

***“God Inside, God Outside:
Introduction to Holistic Spirituality”***

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Through many years of teaching (at high, college and university levels) and offering lectures, classes, seminars and articles, she is happy to have helped many souls to awaken to spiritual knowledge through philosophical reflection.

To The Universal Life Force of the Universe
Who bestowed me with the amazing gift of seeing It everywhere, in the hope that
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CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: Holistic Spirituality.....	2
CHAPTER 2: Our Chart.....	6
CHAPTER 3: The Big Question marks Of The Soul.....	7
CHAPTER 4: Western Attempts at Answers: Science	10
CHAPTER 5: Western Attempts at Answers: Philosophy	14
CHAPTER 6: Western Attempts at Answers: Religious Institutions.....	20
CHAPTER 7: Western Attempts at Answers: Spirituality.....	24
CHAPTER 8: Spiritual Paradigms: Characteristics of Spiritual Knowledge.....	27
CHAPTER 9: Principles of Holistic Spirituality: The Unmanifest that Manifests as Universe.....	31
CHAPTER 10: Principles of Holistic Spirituality: God as Activity	36
CHAPTER 11: Principles of Holistic Spirituality: God as the Order of the World	41
CHAPTER 12: Principles of Holistic Spirituality: The Sacred Universe	45
CHAPTER 13: Principles of Holistic Spirituality: Panentheism I: Divine Immanence	49
CHAPTER 14: Principles of Holistic Spirituality: Panentheism II: Divine Transcendence	52
CHAPTER 15: Principles of Holistic Spirituality: A Meaningful Universe	57
CHAPTER 16: Principles of Holistic Spirituality: The Universe as a Message	62
CHAPTER 17: Conclusion.....	67
APPENDIX: Different Names for Holistic Spirituality.....	68
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	72
AUDIO RESOURCE LIST.....	77

INTRODUCTION

Starting from the XVIIth C. Scientific Revolution and the XIXth C. Industrial Revolution, the Western civilization has giddily increased the human ability to modify its own habitat at unthinkable rates, abysmal compared to other animal species. Scientific, technological and production progresses promoted a dramatic increase of comfort, health, life expectation, creativity, communication and interaction.

But what began as an improvement of human life gradually slipped down to an orgy of consumerism, pollution of our planet and its surroundings, and social inequality.

We have so much contaminated our Earth that the possibility of it not being able to satisfy our necessities becomes every day more real. We are destroying day by day its beauty and its biodiversity. Violence, adictions, loneliness, depression, anxiety, and stress, prevail in our hyperdeveloped societies.

Why?

In my opinion, science, technology and production flourished integrated in a paradigm set up by Descartes and Newton, which lead in the XIXth C. to a mechanic non-sacred vision of the universe. We seem to assume that scientific, rational thinking can only admit an inanimate, rigidly determined universe, whose whole existence, on the other hand, is random. No wonder that people finding themselves living in this inanimated machine whirling with no visible goal in the huge sidereal space, will develop feelings of desolation, meaninglessness and existential absurd.

Does it have to be necessarily so? Isn't there a paradigm where rationality, science, technology and economy can live together with spirituality, a paradigm acceptable to reason and to soul?

Every mystic's heart, together with my own, always said "yes". In this book, I would like to present the basements of an holistic spirituality, the vision of a sacred universe acceptable for our thinking minds of the XXIst century.

My aim is ultimately to facilitate everyone's access to its own intuition, where non-mediated existentially satisfactory answers can be found.

This book is not closed and finished. I rather see it as a message bottle thrown into the sea, searching for soul sisters and brothers. It proposes an interactive path to tread together. I eagerly wait for your commentaries, suggestions, contributions or questions to info@pleroma.org.ar (www.pleroma.org.ar).

Only changing our glance will we be able to live happily in this wonderful planet. Such is the way of the spirit.

Chapter 1: Holistic Spirituality

Spirituality: What For?

I am a professor of philosophy living in Buenos Aires, the capital of the Argentine Republic. This city is currently suffering from grave social, political, financial, and economic problems, but above all, to my understanding, it suffers from moral and, ultimately, spiritual problems. The individual and institutional moral corruption, the violence in the streets, the insecurity, the general discontent, the hopelessness, the lack of respect for government, the lack of community ideals, the individualism, the “every one for himself” attitude, the absence of socially motivating projects, and cynicism, are some of the evils we are suffering from at this time. During the decade of the 1990’s the official government promoted an easy consumer culture and ostentation rather than productive work, generating a monstrous debt with international organizations. The brutal financial crisis at the end of 2001 crumbled the fragile structure on which many Argentines had based their happy and wasteful lives, dependent upon the importation of nearly all consumer goods.

On the other hand, at a world level, we are attending to a brutal exploitation of the planet, and of the majority of its inhabitants: we are destroying riches, beauty, and the life of our own habitat. This, combined with bellicose armed conflicts, each time with more powerful weapons, makes it a likely prediction that *homo sapiens* is running toward his own destruction. What can be done?

I have been a political activist in my youth, but at this moment of my life, I am firmly convinced that no social or political system will efficiently function toward the ideals of justice, honesty, and happiness for all, without an *internal change* in people. From what I have seen in my country and in the world, as good as a political or social system may be, it will not function unless the people who are part of it embody in their own lives the values of love, justice, compassion, solidarity, self-esteem, dignity, mutual respect, respect for difference, a meaningful life, and care for the planet.

Because we are the problem: we are the ones destroying our own habitat and the habitats of the other species by our blindness, our greed, our envy, our violence, and our rapaciousness. These spiritual sins are destroying the planet and provoking the desperation of our young. (Thomas Aquinas teaches that the spiritual sins are much more serious than the carnal ones, but the churches have rarely followed his teachings in this regard.) For this reason we need spiritual work –and spiritual workers.¹

I think that the only way of reaching these objectives is to help the greatest number of people access to their own interior, to their own soul, to their own divine spark which is the fountain where all the mentioned values are housed. Psychotherapy does not get us there, nor do ego or personality therapies ego. We need a true soul therapy. And this is the field of action for the different spiritualities.

Holistic Spirituality: A Spirituality Of The Whole With All

Dualistic spiritualities separate sacred from profane. *Fundamentalist* spiritualities, on their hand, consider their own spirituality true and all others false.

Does a spirituality exist that could claim a non-dualistic, non-fundamentalist *universality*, that could go beyond creeds, borders, and flags, just trying to open our hearts to the presence of the sacred, coexisting with different other creeds as well as with no creed at all? One that could *integrate* and *illuminate* art, science, technology, economics, politics, medicine, physical labor, education, and all our jobs? One that is based in the living experience of wisdom that exists *in*

¹ Matthew Fox, *The Reinvention of Work* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 22.

ourselves, in every one of us, we being conscious manifestations of the same mystery we are trying to unravel?

In my opinion, the answer is yes. It comes from an *ancient tradition*, as ancient as the human being, that runs like a *subterranean river* beneath all traditions and religions, coming to the surface when the direct spiritual experience is allowed to be, untainted by dualism, fundamentalism, ambitious power, intolerance, or prejudice.

Aldous Huxley called it *Perennial Philosophy* (*philosophia perennis*), tracking it in his homonymous book on the history of thought and mysticism. Ken Wilber says it beautifully:

The perennial philosophy is fundamentally concerned with the profound structures of the meeting of the human with the divine. Because those truths about which the Hindus, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Taoists and Sufis absolutely agree, usually refer to something profoundly important, something that speaks to us of universal truths and of ultimate significance, something that touches the fundamental essence of the human condition.²

The contemporary North American theologian, Matthew Fox names it *Creation Spirituality*. In regard to this, one of his disciples says:

Creation Spirituality is an ancient wisdom tradition that holds as sacred all of creation as the breath of the Divine Creator. All of creation is honored as a holy blessing – all space, all time, from the whirling galaxies of the cosmos to the one-celled microorganisms on our home planet Earth. This spirituality honors creation and honors our place in that whirling cosmos, honors the relationship of being, communing and responding with Creation and Creator. We are co-creators, a sentient and transcendent species of our home Earth, called to live out our creativity as an integral part of the spiral dance of unfolding life.

Creation Spirituality is centered in blessing, in the deep understanding that all of creation is gift. This vision of the blessing spirit is seen in the earliest expressions of human spirituality, and is the ancient heritage of all native/ aboriginal peoples. The Divine is recognized in all things, bursting forth in all of creation, including the human person, body/mind/soul as one.³

Other authors, such as the Brazilian Frei Betto, call it *holistic spiritualities*.⁴ These are the spiritualities that see the universe as completely *sacred*, perceiving a mysterious breath searching to manifest in infinite forms, a living spirit that animates absolutely every existing thing. In those spiritualities, nothing is rejected as *non sanctus*, because everything is an expression of that mysterious “something” (including what we don’t consider nice, pleasant, or easy to understand). The divinity is recognized in all things. I have chosen to use *holistic spirituality* rather than *Creation Spirituality*, in order to transcend the word *creation*, too related to Judaism and Christianity, in my opinion.

From this “simple” basic perception, consequences are surfacing that can radically transform from within the life of the human being. Above all, *happiness* is increased when a person opens to the possibilities of living in a *meaningful universe*.

The Family Tree Of Holistic Spirituality

² Ken Wilber, *Gracia y Coraje*, Translated by Teresa Sans Morales. (Spain: Gaia, 1995), 97.

³ Beverly Fontaine, “The Re-creation of Social Work in the Light of Creation Spirituality”(D. Min. Dissertation, University of Creation Spirituality), 2003, 2-3.

⁴ Espiritualidad Holística, www.dominicos.org

The holistic focus of spirituality is not new. It has many different names. For a tentative list, please see Appendix A.

Basic Principles Of Holistic Spiritualities

Ken Wilber finds seven points in common between all the spiritualities based on real life meeting experiences between humans and the Divine:

One: The Spirit exists. Two: The Spirit is within us. Three: In spite of this, most of us live in a world of sin, separation, and dualism, in an illusory fall state, not being aware of that Spirit within. Four: There is a way out from that state of fall, sinfulness, and illusion; there is a road that leads to liberation. Five: If we follow that road to its end, we will experience a rebirth, an illumination, and a direct experience with the internal Spirit, a Supreme Liberation. Six: That experience marks the end of sin and suffering. And Seven: The end of suffering leads to a loving social action and compassion to all sentient beings.⁵

In my opinion these points can be expanded upon finding in the various Holistic Spiritualities the following points of contact:

Life

- The universe is enlivened by what we call "spirit."
- The universe is alive.

Message

- The universe "speaks."
- We can decipher its message and dialog with the universe, because we are made up of its same components. We are a part of it.

The Universe as Gift

- The universe is a gift.
- Seeing this promotes an attitude of joyful acceptance, feeling basically grateful for the innumerable presents we continuously receive.

The Sacred Nature of Everything

- *Panentheism*: The Divine is present in all things, and outside them too.
- Human beings participate in the nature of the Divine, as much in its manifest aspect (beings with qualities; in our case, the body, energy, emotions, the mind and any peculiar feature) as in the unmanifest (the non-visible that is manifest in the universe; in our case, consciousness, the non-material fountain of spontaneity, the soul). We are a microcosm of the macrocosm.
- Being sacred things, our body as much as the planet Earth (and all the universe) should be respected, cared for, and honored.
- Being sons and daughters of the sacred universe, we all possess dignity, beauty, and are sacred.
- Our creativity is also sacred, because it is one of the eminent features by which we resemble the Creative Cause of everything: exercising it will bring us happiness.

Evil and Suffering

- Evil arises out of the illusion of separation. (We see ourselves as isolated entities, separated from the rest of the universe and from our own source). The greater one's sense of ego (the small "I" of private property), the greater the level of suffering.

⁵ Ken Wilber, *Gracia y Coraje*, Translated by Teresa Sans Morales. (Spain: Gaia, 1995), 97-98.

Meaning, Co-creation, and Happiness

- Life has meaning.
- Meaning consists of achieving our mission, that for which we came to this earth.
- We are co-creators of this world, together with the Principle Creator, each one with a unique and particular mission.
- The discovery and realization of this mission will make us happy, giving meaning to our life.

Holistic Spirituality In The Postmodern World

In his *Creation Spirituality*, contemporary North American theologian Matthew Fox updates the holistic statements of the *philosophia perennis* to the characteristics and necessities of our third Western millennium, highlighting the following specific points:

- *Interdependence* of all beings.
- *Deep Ecumenism*: all religions and traditions have a mystical-spiritual nucleus (based on the direct experience of the numinous), which can be seen as one facet of the great diamond of Truth.
- *Respect for all diversities* (cultural, ethnic, religious, sexual, of abilities) as manifestations of the Mystery, but at the same time, *search for the underlying Oneness* (the nameless, unmanifest, the ineffable, and indescribable; only pointed at or experienced).
- *Urban Spirituality*: the city can and should be a space for manifesting the sacred.
- *New Cosmology*: the scientific history of the universe told not out of a paradigm of chance and machinery, but from the paradigm of webs (systems), self-organization (life), and meaning (teleology).
- The *Journey of our Soul* on this earth evidence of the following four basic components that should *all* be dealt with in an integral spirituality:
 1. *Via Positiva*: Amazement and marvel at the blessing and miracle of creation.
 2. *Via Negativa*: To let go of and release to the various transitions of death in our lives.
 3. *Via Creativa*: To exercise our unique and particular creativity.
 4. *Via Transformativa*: To transform, consequently, our relationship to the rest of us and to the planet (justice and compassion).
- We can *reinvent our work* accordingly, participating in the great work of the universe.
- *Teaching*: Integrally develop every aspect of the human being (body, mind, energy, emotions, concerns, love, imagination, creativity, relations, spirit).

The former basic and postmodern principles of Holistic Spirituality are the ones we are seeking to embody in Pleroma, putting them in practice in order to build a Holistic Spiritual community.

Chapter 2: OUR CHART

"This is a moment of great celebration, for we are coming home to ourselves" (Connie Kaplan, EEUU, contemporary)⁶

We will start looking for the great basic existential questions every human being asks herself in some point of his life. We will look for those unavoidable questions that everyone implicitly or explicitly needs to answer with his / her own life.

Then we will take a look at the most common available Western answers, that is, Science, Philosophy and Religion.

This small essay does not pretend to be an exhaustive History of Science, Philosophy or Religion. Solving the problem of our own life's meaning is urgent. We don't have time to revise every previous contribution, and then choose the most suitable for each one of us. Even the learned person who follows this procedure ends up choosing her answer not out of comparison, but out of resonance with his own deep beliefs.

We will first try to "clean the way" for people seeking a personal encounter with the ultimate answers. In our opinion, the scientific, the philosophical and the religious most common available Western paradigms are inadequate for an actual self-transformation and evolution of the consciousness.

We will then analyze the concept of "spirituality". In our perspective, spirituality can offer more satisfactory existential answers than the previous systems, with whom spirituality will nevertheless, work together.

After that, we will offer a definition of Holistic Spirituality, analyzing thoroughly in the following chapters its basic principles.

⁶ Kaplan, C., *Dreams ...*, p. 145.

CHAPTER 3: THE BIG QUESTION MARKS OF THE SOUL

Advocation to Shiva

*Like word and meaning united
for the right understanding of word and meaning
I honor the parents of the universe,
Paarvatii (Shiva's wife) and Parameshvara (Shiva)
(Kaalidasa, India, 5th Century)⁷*

I put this essay under the protection of the archetypal figure of the Hindu god Shiva, who symbolizes the destruction of the old in order to bring forward the new. He is also called "Nataraja," or "Lord of the Dance," symbol of the cosmic dance of the universe, pure change and fluidity. According to tradition, Shiva is also the patron god creator of the discipline of Hatha-Yoga. He also symbolizes the harmonic union of the masculine with the feminine. His body is depicted as half man, half woman, or he will appear with his spouse Shakti. I feel very identified with these three aspects: the dance, the Hatha-Yoga, and the union of masculine and feminine principles.

To Find Oneself Thrown Into The World – An Enigma To Be Deciphered

I find myself among the (many? few? not too many?) people for whom the issue of the personal existential situation, of being in the world, of finding oneself "thrown" (launched) into it, as Heidegger says,⁸ raises a question and a mystery.

From the moment that our consciousness awakens to the world in this life, we find ourselves already in a certain situation: with a body, a consciousness, a personality, a family, a society and culture, a country, and a language. We are also inserted into a bio-natural context, with the sun, planets, air, water, and temperatures that guarantee our biological life.

We are used to take all of these circumstances for granted. But in certain special moments, they will appear, quite to the contrary, as urgent riddles to be resolved: messages to be deciphered.

These riddles to be solved take the form of the great basic questions about our own existence and the existence of the world:

Why is there something, rather than nothing? Why is the world this way, and not in some other? Who am I? What is the cause of my existence? How and from where does my consciousness arise? Why am I right here? What happens to my consciousness when my body dies? Does my life and that of all humanity have any meaning? Does the existence of the world have any meaning? How are we to understand the wonderful and terrible that exists in the world? Is there a reason for the existence of the universe, or is it all just a product of mere chance?

All

I would venture to say that all human beings, in some moment of their lives, especially in crisis or in border situations,⁹ ask these basic existential questions.

⁷ Vyaas Houston and Mark Kelso, *Songs to Shiva*, (Warwick N.Y.: Vyaas Houston and Mark Kelso, 1993), 5.

⁸ Martín Heidegger, *El Ser y el Tiempo*, 4th ed. (México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1971), 152.

As Children

As children we all have most probably posed more or less consciously these questions (certainly not with this technical or abstract terminology), but our parents or teachers have not always known how to stimulate a healthy search for answers.

Cultures

Moreover, the great basic existential questions are universal: we find attempts to answer them in all cultures, in all civilizations and in all times.

The Alternative Consideration

To my understanding, we are able to ask all these questions because we possess a faculty that is uniquely human, which I have called somewhere else¹⁰ “alternative consideration of reality.” In front of whatever circumstance, the human being can “see an object for what the object is not,” imagining possible alternatives.

For example, we are mortals and we want to be immortal. We don't have wings, and we want to fly. We are not fish, and we want to swim. We look at our hair, we see imagine it could be a different color, and we dye it blue.

History

The alternative consideration of reality makes it possible for humans, unlike the rest of the animals, to have history. What is history? History is change. Without change, there is no history.

Bees, for example, do not possess “history,” nor do they progress. They go on building their hexagonal panels just as they have done for thousands and thousands of years. It doesn't occur to them one day to build them square, for example. The human being, on the other hand, always sees “other options” besides what already exists (the alternative consideration). And it creates skyscrapers, igloos, huts, chalets, and bungalows.

The Great Existential Questions And Alternative Consideration

That is why, in front of our personal existential situation, we think: “why are things like this, and not some other way?” We don't just simply conform: we are rather always arguing why are things like this, and not otherwise. The world could be different. We could be different. The world could not exist. We could not exist.

From this point arise the great existential questions of humanity, the most basic of which is the famous leibnizian: “Why is there something, rather than nothing?”¹¹

Happiness And Meaning

“This, then, is salvation: when we marvel at the beauty of created things and praise their beautiful Creator.” (Meister Eckhart, Germany, 13th century)¹²

Answering to the previous questions will not grant us material benefits, power or social status. Perhaps that's why they are not included in the official educational system.

Nevertheless, it is important to respond to these questions: at play in them is nothing less than happiness and the meaning of our own lives. Our answers, especially, what we feel about

⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Introduction à la Philosophie*, Translated by Jeanne Hirsch. (France: Union Générale d'Éditions, Paris, 1966), 18.

¹⁰ Ana Chornik, *¿Por qué permite Dios el Mal en el Mundo?* (Buenos Aires: Kier, 1994), 49.

¹¹ Nicolás Abbagnano, *Historia de la Filosofía*, Vol 2., 5th ed. (Spain: Montaner y Simón, 1965), 258.

¹² Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing*, (New Mexico: Bear & Company Publishing, 1983), 118.

whether cosmic existence and our personal existence making or not making sense, will determine our life's "color," its basic vibration.

Many people possess health, family, and material goods, but still don't achieve happiness because they cannot get a sense of their life. And *vice versa*, many people lacking what, according to certain parameters the media wants to impose on us as the *sine qua non* of well being, nevertheless enjoy a vital, optimistic attitude, and happiness.

Directing our own lives with a significant cosmic vision will determine our tone of basic happiness or unhappiness, regardless of the particular adverse or favorable circumstances. And our basic cosmic vision will depend on how we have elaborated the great basic existential questions.

In fact, it is impossible not to adopt some posture in regards to these questions, as we will see. In real life,

Everyone Has An Answer!

In our personal lives, everyone implicitly answers in some way. Know it or not, want it or not, what our lives look like will always depend upon a cosmic vision, a paradigm, an implicit system of beliefs. Most people who claim not to worry about these questions, are in fact unconsciously following the life paradigm proposed by education, mass media and publicity. The more we bring our own way of seeing the world to awareness, the more we will be masters of it instead of it being our master.

Every culture has developed systems of explicit answers to the great basic questions about factual existence. In the West, those disciplines took the form of science, philosophy, religion, and spirituality.

We will analyze the basic assumptions of science, philosophy, religion, as lay people (not specialists) may find them in their ways.

CHAPTER 4: WESTERN ATTEMPTS AT ANSWERS: SCIENCE

"Matter has reached the point of beginning to know itself...[the human being] is a star's knowing about the stars." (George Wald)¹³

Western Science And The Great Basic Existential Questions

The definition of "science":

Western Science (from the Latin "scire," to know) constitutes a way of knowing that aspires to formulate, by means of *univoque language*, the precise laws that regulate the functioning of *phenomena*.

A "univoque language" signifies that every term has only one meaning. For example:

"Planet Earth was formed some 4,500 million years ago."

Here the word "Earth" and the word "year" have a singular and precise meaning: "Earth" designates the third planet in the solar system, and "Year", the unit of time that consists of 365 days, except for every fourth year, which has 366.

Let's consider now the following statement by Meister Eckhart (Germany, XIIIth C.):

"The divine whisper tells us: 'You are divine'."

We see a polisemia (many meanings). This could not be a scientific statement.

Either we agree with it or not, this the kind of statement that could be used in responding to some of the great existential questions, because it speaks about our relationship with the cause of the universe. To speak about the totality of what is real, as is asked for in the great basic existential questions, we need a language much richer than the univoque one.

The phone book is one clear example of univoque language. Every word in it has only one meaning. And that is how it has to be: otherwise, it would create general confusion, not achieving its purpose. But, exactly for the same reason, it is insufficient to approach the great basic existential questions.

In order to suggest a multiplicity of meanings, or various levels of understanding, a polisemic language possesses a wealth of possibilities for transmitting something that goes beyond itself. Each generation and each culture will discover new meanings beside the previous ones. This use of the language wishes to transmit a life experience, more than mere information. A univoque language as used by science proves to be insufficient for answer to questions about the totality of existence.

¹³ Peter Russell, *From Science to God: The Mystery of Consciousness and the Meaning of Light* (California: Pre-publication Edition, 2000), 4.

The definition of “phenomena”:

From the Greek *phainomai*, to appear: that which appears.¹⁴ Science studies “that which appears,” the visible, the “observable,” the perceptible.

Phenomena (for instance, a lightning, the rotation of the earth) do not show the cause of their own existence (the cause of their own “appearing”).

The answers to the great basic questions do not pertain to the same scope as the phenomena —that which appears— but rather to the scope of the cause of the appearing, the sphere of what we call “spirit.” Nothing that appears can explain itself. As Antoine de Saint-Exupery, the French pilot author of *The Little Prince*, once said, “*the essential is invisible to the eye.*”

Science And Totality

We are looking for answers to the great questions concerning the totality of the universe and our role within this totality. And the totality of the universe is not a phenomenon for us (it never appears as totality before us; we cannot embrace it as an object to study). However, we cannot let go of posing the great basic existential questions, which do concern totality.

The great “why’s” that appear in the basic existential questions fall outside of the realm of phenomena, proper to science.

Each science (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, sociology or anthropology) is concerned with one sector of the universe. Each one defines its object of study, designing a method appropriate to its approach. The word “method” comes from the Greek “*meta odos*,” “the road toward.” The method of each science will indicate the adequate road to investigate the object proper to that science.

Mathematics, for instance, studies the ideal entities of time (numbers), of space (geometric entities), and of reason (logic). Physics and chemistry are concerned with the intimate structure of material entities. Biology studies living beings. Psychology studies human behavior.

Every sector of reality requires a particular approach in order to be accessed. It wouldn’t be pertinent, for example, to study human behavior with the methods of physics, or living beings with the methods of mathematics...

On their side, the great basic existential questions do not refer to a sector of reality but to totality itself.

Resolving questions about the totality of existence does not belong to science, as we have seen. These exceed the field of action of any particular science. Out of the study of material entities (physics or chemistry), for example, I cannot respond to questions about all levels of reality, such as the ones we are considering.

Unaware of this, many scientists have pretended to demonstrate out of science the existence or non-existence of God, or the meaning or lack of meaning of the universe. Even chance has been “scientifically” postulated as the ultimate determining factor of the universe. Because of the prestige of Western science as the only method to attain truth, many people ingenuously accept spiritual conclusions that in fact exceed the scope of science.

Because each particular science studies a special sector of reality, any one of them is inadequate to elucidate questions relative to the whole.

¹⁴ From *phainomai* also comes the word “phantom” (“appeared,” “apparition”).

Instruments Of Knowledge

Since the seventeenth century, Western science has opted to accept only two human faculties as valid instruments for its study: sensory information and reason. But there are other human faculties of knowledge and learning, such as: imagination, intuition, creativity, dreams, body experiences.

Science does not accept these as valid sources of knowledge and learning, though many scientists, such as Descartes,¹⁵ Newton (the episode with the apple), or Mendeleiev (who saw the elemental table in a dream)¹⁶, mention them as determining factors in their discoveries. To quote Albert Einstein:

*The main work of physics is to try to find, by virtue of pure deduction, those elemental laws, the most general possible, with which to configure its image of the world. There is no logical path to those fundamental laws. We should allow intuition to guide us...*¹⁷

The great questions about the meaning of the universe, of life, and of our own existence are holistic questions¹⁸: they involve the totality of experience. It is more likely, then, that they can be answered by using all of our integrated faculties rather than limiting ourselves to only two of them.

Recent investigations of the functions of the two sides of the brain¹⁹ show that analysis, control, intellect, reason, power, precision and similar functions are localized principally in the *left brain*,²⁰ while in the *right brain* intuition, creativity, physicality, imagination and polisemia (variety of meanings) take place.

Western science uses mainly the resources of the left-brain. Why leave out what the right hemisphere has to offer? All investigators agree that the human species is using only a small portion of its cerebral capacity, and that waking consciousness is scarcely the tip of the iceberg of its full potential.

Science furnishes us with valuable contributions regarding the *quantifiable aspects* of our life, where and sensory information predominate.

But in the search for answers to the great basic existential questions we cannot indulge to reject the other resources the universe has given us. We need to integrate all of our faculties. Holistic questions require holistic use of our faculties.

The How And The Why

According to the latest scientific accepted cosmological theory, the physical universe originated some 15 billion years ago out of super-concentrated energy, in an explosion that has come to be called "the Big Bang."

Most cosmologists now believe that the Universe started somewhere between 8 and 15 billion years ago as a purely unimaginably hot and extremely compact region of pure energy. Intense internal pressures caused the universe to expand very rapidly,

¹⁵ Samuel S. De Sacy, *Descartes par Lui Même* (France: Du Seuil, 1961), 59-69.

¹⁶ See Strathern, Paul, *Mendeleiev's Dream*, Thomas Dunne Books, USA, 2001.

¹⁷ Albert Einstein, *Mi Visión del Mundo*, 5th ed., Translated by Sara Gallardo and Marianne Bübeck. (Spain:Tusquets, 1985), 147.

¹⁸ From the Greek "*holos*," totality.

¹⁹ Ferguson, M. *La Conspiración...*, pp. 339 & ff.

²⁰ In right-handed people (right, in left-handed people).

*creating the Big Bang. As the Universe expanded, it cooled and condensed into elemental particles: electrons, positrons, photons, and neutrinos. Cooling further, these particles began forming stable relations with each other, giving birth to the very simplest of atoms: hydrogen and helium. Matter was born.*²¹

The Big Bang theory does not explain why the universe started. It is a descriptive theory on how the universe began, but not why. Science tells us how things happen, not why.

The same thing occurs with every scientific knowledge. Anatomy, for instance, explains how our physical organs function, not why they are as they are. Why are our fingers in multiples of five and not of three? Why do we have an external symmetrical axis that is not respected internally? Why do we lose and re-grow teeth only once in our life?

The “why” remains as unknown after the scientific investigation as it was before, because it pertains to another research area. And it is exactly this “why” and “what” for, more than the “how”, that the great basic existential questions are about. In order to deal in daily life with this world, it is very important to know *how* reality functions: the faculties of reason and senses have been given to human beings to be used. Science is absolutely valid in this area. The always harmful and useless interferences between science and religion should be avoided.

As examples of famous interferences between science and religion, we can mention the condemnations by the Catholic Church to the sun-centered theories of Galileo, or to Darwin’s theory of evolution. Inversely, we can cite that ninetieth century positivist French surgeon who denied the existence of the soul by saying: “*The soul does not exist because I have never found one under my scalpel.*”²²

Science should not pontificate about the meaning or lack of meaning of the universe, nor about the existence or lack of existence of God. Likewise religion or mysticism should not intermeddle in scientific questions. Those are two different ways of knowledge.²³

Shiva Nataraja, Lord of the Dance, send waves of sonorous impulses into the material world, awakening it from lethargy and bestowing life energy. And matter dances, appearing around Shiva like an aura of furious emanations.

As he dances, Shiva creates and sustains the many phenomena of the universe; as he dances, he destroys with fire all names and forms doling out new destinies.

(Marie-Gabriele Wosien, Germany, 20th Century)²⁴

²¹ Peter Russell, *Waking Up in Time: Finding Inner Peace in Times of Accelerating Change*. (California: Origin Press, 1992), 5-7.

²² Contribution of my first Philosophy teacher, Mr. Lipschutz (1966).

²³ Of course, nothing prevents one and the same person to exercise both forms!

²⁴ Maria-Gabriele Wosien, *Danzas Sagradas: El Encuentro con los Dioses*, Translated by Flora Casas, (Spain: Debate, 1996), 7.

CHAPTER 5: WESTERN ATTEMPTS AT ANSWERS: PHILOSOPHY

*"We either know something by experience, or we do not really know it."*²⁵
Contemporary Benedictine Monk David Steindl-Rast:

Philosophy: Origin And Etymology

Born, as science, in pre-classic Greece, philosophy deals with the basic great existential questions, relative to the totality of existence. Coming from the Greek "*fileo*" (I love) and "*sofia*" (wisdom), it is etymologically defined as "love of wisdom."

Western philosophy began by asking the great "whys" of the universe, of life, and of the human species, but later evolved toward the task of defining the essence of things.

Philosophy As The Search For The Essence Of Things

Philosophy confronts what is, trying to capture its intimate *essence*, *define it*, enunciate its characteristic markings, and name it, as Adam named the animals that God made parade before him in Genesis.²⁶ But Adam had not created the animals, nor the faculty with which he was naming them.

Philosophy searches to define the essence of what is, responding to the question: "what is this?" We define the "essence" of something as *the set of characteristics that make that thing what it is, and not something else*.

For instance, the essence of a table would be: *piece of furniture made up of a smooth board supported by one or more feet, used for eating, writing, etc.* We can find the description of the essence of things in the dictionaries.

Western philosophy tries to define the great general concepts that determine our life; what do we mean, for instance, when we say "human being", or "truth."

Let's see some famous definitions of the essence of "human being":

"Man is an unfeathered biped." (Plato, Greece, 5th Century B.C)
"Man is a rational animal." (Aristotle, Greece, 4th Century, B.C.)
"Man is a machine." (Julien Offray de la Mettrie, France, 18th Century)²⁷
"Man is a symbolic animal." (Ernst Cassirer, Germany, 20th Century)²⁸

Other general concepts with which Western philosophy is concerned, are, for instance, beauty, goodness, justice, liberty, the soul, being.

²⁵ Brother David Steindl-Rast, *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1984), 196.

²⁶ Genesis, II, 19.

²⁷ Nicolás Abbagnano, *Historia de la Filosofía*, 5th ed., Vol. 2, (Spain: Montaner y Simón, 1965), 374.

²⁸ Eike Winkler and Josef Schweikhardt, *El Conocimiento del Hombre*, Translated by Pedro Gálvez, (Spain: Planeta, 1985), 15-17.

Ultimately, philosophy deals with the significance of words, that is, concepts. It is a reflection on the proper use of language, on the human capacity to conceptualize. Once defined the general concepts of a particular area, philosophy attempts to correctly relate one to each other.

The human faculty used by philosophy to find valid relationships between concepts is reason –analytical, logical, or intellectual– a function that today is attributed to the left hemisphere of the brain (in right-handed people).²⁹

What Is Reasoning?

Reasoning is the name of a procedure carried out by reason. “Reasoning” means *obtaining a proposition called “conclusion” out of one or more propositions called “premises.”*

Example 1: All men are mortal
Socrates is a man
_____ (THEREFORE)
Socrates is mortal

In this example, the premises of the reasoning were provided by empirical observation.

Example 2: God punishes those who do bad things.
I did something bad
_____ (THEREFORE)
God will punish me.

In this example, the data of the first premise were provided by faith, by a certain belief, and the ones of the second premise were provided by an internal perception.

Example 3: Scottish people are alcoholics
John is Scottish
_____ (THEREFORE)
John is an alcoholic.

Here, the data of the first premise are provided by prejudice, and the ones of the second premise are provided by empirical observation.

Example 4: The animals with wings are birds
Canaries are animals with wings
_____ (THEREFORE)
Canaries are birds.

In this example, the data of the first premise were provided by a (wrong) definition, and the ones of the second premise were provided by empirical observation.

Reason does not distinguish between true and false premises. It processes information. But this information, *i.e.* the data that figure in the premises, is given to reason by a faculty other than itself.

General statements regarding the whole of the universe do not arise from reason (which only processes information), nor from sensorial information (which could never embrace the totality of existence).

²⁹ See note Nr 19.

Some Of The Great Philosophical Schools Of Western Thought

Let's take a look at the premises from which are constructed some of the great philosophical systems of the West.

- There is no firm knowledge, nor absolutely certain opinion. (*Skepticism*)
- Destiny cannot be changed; therefore there is no reason to struggle uselessly against it. (*Stoicism*)
- All knowledge is based upon sensory experience. (*Empiricism*)
All knowledge is provided by reason. (*Rationalism*)
- All reality is physical, material. (*Materialism*)
- Reality is made of ideas of a consciousness. (*Idealism*)

Each philosophical system postulates different premises regarding the ultimate nature of reality: these particular points are not determined by reason, but rather by *opinion, intuition, preference, prejudice, imagination, or faith*. Our conception regarding the whole nature of reality is not rational: it constitutes rather *the basic matter* that *reason* will later process and organize.

Reason can construct beautiful buildings out of premises, but it cannot guarantee the truth of those premises. Opting for one of them, rather than for its counter possibilities, arises from an extra-rational choice.

Diversity Of Philosophical Systems

Philosophical systems do not agree regarding the ultimate nature of reality. The history of Western philosophical thought offers a broad spectrum of titanic intellectual efforts to explain the universe from diverse perspectives, often contradictory to each other.

Descartes – who considered himself to be a scientist before a philosopher, wrote: “*I learned, once I was at school, that we could not imagine something so strange and hard to believe that it had not already been said by some philosopher.*”³⁰

There are an infinity of answers in philosophy regarding the ultimate nature of reality. How do I choose between them? If reason itself allowed us to do that, there would not be so much difference between them. All the philosophers should agree!

An Example Of Reason's Self-Critique: The Kantian Antinomies

We have seen that different philosophical systems start from different definitions regarding what the universe is in its totality, *i.e.* regarding the essence of the universe. Immanuel Kant (Prussia, 18th Century) enumerates four statements regarding the totality of existence, and tries to demonstrate them using pure reason. Two of them are particularly interesting:

*“The world has a beginning in time and in respect to space, it is enclosed too within limitation.”*³¹

*“There is in the world something that, as its part or as its cause, is a necessary entity.”*³²

³⁰ René Descartes, *Oeuvres et Lettres*, (Belgium: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1966), 136.

³¹ Immanuel Kant, *Crítica de la Razón Pura*, 6th ed., (Argentina: Losada, 1970), Vol. 2, 144.

³² *Ibid.*, 163.

Kant, with his characteristic rigor and honesty, finds that he can demonstrate rationally each one of them...but also their opposite, their antinomy! That is:

*"The world has no beginning in time and in respect to space, it is not enclosed within limitation."*³³

*"There is nothing in the world that, as its part or as its cause, is a necessary entity."*³⁴

He concludes that reason is insufficient for making statements regarding the whole world.

Does a necessary being for example, God, exist in the universe? Even though the answer to this question can radically transform our life, reason alone cannot help us here: Kant shows that rationally we can support this idea, and equally support its opposite. So, how do we come to a decision about this?

Reason Is Part Of What Has To Be Explained

*"It is necessary to know it, but not by science, intelligence, imagination, sagacity, the senses, exterior vision, interior vision, comprehension, or reason...It's not possible to understand unity out of duality."*³⁵

(Ibn al-Arabi, Spain, 12th to 13th Century)

The existential mystery we are trying to elucidate includes human reason. And it is not possible to explain anything using in the explanation the same idea we are trying to elucidate. Reason is always found already happening: it cannot reach its own fundament. It is part of the totality it tries to explain.

Where Can We Look For Certainties?

There are statements that, in the very act of making them, create the object they refer to, for instance: "I exist."

The certainty of your own existence comes from direct existential experience. For us human beings, the only things that give reason of their own existence are our life experiences.

Philosophy, Love, And Wisdom

*"The heart has reasons reason ignores."*³⁶

(Blaise Pascal, 17th century, France)

We have seen that the Greek term "sophia" means "wisdom." The mysterious Greek teacher Pythagoras (6th Century, B.D.) created the term "philosophy" to say that he was not a finished sage, but solely a "lover of wisdom", a "philo-sopher."³⁷

The term "to love" wisdom suggests a personal, affective, even physical relationship. This is not as out of place as it seems: The Old Testament uses the same term for both "to know" and

³³ Ibid., 144.

³⁴ Ibid., 163.

³⁵ Arabi Ibn, *Tratado de la Unidad*, Translated by Roberto Pla, (Spain: Sirio, 1987), 17-18.

³⁶ Blas Pascal, *Pensamientos*, Translated by Juan Domínguez Berrueta, (Argentina: Aguilar Argentina S.A., 1977. Reprint, Argentina: Orbis, 1984), 162.

³⁷ The Greek verb "*phileo*" means "I love" or "to love." Why not give a twist to the interpretation of the word "philosophy" jumping off from that final noun, as we normally do? This would give us "the wisdom of love" or "the wisdom of I love"? Ultimately, Pythagoras was a teacher whose messages could be understood on many levels. Doesn't this definition open unsuspected perspectives?

“have an intimate relationship with.” Real knowing has much to do with love, even with physical intimacy.

There are cases in which real knowledge cannot occur without love. For instance, a teacher and his/her students.

Integral Use Of Our Faculties

Beyond thinking, analyzing and studying the great philosophical questions through the path of reason, why not use all the marvelous instruments with which life has gifted us in order to love and celebrate Sofia in a thousand ways? If the world is not purely rational, why think that reason is sufficient to reveal its mysteries?

Some of those instruments would be: the body, the imagination, dreams, art, daily life, our relationships with others and with the world, work, meditation and visualization.

What would happen if, beyond, reasoning and writing, we were to dance, sing, visualize, play, express physically, photograph, write poetry, dramatize, imagine, paint, sculpt, mythologize, ritualize or transform into service the wisdom? In his school, Pythagoras himself used ritual (meaningful symbolic physical movement), poetry, music, and natural elements, beyond the intellect.

Perhaps wisdom cannot only be “known” and “stated” but also enjoyed, lived, and taken into the daily life. Perhaps the responses to the big philosophical problems are not to be simply answered, but also lived. Perhaps, besides “com-prehending” philosophy (grasp it for ourselves), we could “co-live” it, (live it in community)?

How do we choose, then, among skepticism or stoicism, rationalism or empiricism, idealism or materialism, and so on, all philosophical systems based on different premises regarding reality? How do we choose from among all the cosmic visions that philosophy offers?

By means of our interior life experience, based upon all of our vital experience.

Holistic Spirituality postulates that if we are going to answer the great basic existential questions, we will more likely succeed taking the integrated path of using all the faculties with which we have been blessed, rather than using just one of them.

Philosophy As The Safeguard Against Irrationality

Philosophy reflects the daring effort of the human spirit to access truth through the correct use of language and reason. It is the great clarifier and organizer of human thought. It helps us express with precision, and not fall into contradictions in our own lives.

With regard to the ultimate questions, we have seen that reason shows to be “too small” to answer them: the responses we are looking for are *supra rational*, they exceed reason. But, careful, this doesn’t mean we should not use reason in our daily life. Our daily life, our science, and our philosophy should remain directed through reason, whose function is precisely that one: to help us move through the manifest world.

Philosophy is our great rational safeguard in our search for supra-rational answers, helping us to avoid falling into irrational behaviors that could be toxic in our daily lives.

Day of our Lord 1654, Monday, the 23rd of November, feast day of San Clement...from approximately 10:30 at night until around 12:30, fire. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and the learned ones. Certainty. Certainty. Feeling. Happiness, Peace. God of Jesus Christ.

Deum meum et Deum vestrum. (John, 20, 17)
*Your God will be my God. (Ruth, 1, 16)*³⁸

[Fragment of writing found in the clothing of Blaise Pascal (France, 17th Century) after his death]

³⁸ Karen Armstrong, *Una Historia de Dios*. Translated by Ramón Alfonso Díez Aragón, (Argentina: Paidós, 1995), 346.

CHAPTER 6: WESTERN ATTEMPTS AT ANSWERS: RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

*The cults of the different religions/ which are like so many small streams, / move together to meet God, who is like the ocean.*³⁹

Religion: Etymology and Role in the West

My heart is capable of understanding any form. / A cloister for a monk, a temple for idols, / a pasture for gazelles, the Caaba for the devout, / the tablets of the Torah, the Koran. / Love is my creed; where ever its camels go, it will always be my creator and my faith.
(Ibn-al-Arabi, Spain, 12th and 13th C.)⁴⁰

The term religion comes from the Latin “*religare*”: to bind, to link, to attach.

The different religions are the institutional answers the Western culture offers for the ultimate great questions.

To their members in the West, religions offer:

- Explicit answers to the great basic questions
- Paths of action
- Community

Western Religious Institutions Seen from the Outside

From an external point of view, religions appear as communities of “bound” people, attached by their practice, beliefs, and norms of behavior.

Religion as an Interior Attitude

Zaniah defines religion as “an attitude that human being adopts *in front of a superhuman power*, upon which it feels *dependent* as its creature.”⁴¹

From an internal perspective, religion points, just as yoga,⁴² to the binding of the individual soul with the founding power of the universe.

Minimum Constituting Elements of Western Religious Communities

The god of the Hindus resides in a temple; / the god of the Moslems resides in a mosque. / Who resides there, / where there are no temples and no mosques?
(Kabir, India, 15th Century)⁴³

³⁹ Rajjab, disciple of Dadu Dayal, India, 17th Century: Matthew Fox, *One River, Many Wells*, (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2000), 18.

⁴⁰ Ibn Arabi, *Tratado...*, p. 9.

⁴¹ Zaniah, *Diccionario Esotérico*, 5th ed. (Argentina: Kier, 1987). Entry “Religion.”

⁴² In Sanskrit, “union.”

The following basic elements characterize a Western community as religious:

- Foundational scriptures, considered sacred for being the word of God
- Rites of worship
- Rites of passage
- A complete and closed system of beliefs that the devotee must accept in order to be part of the congregation
- Norms of conduct for daily life
- Worship professionals, who “know” how to lead ceremonies, frequently even considered as intermediaries between the devotee and the divine.

Founders and Followers

The founders of the three great monotheistic religions of the West (Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed⁴⁴) claim having had a personal relationship to the superhuman creator power. In that direct personal experience, a knowledge regarding the soul and the world, norms of moral behavior, and rules for the practice of rituals and worship, were revealed to them.

Today, religions scarcely carry on the teachings of their founders. The strong impact of these founders over their contemporaries and followers generated in the latter the will *to preserve, communicate, and transmit* to future generations this treasury of illuminated knowledge, avoiding distortion and forgetfulness.

Unfortunately, in their fervor, admiration, and respect for the founder’s message, the followers very often adhered more to the *letter* than to the *spirit* of the teachings.

Critique to the Great Western Institutional Religions

*Remember when you didn't have any religion?
Remember when the only thing you had was Him?
(Rumi, Turkey, 13th Century)⁴⁵*

The great religions do offer answers to the basic existential questions. However, unfortunately, they have assumed *four conditions* that usually discourage the spiritual seeker:

1. Information from an Authority
Although the founders obtained the answers to the great existential questions through a personal experience of union with the Ultimate Source, the mode of transmission for those answers to the devotees in the Western religious institutions is *informative*. Someone who “knows” how the teachings of the founder should be interpreted turns the information over to someone who “doesn’t know,” who is told to accept them. The entire process is based upon the criteria of *authority*.
2. Dogmatism
A dogma is a statement presented as absolute truth.

⁴³ Matthew Fox, *One River, Many Wells*, (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2000) 17.

⁴² This raises a very interesting discussion... Many scholars of Christianity, and many Christians do not see Jesus as the founder of a religion. He was very much a Jew. It was his followers who founded a religion. He did not seem to be interested in that at all...However, it might be noted that this is what has been handed down as part of the tradition. Yet, it is not necessarily what the person who was the inspiration intended –at least in the case of Jesus (Mel Bricker, private mail).

⁴⁵ Djalal Ud Din Rumi, *En Brazos del Amado*, Translated by Alfonso Colodrón, (Spain: Arca de Sabiduría, 1998), 77.

The great Western religions, present their beliefs as dogmas. Each organized religion presents its dogmas as unquestionable divine revelations.⁴⁶ It is significant to point out, nevertheless, that etymologically speaking, the word “*dogma*” comes from the Greek “*opinion*.” “Dogmas” are, in fact, “opinions.”

Western religions call “Orthodoxy” the body of doctrine accepted by a particular one, and “heterodoxy” the doctrinal statements not accepted. Etymology reveals that while the term “ortho-doxo” means, as one would expect, the correct or right opinion, “hetero-doxo” surprisingly means the opinion “of the other.”

When a significant number of people do not accept a certain orthodoxy, a schism is provoked between the different dogmatisms, bringing about a new religion, frequently counter-facing the first one, generating tension, conflicts, even wars.

Science, on the other hand, does not accept dogmatism. Scientific thought does not accept statements that cannot be verified by reason or the senses. The development of Western science began to accelerate in the 17th century with the Scientific Revolution.

Since that time, an ever-growing gap has existed between science and religion. Consequently, “thinking people” distanced themselves all the more, since for them, science was the paradigm for obtaining true knowledge.

3. Fundamentalism

But the greatest sin, by my understanding, in which dominant groups of most of the organized religions have incurred, is fundamentalism. By “fundamentalism”, we understand the belief that only one particular religion (our own) possesses the truth, while all the others are wrong.

In the case of Judaism, fundamentalism is based on the exacerbation of the idea of being “a chosen people,” to the point of fomenting the “non-contamination” of the blood, *i.e.* racial isolation.

In the case of Roman Catholicism, the concept of “original sin” charges all human beings, just for being humans, with the fault of the sin of the first human, Adam. The redemption from this sin can be found in the sacraments, which only the Catholic Church can administer. Otherwise, the person is condemned to an eternity in hell. The salvation of the soul is to be found in the hands of one only institution.

If we consider Islam, the notion of “*jihad*” (holy war: religious duty to expand Islam even through war), has historically been the cause of blood baths and cruel confrontations whose aim was physically eliminating those that did not share the same religion.

The term itself of “fundamentalism” comes from a conservative movement that originated in then North American millenary Protestantism in the 19th century, which reclaimed as fundamental to Christianity, the literal interpretation of the Scriptures, and their absolute infallibility as the unique source of spiritual truth.

The fundamentalist posture has generated, according to each case respectively, movements of missionaries by persuasion or force (Catholic, Islamic, Protestant), or endogamic isolation (Judaism).

According to my understanding, these attitudes not only do not favor, but rather damage, any authentic spiritual searching. Limiting free thought and free life experience to the

⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas himself, the *Doctor Angelicus* of the Catholic Church, nevertheless, observes that a dogma can be false, in which case he calls it “*dogma perversum*.” (Ferrater Mora, Diccionario . . . , entr. “Dogmatismo.”)

devotees, creates in them an attitude of dependence and fear that make authentic spiritual experiences difficult or impossible.

4. Compromises

Because spiritual necessity means so much to human beings, these bestow great power to religious institutions. That huge power has often been misused by the great organized Western religions, which indulged themselves to contract compromises with social, economic, and political powers, ending in the prostitution or betrayal of spiritual values.

As historical examples of the preceding, we can mention:

- The Catholic priests who blessed Argentine armaments in the Malvina's war.
- The ultra-orthodox Jews who provoke ultra-nationalistic and intolerant politics in Israel
- The Islamic terrorists who kill in the name of Allah.

*There is only one religion, the religion of love.
There is only one caste, the caste of humanity.
There is only one language, the language of the heart.
There is only one God, and He/She is omnipresent.
(Sai Baba, India, contemporary)⁴⁷*

⁴⁷ "The Religion of Love," in *Sólo Luz* (Only Light) by Albert Kusselman, No.4.

CHAPTER 7: WESTERN ATTEMPTS AT ANSWERS: SPIRITUALITY

*Show me a house / where His/Her light does not shine.
Show me a garden / where His/Her grace does not flourish.* ⁴⁸

Spiritualities and the Great Basic Existential Questions

Some of the great existential questions we saw in Chapter 3, were:

Why is there something rather than nothing? Why is the world this way, and not some other way? Who am I? What is the cause of my existence? How and from whence comes my consciousness? Why am I here? What happens to my consciousness when my physical body dies? Does my existence, and that of all humanity, have a meaning? How are we to understand all the marvelous and terrible things that co-exist in the world? Does the universe exist for a reason, or is it all just a matter of random chance?

These great questions rise up in every human being confronted with the mystery of existence, of change, and of the disappearance of things. Is it not possible to live without somehow answering to these questions. Everyone answers them in some form, whether implicitly (in one's own life) or explicitly.

Among the great Western attempts to answer these questions explicitly, we have mentioned science, which answers "how" the universe is; philosophy, which is concerned with "what" things are; and religion, which tells us "what to believe," and "how to behave."

On the other hand, from the dawn of its existence, long before the existence of science or philosophy, the human being attempted not so much to talk *about* the fundamental principle, as to communicate *with* it. They wouldn't approach it like an object of study, but as a living subject, an interlocutor.⁴⁹

The presence

*God is here / As certain as the air I breathe / As certain as the morning
Rises / As certain as I love him / And he loves me.*
"God is Here," (Christian tradition) ⁵⁰

When we speak to someone, we are not speaking to his/her body. We are speaking to a presence we perceive in others, beyond their bodies, with which we can dialog. In the same way, We also perceive a *presence of being* within ourselves, an intimate self, origin of our intention toward the others.

We will name "*spirituality*" that attitude that perceives an internal presence manifesting not only in human beings, but in everything.

⁴⁸ Djalal Ud Din Rumi, *En Brazos del Amado*, Translated by Alfonso Colodrón, (Spain: Arca de Sabiduría, 1998), 68.

⁴⁹ Martin Buber, *La Vie en Dialogue*, (Translated by Jean Loewenson-Lavi, Paris: Aubier, 1956), 12.

⁵⁰ Dances of Universal Peace in Spanish, No. 4

“ No creature lacks an interior life.”
(Meister Eckhart)⁵¹

The distinct spiritualities attempt to facilitate the life experience of this foundational presence in the universe, rather than formulating discursive questions about it. That living presence that is perceived to be animating the universe has been given many names in many different traditions, such as God, Allah, Jehovah, Viracocha, Saccidaananda, Physis,⁵² living fire, Cosmic Consciousness, Universal Being, and many others.

From here on, we suggest conventionally to use the term “spirit” for the vital universal presence and “soul” for the vital individual presences.

Soul and Spirit

The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. (John 3:8)

The term *spirit* comes from the Latin “spiritus” meaning breath; air. In Latin languages, the term “alma”, “âme” (*soul*), often used as a synonym of “spirit,” comes from the Greek “*autmé*” meaning blow, breath and “*atmós*” meaning vapor, which come both from the Sanskrit “*an*” which means to breathe, and “*aatman*” = breath, soul.

From the beginning of civilization, human beings noticed the binding correlation between breathing and life. The entrance of a baby into extra-uterine life is forced by provoking a cry, symptom of breathing. Breathing means living. For a hundred years, and even today, in absence of more exact technical methods, life is tested by placing a mirror beneath the nose of a person to see if it fogs up, or by placing a feather beneath the nostrils to see if it moves. On “expiration,” the ancients believed that with the last breath, the soul abandoned the body. That is why they used terms associated with this biological function to designate principles of life. As the air, the soul and the spirit are invisible and yet synonymous with life.

Spirit in Philosophy: Two Examples

*God is to be found in all things, and God works through all things.*⁵³
(Matthew Fox, USA, contemporary)

The Oxford Companion to Philosophy defines “spirit” as “a non-material intelligent power.” To Wilhelm G. F. Hegel (Prussia, 18th-19th Century), the Spirit is a living being, gifted with conscience, intelligence, and power, which creates things, simply by thinking them. This Spirit evolves, developing throughout time. Self-unfolding, and self-actualizing, it successively constitutes the worlds of Nature, individual self-consciousness and cultural self-consciousness, culminating in absolute self-consciousness, considered to be Hegel’s own system, which describes this process.

An example of a natural entity would be a tree, one of individual self-consciousness would be a human being, and one of cultural self-consciousness would be a nation.

“Satchidaananda”: with this term, the Upanishads⁵⁴ designate the spirit that animates the universe, which they considered gifted with sat (being), cit (conscience), and aananda (joy).

⁵¹ Matthew Fox, *The Reinvention of Work*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 300.

⁵² “That which grows.” (Greek)

⁵³ Matthew Fox and Rupert Sheldrake, *Ciencia y Espiritualidad*, Translated by: no mention. (Argentina: Kier, 1999), 36.

⁵⁴ Indian sacred texts, composed approximately between 1000 and 500 B.C. E.

Observing our universe, we could equally attribute to the spirit that animates it: liveliness, creativity, intelligence, violence, solidarity, wastefulness.

Religion and Spirituality

But the Spirit of God was moving over the waters. (Genesis 1:1)

Both religion and spirituality believe in a non-material realities that is in some form cause the material reality. But spirituality offers a more universalist vision: spirit is not seen as exclusively belonging to one sector of humanity.

In spirituality, belief is based upon life experience, instead of authority or dogma.

Positions Regarding the Spirit-World Relationship

All is within You and You are in every thing. You fill and move into everything; when everything was created, You were in everything. You were everything.
(Jewish Liturgical Song of Unity)

Spirit (the divine) and world can be considered as related in three different ways:

Immanence: The divine is within the world. Some examples of immanent spiritual traditions are pantheism⁵⁵, animistic religions, pagan pre-Christian and native aboriginal traditions. We also find immanence in the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza (Holland, 17th Century).

Transcendence: The divine is outside of the world. The Creation according to the Jewish-Christian Bible is an example of a transcendent conception of the Divine.

Immanence-Transcendence: The divine is simultaneously within and outside of the world. We find it, for instance in the Upanishads (India, 13th to 9th C. b.C.) and in the Bhagavad-Gîtâ (India, 6th to 4th C. b.C.)

*My manifest nature has an eightfold differentiation: earth, water, fire, air, ether, sensory mind, intelligence, and ego. Thus my lower nature. But understand, O Mighty-armed! That My different and higher nature is the self-consciousness and life-principle that sustains the cosmos.*⁵⁶
(Bahvavad-Gîtâ, VII:4,5)

⁵⁵ From the Greek "pan" ("all"), and "theos" ("god"): "God is in everything."

⁵⁶ Paramahansa Yogananda, *God talks with Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita*, Royal Science of God-Realization, (California: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1995), 669, 673.

CHAPTER 8: SPIRITUAL PARADIGMS CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

The worldview we hold makes a difference in how we relate to the world we live in. (Matthew Fox, USA, contemporary)⁵⁷

Spiritual Paradigms

A *paradigm* is a system of beliefs, values, and preconceptions through which we see the world, whether we are or not conscious of them. It is a worldview, a model regarding the totality of reality or about a sector of it. They are the “glasses” through which we look at the universe. They are statements previous to the observation of the universe, to which they give form and meaning.

An example of a paradigm about the world could be: “*Everything is matter.*” A paradigm about one’s own life could be: “*The most important thing is money.*” A paradigm about geometry would be: “*Space is plane.*”

Classification of Paradigms from a Spiritual Point of View

We will classify spiritual paradigms upon whether they consider the universe alive or inert.

A. An Inert Universe: Mechanistic Paradigms: the universe is compared to a giant machine: it is inert. Our bodies are machines. There are three variations:

*(In) the mechanistic vision of the world...the machine (is the) central image, the animals and the plants are like machines, and the human bodies are like machines. The work of science consists of finding out how these machines function...The mechanistic universe is inanimate and lacks purpose.*⁵⁸

Atheism. Neither the individual soul, nor the universal spirit exists. Everything is inert matter. Our consciousness is a by-product of this said matter. Though the conformations of the universe are the product of random chance, the final result is a huge machine.. An example of this conception can be found in communist materialism.

Deism: God is outside the world. He created it and put it in motion, and then ignored it. After creating the universe, God does not interact anymore with it. There is an individual soul, trapped within the body. Body and soul are different substances. This vision underlies Newton’s idea of a “clockmaker God”. (England, 17-18th Centuries)

Theism: There is a personal God creator and sustainer of the world, but transcendent to it. The individual soul exists: it is of a different nature than that of the body, finding itself enclosed within it, as if in a prison. The body is a foreign substance, even antagonistic, to the soul. God communicates with His creatures, and even modifies His work (the Universe is considered incapable of modifying itself), but always from “outside.” As an example, we can mention the Judeo-Christian Biblical tradition.

⁵⁷ Matthew Fox, *The Reinvention of Work*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 74.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

B. The Living Universe. Holistic Paradigms: The universe is a manifestation of and a part of a living spirit. The soul, the body, the material universe, and the universal spirit are distinct manifestations of one and the same reality, the spirit.

*The universe is an organism that is still growing and developing.*⁵⁹
(Rupert Sheldrake, a contemporary English biologist)

Pantheism: The universe and God are identical. The spirit is immanent to the world. Some examples of this paradigm could be: the animistic religions, pre-Christian paganism, native aboriginal traditions, Baruch Spinoza (17th century, Holland).

Panentheism: The universal spirit is in all things, and moreover, exceeds them. Said in another way, the universe is part of God, though not His / Her totality. The spirit is at once immanent and transcendent of the world. Our soul is part of that universal spirit.

Here we could name: the Bhagavad-Gita (sacred text of Hinduism, ca. 5th century B.C.) In general, all of the great mystics refer to panentheistic experiences, experiencing the divine as present inside and at the same time outside, everything.

The term “panentheism” was coined by the German K.C. F. Krause in 1828 as a designation for his own philosophy. Although elements of quasi-panentheism reach as far back as Plato’s *Laws*, it’s in the 19th Century German Idealism (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) and 20th Century “process” philosophy of Whitehead (England) that the doctrine receives systematic elaboration. Charles Hartshorne, a follower of Whitehead, provided the definitive theological analysis of panentheism, based upon the analogy of an organism (God) comprising individual semi-autonomous cells (all known and unknown elements constituents of reality).⁶⁰

Holistic spiritualities are panentheistic.

Characteristic Features of All Spiritualities

Inevitability

It is not possible to live without a spiritual paradigm about reality. In the same way we all have some type of answers to the great basic existentialist questions, we all select, explicitly or implicitly, by the very act of living, one spiritual paradigm. Even those who deny any spiritual reality, adopt a peculiar vital attitude before the “*factum*”⁶¹ of existence and of life.

The reason why we adhere to one spiritual paradigm rather to another is a mystery. Following our beliefs, we will ascribe it to our evolution stage, to our past lives, to Divine Grace, or simply to random chance.

Spiritual Paradigms: Attitudes Toward Life

*We must avoid at all costs the experience of the mysterious, because it represents a primitive state of mind, now surpassed by the civilized human. The clouds, the winds, dew, and lightning are simple physical phenomena in which the scientist finds no reason for marveling.*⁶²

Our spiritual beliefs, conscious or unconscious, will inevitably determine a certain attitude toward life, a vital “positioning” that will “color” our interior being, and our daily life.

⁵⁹ Matthew Fox and Rupert Sheldrake, *Ciencia y Espiritualidad*, Translated by: no mention. Argentina: Kier, 1999), 31.

⁶⁰ The New Encyclopedia Britannica, entry “panentheism.”

⁶¹ In Latin, “fact.”

⁶² Karen Armstrong, *Una Historia de Dios*, Translated by Ramón Alfonso Díez Aragón. Argentina: Paidós, 1995), 350.

For instance, someone who thinks that the universe is a giant inert machine will only see in life the meaning he/she pours into it, while someone who thinks that the universe is intelligent will frame his/her life's meaning in a significant universal context.

Integration

No matter what form of spirituality is adopted, by being a vital attitude, it will integrally involve every aspect of a person: body, energy, emotion, intellect, creativity, values, and family, social, and planetary relationships.

An Experiential Knowledge

Science and philosophy constitute a *discursively communicated knowledge*. The verbal-rational discourse (philosophy) or the description of experiments (science) allow for the appropriate transmission of knowledge by reader or listener.

The situation is quite different with spiritual statements, because just to be informed about a spiritual statement very seldom allows its appropriation by the reader or listener.⁶³ It stays "outside," as an (eventually) interesting information, regarding someone else's beliefs.

The truth or falsity of a spiritual statement can only be checked through one's own living experience.

The History of Spirituality vs. Strictly-Speaking Spirituality

The history of spirituality is an informative description of the distinct historical spiritualities that have developed over time and cultures. This intellectual academic study has its own validity, but should not be confused with an authentic spiritual practice. A spiritual practice involves the whole person, and its goal is to live spirituality. It is not enough to verbally repeat the different spiritual declarations. The academic and intellectual study never replaces the personal experience.

"Non-Repeatability"

A scientific experiment is repeatable: if certain particular conditions are repeated, the same effect should be obtained.

For example, water electrolysis: passing an electrical current through water, we obtain hydrogen and oxygen gasses.

Spirituality, on the other hand, does not achieve the required scientific *repeatability* of the experience. The repetition of the conditions of a spiritual experience, unlike a scientific one, does not guarantee that one would obtain the same effect. Each spiritual experience is unique and not repeatable, and, as we saw, scarcely communicable through discourse.

Not Progress But Appropriation

Science progresses: the different areas of scientific knowledge *progress* through time. Through the improvement of methodological instruments and investigations, some scientific knowledge falls into disuse, giving rise to other new ones, which in turn will run the course of their own destiny, being replaced by others, more precise and perfected. This speaks for the humility

⁶³ We are not talking of the non-informative use of language (poetic, artistic, or mystical, from the right hemisphere), which give rise to many significant levels of interpretation, also capable of provoking life experience.

and the honesty of the scientific spirit, which accepts its limitation and the finiteness of the human's knowledge of the world. Scientific knowledge is perfect-able.

Compared to scientific knowledge, *spiritual wisdom does not progress*. The great spiritual teachers of all traditions have been saying very similar truths – using different words – for thousands of years. Spirituality does not try to acquaint the “latest discovery” about God. Spirituality means experiencing through living, *incorporating*, making flesh in our own lives, the teachings of the ages.

Spirituality as Life Experience

The human body is a microcosm reproducing the universal macrocosm.
(Hermes Trismegistos, Egypt, circa 3000. B.C.)

A non-experienced spirituality would be pure “lip service” spirituality: it would not modify the quality of life. A living spirituality does, as much in our good moments as well as in our bad ones.

The distinctive mark of any spirituality is its experiment-ability (the prerequisite of experiencing it in the own life). So, a spirituality will not try to describe reality's foundation “from the outside” (because it will be unavoidably part of what it seeks to explain)⁶⁴, but to live it; to be one with it. We are part of the answer we are searching for. On contacting with the mystery of our own being, we will contact the mystery of all being.

*“The essential is invisible to the eyes.”*⁶⁵

The Different Spiritual Practices

*All of creation is a song of praise to God.*⁶⁶

We can mention Yoga, Kabala, Sufism, Christian mass, and spiritual exercises as examples of spiritual practices.

The different spiritual methods always aim to modify the usual state of conscience. This can be perceived as an alteration, a quieting, or as an enlargement. The usual state is only the tip of the iceberg of the total possibilities of human consciousness. The different spiritualities try to facilitate accessing the “rest of the iceberg,” the expanded consciousness that sleeps within all of us. In this expanded state of consciousness we will be able to access the basic existential answers we are searching for.

History has registered as having actually gone through spiritual experiences the “pioneers” of consciousness: mystics, masters, and saints from all traditions, who experimented answers in the realm of spirituality. So that their teachings may serve us, we should be able to relive their experiences, not just repeat them on a verbal, emotional or intellectual level.

⁶⁴ As we saw for reason (cf. p. 19)

⁶⁵ Antoine de Saint-Éxupéry, *Le Petit Prince*, 28th ed., (France: Gallimard, 1999).

⁶⁶ Fox, Matthew. *Original Blessing*. New Mexico: Bear & Company Publishing, 1983), 69.

CHAPTER 9: PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY THE UNMANIFEST THAT MANIFESTS AS UNIVERSE

In Him we live, we move and have our being. (Acts, 17:28)

An Opinion Regarding Holistic Spirituality

This spirituality is not based on a linear ladder like the patriarchal hierarchy of so many mainstream religious institutions, but is rather a spiral dance, a whirling movement towards the Unity of All. It is a tradition that is non-dualistic and believes in the goodness of the many and varied paths to the One...

The scientists of this cosmology are discovering that, indeed, the universe is filled with motion and mystery, that even an atom is mostly motion, a swirling nothingness that becomes. The human expression of this cosmic energy a sentient, conscious expression, and we are created to be co-creating. In the context of our work as individuals, re-inventing our concept of “work” from the perspective of creation spirituality means looking at our work as an integral part of the of the creation process...Our capacity to create is then seen as our greatest individual and social strength, our greatest communal responsibility and the fulfillment of our greatest human potential.⁶⁷

Principles of Holistic Spirituality

- 1) “Something” exists that is not an object; “Something” unmanifest manifests as the universe.
- 2) The universe is the manifestation of that “X.”

“Something” That is Not a Thing

He who is One, without any colour, by the manifold exercise of his power distributes many colours in his hidden purpose. Into Him is concentrated in the beginning and at the end the universe is gathered. (Shvetashvatara-Upanishad, IV, 1)⁶⁸

A *thing* is something that can be pointed out in the universe, for example: a chair, an idea, and a country. A synonym for the word “thing” could be “entity”⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ Beverly Fontaine, “The Re-creation of Social Work in the Light of Creation Spirituality,” (D. Min. Dissertation: Wisdom University, Oakland, CA 2003) 2-4.

⁶⁸ S. Radhakrishnan, ed. *The Principal Upanishads*, 3rd ed., Translated by S. Radhakrishnan. (USA: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1953. Reprint, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1992)., 731.

⁶⁹ “Entity” comes from the Greek term “*to on, ontos*,” gerund of the verb “to be.” Its literal translation would be “that which is being”, in Spanish “that which is.”

Manifestation

The manifest is that which can be pointed at, marked or indicated as distinguishable from the rest. Something can be pointed at when it is finite, when it possesses characteristics, qualities or features that differentiate it from other things.

The manifest universe is the whole of all things with their qualities, or the totality of all point-able things.⁷⁰

God cannot be “pointed at”, because pointing at It would mean It is a finite being; there would be things existing independent of God, which is oxymoronic. Nevertheless, we find this idea in many thinkers and believers. Let’s consider the following examples.

God is the light of the heavens and the earth. That light is like a bundle in which shines a lamp, a lamp located within a crystal, a crystal that looks like a brilliant star; that lamp is lit by the oil of a sacred tree, an olive tree that is neither from East nor from West, whose oil almost lights without touching the flame. It is light upon light. (Koran, 14:35)

A Supreme Entity as the Cause of the World

Returning to one of our basic existential questions: “Why does the universe exist?”, a possible answer could be looking for the cause or foundation of the universe among its own manifest things. Let’s look at two examples:

1. Tales of Miletus (Greece, 6th Century, B.C.E.)
Tales says that water is the original cause of beings – and for that he also demonstrated that the earth was on the water – possibly deriving this conception from observing that humidity is the nutrition of all things, and that even heat is generated in it and lives: now fine, this of which generate all things, is precisely their original cause.⁷¹
2. Theists follow the same scheme: They attribute the cause of the world to a “supreme entity”⁷² described as an anthropomorphic being with special powers, especially over things.

*Oh, Rudra, that with the aid of your kind mercies
may I reach one hundred winters,
Keep hostility away from us, keep away misery,
Drive away illnesses in all directions.*

*Oh Rudra, bearer of ray, you are, because of your influence,
the most prestigious of all beings, the strongest of the strong”*
Rg-Veda (India, 15th Century, B.C.E.) II, 33: “To Rudra”⁷³

According to our previous analysis, water and the anthropomorphic god have in common that both are “point-able at.” The divinity, in this case, belongs to the world of manifest things: for as special as It is, It is nevertheless a “thing,” a “something” manifest that possesses qualities.

⁷⁰ It is interesting to point out what “manifest” signifies etymologically: “caught with the hands in the dough”, and in the legislation of ancient Rome: the evidence of an act.

⁷¹ Rodolfo Mondolfo, *El Pensamiento Antiguo*, 6th ed., Vol 1, (Argentina: Losada, 1969), 41-42.

⁷² From the Greek, “theos,”: “privileged entity.”

⁷³ Juan Miguel De Mora, ed. *El Rig Veda*, Translated by Juan Miguel de Mora, (México: Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo, 1989), 145.

Idolatry

*The essential is invisible to the eyes.*⁷⁴

For Holistic Spirituality, no part of the manifest world could explain the manifest world. We are looking for nothing more nor less than the cause and origin of the universe; no element of it could achieve this role, because it would be part of what is to be explained⁷⁵. This would be, properly speaking, “idolatry.”

We call “idols”⁷⁶ any elements of the universe to which the power to explain, to cause, or give sense to, is conferred. We easily identify a stone statue or a gold one, as idols among people we designate as “primitive”. But our own Western culture also generates its own idols, for example: money, power, status, or a young and athletic body, all worldly elements that are, nevertheless, capable of determining the life of millions of people.

Something Non-Manifest that Manifests as Universe

Manifestation and Impermanence

The God without form takes a thousand forms in the eye of His creatures: / He is pure and indestructible; / His form is infinite and unfathomable. / He dances in ecstasy, and from his dance waves of form flower forth.

(Kabir, India, 15th Century)⁷⁷

No manifest thing is eternal. We see things, including our own body, appearing, changing, and disappearing. Manifest things emerge and disappear.

The only permanent constant is the process of manifestation itself. The Greek thinker Heraclitus (6th Century, B.C. E) stated in this sense, that nothing is “fixed” or immutable, except for the permanent process of change itself.

This world, the same for all beings, has not been created by any of the gods or men, but it always was, is, and will be, eternally alive fire, moderately lit and moderately extinguished. (Fragm. 30)⁷⁸

Reason cannot capture this change process: it can only indicate its various phases: it can take static pictures, but it cannot capture the process of change itself between one picture and the other.

Manifestation and Self-Causation

Only God possesses “isness.” For that reason all creation is in itself nothingness. All the creatures are merely nothing...The whole universe, compared to God, is nothing. (Meister Eckhart)⁷⁹

Medieval theology characterized God as “*causa-sui*,” as “self-caused” or self-created, while the rest of the world was not *causa-sui*.

⁷⁴ Antoine de Saint-Éxupéry, *Le Petit Prince*, 28th ed., (France: Gallimard, 1999).

⁷⁵ Cf. pp. 19 and 30.

⁷⁶ From the Greek “eidolon”: “that which is seen”

⁷⁷ Kabir. *Poemas Místicos*, Translated by: no mention, (Spain: Obelisco, 1989). 43.

⁷⁸ Rodolfo Mondolfo, *El Pensamiento Antiguo*, 6th ed., Vol. 1, (Argentina: Losada, 1969), 49.

⁷⁹ Matthew Fox, *Meditando con Meister Eckhart*, Translated by Ana Jachimowicz, (Argentina: Uriel Satori, 2003), 45.

No manifest element exists that has not had its initiation in time: all things began at a certain moment.

Things with qualities, then, are not self-created: because they weren't already there when they began. They could not have provoked their own existence, because they were non-existent.

On the other side, something that is "causa-sui" cannot be annihilated, because it possesses within itself, the cause of its very being. Any given thing, then, that begins in a certain moment, and ends in another, is not self-sustaining: it does not have within itself the cause of its own being.

The only thing then that is causa-sui is precisely not "a thing": it is the manifestation process itself of birthing qualities out of something that has no qualities.

The Process of Speaking as an Example of Manifestation

Let's consider what happens, for instance, when we speak. When we are speaking, we are not "reading" what we are saying. Our sentences are spontaneously generated from a generating center, which doesn't actually have words in it. It is a process of manifestation. We are generating phenomena (concepts, phrases, reasonings) out of nothing.

*"Searching within themselves the sages found in the not-being the link with being."*⁸⁰

The Structure of Reality According to Holistic Spirituality

The one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the inner self of all beings, the ordainer of all deeds, who dwells in all beings, the witness, the knower, the only one, devoid of qualities. (Upanishads)⁸¹

The general structure of the universe according to Holistic Spirituality can be then said in four ways:

1. There is an *unmanifest* power that *manifests* as the material universe.
2. There is a *non-pointable something* that manifests as the universe of *pointable things*.
3. There is *something without qualities* that generates things with qualities.
4. The existence of manifest things, that are not *causa-sui*, depend on something non-manifest that is *causa-sui*.

How do we come to this conclusion? We start from what is given, but seeing that this does not hold within it the origin of its own existence, and yet it still exists or happens, we deduce that something not manifest exists, with no temporal/spatial qualities, which does have within it the origin of its own existence, and which manifests as the universe we know.

This cosmic vision of Holistic Spirituality does not underestimate the given: Holistic Spirituality perceives, against all logic and common sense, the invisible (the spiritus, the air) behind or within the visible, the "Other" that is expressed in "this." The fact that this manifest reality, that surrounds us, be dependent on an unmanifest power that manifests in it, does not diminish its value, but rather gives it, quite in the contrary, its sacred and marvelously mysterious character. Holistic Spirituality considers the universe to be sacred, precisely *because* it is the

⁸⁰ Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, ed. *The Rig Veda*, Translated by Wendy Doniger O' Flaherty, (England: Penguin Books, 1981), 278.

⁸¹ S. Radhakrishnan, ed. *The Principal Upanishads*, 3rd ed., Translated by S. Radhakrishnan. (USA: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1953. Reprint, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1992). 746.

manifestation of that mysterious presence which, out of lack of a better name, we call "The Divine."

(God) is a light that cannot be compared to anything in nature; a light without form, without limit, without measure, a light that is pure and unchangeable, that interpenetrates everything that exists and that is always the same in all parts...
(Saint Rose of Lima, Peru, 16th Century)⁸²

⁸² Alicia Ortega, *La Mística y los Místicos*, (Argentina: Hypatia, 1979), 438.

**CHAPTER 10: PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY
GOD AS ACTIVITY**

The Names of God - According to Moslem tradition

1. The Modeler, (Al-Musawwir)
2. The Doer (Al-Bari)
3. The Creator (Al-Khaliq)
4. The Majestic (Al-Mutakabbir)
5. The Compeller (Al-Jabbar)
6. The Almighty (Al-Aziz)
7. The Protector (Al-Muhaimin)
8. The Giver of Peace (Al-Mu'min)
9. The Author of Security (Al-Salam)
10. The Saint (Al-Quddus)
11. The Sovereign (Al-Malik)
12. The Pious (Al-Rahim)
13. The Compassionate (Al-Rahman)
14. The All-Hearing (Al-Sami')
15. The Dishonoring (Al-Muzi'l)
16. The Reverence (Al-Mu'izz)
17. The Exalter (Al-Rafah)
18. The Abater (Al-Khafid)
19. The Expansive (Al-Basit)
20. The Contractor (Al-Qabiz)
21. The All-Knowing (Al-'Alim)
22. The Judge (Al-Fattah)
23. The Provider (Al-Razzaq)
24. The Grantor (Al-Wahhab)
25. The Dominator (Al-Qahhar)
26. The Forgiver (Al-Gaffar)
27. The Maintainer (Al-Muqit)
28. The Preserver (Al-Hafiz)
29. The Biggest (Al-Kabir)
30. The Sublime (A-Aliyy)
31. The Appreciator (Al-Shakur)
32. The All-Forgiving (Al-Ghafur)
33. The Great (Al-Azim)
34. The Patient (Al-Halim)
35. The Conscious (Al-Khabir)
36. The Subtle (Al-Latif)
37. The Just (Al-Adl)
38. The Judge (Al-Hakam)
39. The All-Seeing (Al-Basir)
40. The Trusted (Al-Wakil)
41. The Truth (Al-Haqq)
42. The Witness (Al-Shahid)
43. The Awakener (Al-Ba'ith)
44. The Noble (Al-Maajid)
45. He Who Loves (Al-Wadud)

46. The Sage (Al-Hakim)
47. The All-Embracing (Al-Wase')
48. The Responder (Al-Mujib)
49. The Vigilant (Al-Raqib)
50. The Generous (Al-Karim)
51. The Glorious (Al-Jalil)
52. The Accountant (Al-Hasib)
53. The Guide (Al-Haadi)
54. The Noble (Al-Maajid)
55. The Finder (Al-Wajid)
56. The Self-Sustaining (Al-Qayyum)
57. The Living (Al-Hayy)The Giver of Death (Al-Mumit)
58. The Giver of Life (Al-Mohyi)
59. The Restorer (Al-Muid)
60. The Initiator (Al-Mubdi)
61. The Bookkeeper (Al-Muhsi)
62. The Praise-Worthy (Al-Hamid)
63. The Friend Protector (Al-Wali)
64. The Firm (Al-Matin)
65. The Fountain of All Good (Al-Barr)
66. The Governor (Al-Waali)
67. The Manifest (Al-Zahir)
68. The First (Al-Awwal)
69. He Who Advances (Al-Muaqddam)
70. He Who is Able (Al-Qadir)
71. The One (Al-Wahid)
72. The Enricher (Al-Mughni)
73. He Who Harvests (Al-Jame)
74. Lord of Majesty and of Munificence (Dhul-Jalal Wal Ikraam)
75. Lord of the Reign (Malikul-Mulk)
76. The Forgiver (Al-Afuw)
77. He Who Accepts Repentance (Al-Tawwab)
78. The Guide (Al-Rashid)
79. The Everlasting (Al-Baqi)
80. The Orienter (Al-Haadi)
81. He Who Enjoys (An-Nafe)
82. The Strongest (Al-Qawi)
83. The Most Exalted (Al-Muta'ali)
84. The Hidden (Al-Batin)
85. The Ultimate (Al-Akhir)
86. The Delayer (Al-Mu'akhir)
87. The All-Powerful (Al-Muqtadir)
88. The Eternal (Al-Samad)
89. The Refuser (Al-Mane')
90. The Self-Sufficient (Al-Ghani)
91. The Equitable (Al-Muqsit)
92. The Merciful (Ar-Ra'uf)
93. The Avenger (Al-Muntaqim)
94. The Persevering (Al-Sabur)
95. The Heir (Al-Warith)
96. The Originator (Al-Badi)
97. The Light (Al-Nur)
98. The Afflicter (Ad-Darr)

99. He is God, there is no other God except Him (Hua Allah alladhi la ilaha illa hu)⁸³

The Names for God in Different Traditions

They call it Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni and it is the heavenly garutmat⁸⁴ that flies. The wise speak of what is One in many ways; they call it Agni, Yama⁸⁵, Maatarishvan.⁸⁶ (Rg-Veda, X, 164; "To the Vishvadeva"^{87,88})

The different traditions have given different names for the cause of all things, the unmanifest that manifests the universe:

- Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva: the three gods of the Hindu pantheon, which represent the principles of creation, conservation, and destruction, respectively.
- The thousand names of Vishnu
- Adonai, El, Elohim, Shaddai, El, Shedkinah, in the Jewish tradition
- Inti, Pachamama, Viracocha, in the Inca tradition
- Amón, Ra, in the Egyptian religion

The Impossibility of Naming God Informatively

The Informative Use of Language

In science and in every informational language, we use language to convey information. Language, in its informative use, always designates separate entities that are distinguishable, identifiable, with given attributes and qualities. Informative language cannot name something that has no qualities. In naming, we name a manifestation of the originating principle.

Some examples of names in informative language would be: dog, table, John.

There is no informative name adequate to name the unmanifest that manifests the universe. The originating principle, as unmanifest, cannot have qualities, and therefore, it cannot be named from an informative point of view. When we inform about something, it is always something manifest, something point-able at in the universe, something that possesses qualities. But the divine (understood as the unmanifest that brings about the universe) cannot be identified as a distinguishable entity within the universe: that would be an idol.⁸⁹

The Non-Informative Use of Language

On the other hand, an example of language being used in a non-informative way could be:

⁸³ Carl Ernst, *Sufismo*, (Spain: Oniro, 1999), 102-104

⁸⁴ A type of vulture

⁸⁵ God of the Dead. The first human being that died.

⁸⁶ He who gave fire to human beings: another name for Agni

⁸⁷ All the gods.

⁸⁸ Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, ed. *The Rig Veda*, Translated by Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, (England: Penguin Books, 1981), 80.

⁸⁹ See previous chapter.

*Waterfalls of turquoise madness
Cascade from the mantelpiece of my consciousness.*⁹⁰

A name or reference for God in a non-informative type of language could be: “*Ha Shem*” (The name), in the Jewish tradition. To name God is to name something that does not appear as such in the universe.

The ninety-nine names for God in the Moslem tradition, on the other hand, attempt to solve this dilemma, strongly suggesting there could be many more, none of them fulfilling the task. Particularly name No. 100, no-name at all, the real name of God.

In fact, the names of God in the different traditions are all simultaneously correct and incorrect. The human being has always attempted to name the nameless. We can consider the names for God from the different traditions as incorrect from the informative point of view, but correct from an allusive, metaphysical, or suggestive point of view.

Holistic Spirituality proposes respecting all names from all traditions, knowing that while no name is adequate for God, all help to experience It.

: In the Jewish tradition, there is a strong tendency to avoid naming God, based upon the fourth Commandment: “*Do not misuse My name. I am the Lord your god, and I will punish anyone who misuses my name.*” (Exodus, 20:7)⁹¹

Responding to the request of Moses, God says his own name in the Torah.⁹² The Jewish orthodoxy, however, avoids naming it, using paraphrases such as “the Tetragrammaton”⁹³ (referring to the Y, H, V, and the H that figure in the Old Testament), or “*Ha Shem* (“the name,” in Hebrew).

The Kabbalistic Concept of “Ein-Sof”

God is not a thing, a being, or a noun. It doesn't exist, as existence is defined, for It takes up no space and is not bound by time. Jewish mystics often refer to It as EIN SOF, which means Endlessness.

EIN SOF should never be conceptualized in any way. It should not be called Creator, Almighty, Father, Mother, Infinite, The One, Brahman, Buddhamind, Allah, Adonoy, Elohim, El or Shaddai; and never, never should be called He. It is none of those names; it has no gender.

When we call It “God,” what are we talking about? If we say that it is compassionate, full of loving kindness, the source of love, we may be talking about our image of what we think the divine nature ought to be, but we are not talking about EIN SOF. In the same way, if we say that the God portrayed in the Bible is vindictive, jealous, angry, cruel, uncaring, or punitive, we cannot be referring to EIN SOF...

Giving a name to the nameless creates stumbling block that trips most people. We think that if something has a name, it has an identity. An identity comes with attributes... Yet various names seep through because our minds cannot work without symbols...

⁹⁰ <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/david.cox101/jones/cosmic.html>

⁹¹ *The Bible: Contemporary English Version*, (London: HarpersCollins Publishers, 1991), Exodus, 20:7, 68.

⁹² *Ibid.*, Exodus, 3:14.

⁹³ “The four letters,” in Greek

Kabbalists teach that the very first line of Genesis has been mistranslated. Most people think it says: 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.' But the actual words in Hebrew can be read another way. A Kabbalist could say "With a beginning, [It] created God (Elohim), the heavens and the earth."⁹⁴

God as Activity or Process

*There was neither non-existence nor existence then...
That One breathed, windless, by its own impulse...⁹⁵*

Rabbi David Cooper continues by saying that if we want to persist with the grammatical metaphor, God could be better represented by a *verb* (dynamism), rather than by a *noun*.

EIN SOF is the not name of a thing, but is an ongoing process.⁹⁶

God is the very process of phenomena generation out of nothing.⁹⁷

The Human Being as an Activity or Process

Elohim created the human in His image, in the image of Elohim he created it: male and female He created them. (Genesis 1, 27)⁹⁸

*We are cells of the Radical Wonder.
(Connie Kaplan, contemporary, USA)*

It turns out that we too are spontaneous fountains of generation of being, for instance in the human activities of speech and dance.⁹⁹ Where is the center where movement comes from? From whence do the dancer generates the movements of arms and legs?

From this perspective, our biblical "image and likeness to God" can be understood as meaning that, in certain levels of reality, we share the divine faculty of generating things out of nothing. We call it creativity. That's how we can interpret too the famous statements of Advaita-Vedaanta: "*Brahman is Aatman*" and "*Aham brahmaasmi*" ("I am Brahman").

The foundation of God is my foundation...All of our works should come from this hidden foundation, without a why or wherefore. Then God and the soul together would fruitfully make their eternal work. (Meister Eckhart)¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ David A Cooper, *God is a Verb*. (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), 65-67

⁹⁵ Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, ed. *The Rig Veda*. Translated by Wendy Doniger O' Flaherty, (England: Penguin Books, 1981), X, 129, "Asadiya."

⁹⁶ David A. Cooper, *God is a Verb*. (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), 65-67.

⁹⁷ See note 14.

⁹⁸ Mordejai Edery, ed. *Génesis*, (Argentina: Fundación Cabuli, 1991), 11

⁹⁹ See p. 38.

¹⁰⁰ Matthew Fox, *Meditando con Meister Eckhart*, Translated by Ana Jachimowicz, (Argentina: Uriel Satori, 2003), 106.

CHAPTER 11: PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY GOD AS THE ORDER IN THE WORLD

Did you ever tell the sun to rise? / And did it obey?.../ Job, have you ever walked / on the ocean floor? / Have you seen the gate / to the world of the dead? / And how large is the earth? / Tell me, if you know! / Where is the home of light / and where does darkness live?...Have you been to the places / where I keep snow and hail, / until I use them to punish / and conquer nations? / From where does lightning leap? Who opened the valleys so that torrents of rain could run through them? Who carves out a path / for thunderstorms?... Can you arrange the stars in groups / such as Orion and the Pleiades? Do you control the stars / or set in place the Great Bear / and the Little Bear? Do you know the laws / that govern the heavens, / and can you make them rule the earth?...And when starving young ravens / cry out to me for food, / do you satisfy their hunger? When do mountain goats / and deer give birth? / Have you been there / when their young are born? / How long are they pregnant / before they deliver?...Who set wild donkeys free? (Job, 38:12-39:5, 505-6)¹⁰¹

Principles of Holistic Spirituality

5. "X" orders all things.

Seasons pass. Day follows night. Pear trees give pears, and nothing else. The species do not crossover. Human beings change their teeth only once in their life. The teeth of the gnawers, on their side, grow according to need. Order manifests in the cosmos. Science studies its laws. One example of scientific law could be the law of conversion between material and energy, formulated by Albert Einstein: $E=mc^2$.¹⁰²

Order manifests as a system of elements related by stable relationships. In the physical world, a bunch of invariable laws¹⁰³ rule the functioning of things, assuring the persistence of forms. In this universe, the persistence of forms is based upon the existence of structures (elements plus relationships).

It is impossible to imagine, in this world, an order with no parts (distinguishable unities, "singularities").

Cosmos

With the word "cosmos" we designate the whole of the universe. But, etymologically, in Greek it means "order." The Greeks did not conceive of a "creatio ex nihilo" as the Jews and Christians do. They postulated a preexisting matter, with no form, which they called "chaos."

¹⁰¹ *The Bible: Contemporary English Version*. (London: HarpersCollins Publishers, 1991).

¹⁰² E=energy, m=mass, c=speed of light.

¹⁰³ However, contemporary English biologist, Rupert Sheldrake, prefers to speak about "habits" of Nature that may change.

Before all things, there was Chaos.
(Hesiod, Greece, 6th century B.C.E)¹⁰⁴

Later, a demiurge (a non-creating god, an artisan) ordered this formless chaos, inserting characteristics, objects, and laws of functioning, and so transforming it into “cosmos.”

Inserting “order” into “chaos” means inserting determinations, characteristics, qualities. A universe with no quality would be impossible to describe, because there would be nothing to name, nothing to distinguish, nothing to point to. Language is a witness to order in the universe. If a certain persistence of form did not exist, if everything were in eternal dissolution of one form into another, or, moreover, if no form at all surged into being, there wouldn't be concepts capable of naming anything (moreover, there wouldn't be any “namer”).

Chance

Chance is the absence of cause.

According to holistic spirituality, the laws of the universe were produced by a cosmic intelligence. It seems suspicious that quartz crystals, roses, life, consciousness, or the planets and galaxies could have arisen “by chance.”

I planted the seeds, and Apolos watered them, but it was God who made them bud and grow. (1 Cor. 3:6)

David Bohm¹⁰⁵: Implicit Order and Explicit Order

Bohm named “explained,” “unfolded” or “explicit” order, that order we observe in the universe. But he added the novelty of considering this order to be the unfolding, the development of an order that was previously found “implicit” or “implied” in the universe. In the words of Bohm, himself:

The word “implicit” is a participle of the verb “implicate,” which means ‘to fold inward’...(Let us consider) some examples of “folded” or “implied” order. So, in an emission of television, the visual image translates to a temporary order ‘transported’ by radio waves. The points that are near in the visual image are not needed to be in the order of the radio signal. So, the radio wave transports the visual image in an implied order. The function of the receptor is, then, to explain this order, that is to say, ‘unfold it’ in the form of a new visual image.

A more surprising example of implied order can be demonstrated in the laboratory with a transparent container, full of very viscous fluid, such as molasses, and equipped with a mechanical rotor capable of ‘moving’ the fluid very slowly, but in all its volume. If we let fall in the fluid one drop of insoluble ink, it will gradually transform into a filament extending throughout the fluid. It will finally look like it was distributed more or less ‘by chance’, looking like a certain gray shadow. But if we make the moving mechanical rotor turn in the opposite direction, the transformation will be the inverse, and the drop of dye will suddenly appear, reconstituted...

Even though the ink was apparently haphazardly distributed, it had nevertheless a certain type of order different, for instance, from the one obtained in another drop put at the beginning in another position. This order is folded or implied in the ‘gray mass’ that was visible in the fluid...

*Speaking in general, physical laws have referred until now principally to explained order.*¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Rodolfo Mondolfo, *El Pensamiento Antiguo*, 6th ed. (Argentina: Losada, 1969), 18. (., Theogony, 113 and ss.)

¹⁰⁵ Quantum physicist, Germany, 20th Century. Former collaborator with Einstein, taught Theoretical Physics at the universities of London, Princeton, Sao Paulo, and Haifa.

Using holistic spirituality words, we could analogize the “explained order” to the manifest universe, and the “implied order” to the Divine Intelligence that governs its functioning.

Human Intelligence and Cosmic Intelligence

Intelligence (helped by the senses) is the human faculty that permits the discovery and the formulation of the laws that rule the functioning of the universe.

Human intelligence and cosmic intelligence must have then something in common, because using the first, we are able to comprehend the second. The different traditions express this by saying that our intelligence is a microcosmic manifestation of the Macrocosmic intelligence (the implicit plan that rules the explicit universe).

In a world without order, internal intelligence, or laws, there would be no distinguishable form, because none of them that hypothetically could emerge would be able to last. No structure would be able to last without stable relationships between its elements.

Sector and Totality

The sublime, inner essences secretly constitute a chain linking everything from the highest to the lowest, extending from the upper pool to the edge of the universe. There is nothing –not even the tiniest thing– that is not fastened to the links of this chain.

(Moses de Leon, Spain, XIIIth Century) ¹⁰⁷

For Holistic Spirituality, in each sector of the universe the whole is present.¹⁰⁸ In a chunk of bread, for example, the earth, the sun, the rain, wheat, the metal of the harvest machinery, and the people who intervened in the various stages of its fabrication are implicitly present. In fact the whole universe and its history are present in a chunk of bread.

Human beings possess the capacity to “see” the whole in the part. We cannot conceive an element of the universe isolated from the rest. All things and events of the universe are inter-related.

Every time we bathe ourselves or take a shower, we look at our body and think that it is a gift of our parents, and of the parents of our parents...Being in full contact with the present moment, we can see that they are present in us, all our ancestors, no less than the future generations. (Thich Nhat Hanh)

The “Order of the Interlaced Being”

One of the ways of passing through the doors of birth and death is to meditate on the fact that our own being is separate from nothing...The thread of life has never been cut from time immemorial until today. In this moment all the past generations are present in your hands, even the unicellular beings. You can

¹⁰⁶ David Bohm, *La Totalidad y el Orden Implicado*, Translated by Dominica Guthman, ed., (Kairós, 2^a ed. 1990), 210, 211.

¹⁰⁷ (Pirke Avot, Teachings of the Fathers, 6:2)

¹⁰⁸ Mel Bricker, D.Min added the following remark in a personal letter: This happens in holographic photography. If you take the negative of such a photo and cut it up and then reproduce one piece, the original whole photo appears. The whole is present in each part.

observe it and experience it: your hand will always be available to you as a subject of meditation. (Thich Nhat Hanh)¹⁰⁹

In 1964, Thich Nhat Hanh (a Vietnamese, 20th Century Buddhist monk) and a group of other monks founded a new Buddhist order, the “Order of The Interlaced Being,” based upon the recognition that the existence of every thing rests upon the existence of all the rest.

I arise today / through the strength of heaven:/ light of the sun, / radiance of the moon, / splendor of fire, / speed of lightning, / swiftness of wind, / depth of sea, / stability of earth, / firmness of rock.” (Celtic Spirituality)¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Thich Nhat Hanh, *Momento Presente, Momento Maravilloso*, Translated by Annabel Laity and Leandro Wolfson, (Argentina: Errepar, 1992), 28-29.

¹¹⁰ Matthew Fox, *One River, Many Wells*, p. 45.

CHAPTER 12: PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY THE SACRED UNIVERSE

“All the world is holy, and so is all the body.” (Matthew Fox)¹¹¹

*The truly wise person kneels at the feet all creatures.
(Mechtild of Magdeburg, Germany, 13th Century)¹¹²*

Review of the Principles of Holistic Spirituality Seen So Far

1. Something exists that is not a thing. “Something” unmanifest that is manifest in things.
2. The universe is the manifestation of “X.”
3. This “X” is given different names by many different traditions. All the names are worthy and incorrect at the same time.
4. This “X” is a spontaneous center of the activity of being.
5. This “X” puts in order everything.

Principles of Holistic Spirituality

6. Because it is the manifestation of this “X”, we call the universe “sacred.”
The total universe is a hierophany.

All is in you and you are in all things. You fill and you encompass everything; when everything was created, you were in everything; before everything was created, you were everything.
(Unity Song, Jewish Liturgy)

All spiritualities consider the universe as a manifestation of something, an “X,” a reality that transcends the universe, but that is revealed in it. The universe does not run out in itself; it doesn’t sustain itself: it rather reveals a power behind it. Seen this way, the universe takes on for us a quality that has been traditionally named by religions, as “the sacred.”

We will call “sacred”¹¹³ everything that manifests, reveals, or indicates the divine or the mysterious. The sacred constitutes an “extra meaning” of things, related to the divine.

Dualistic Conceptions of the Sacred

A dualistic spiritual conception will consider that certain objects are sacred and others are not.

Some of the things considered sacred in our society are:

Objects: the host, the scrolls of the Torah

Spaces: the altar, the holy sanctuary, the church

¹¹¹ Matthew Fox, *One River, Many Wells*, (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2000), 45.

¹¹² Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing*, (New Mexico: Bear & Company Publishing, 1983), 69.

¹¹³ From *sacrum* (Latin): “object of worship.”

Times: religious festivals, the Sabbath

Every other object, space, or time, is called profane,¹¹⁴ deprived of sacredness. Within the profane, some are considered morally neutral, while others are considered diabolical, sinful, or evil.

If we consider human actions, a profane neutral action would be walking, and profane sinful actions would be luxury, gluttony, mixing milk and meat in Judaism.

Spiritual Paradigm

The whole of things we consider sacred, or profane represent possible ways of considering the world, attitudes about life, ways of being in the world. They constitute our spiritual paradigm.

A *paradigm* is a system of beliefs, values, and preconceptions through which we see the world, whether we are conscious of it or not. It is a cosmic vision, a model regarding the totality of reality or a sector of it. They are the “spectacles” through which we look at the universe. They are statements previous to the observation of the universe, which they constitute (or determine).¹¹⁵

Holistic Spirituality: Total Hierophany

Seize God in all things, because God is in all things.

(Meister Eckhart)¹¹⁶

From a holistic spiritual view, everything manifests divinity; all is sacred. Nothing is “outside the temple”: the whole universe is a huge temple for us to “con-temple”. Holistic Spirituality opts to consider the cosmos as sacred, *hierophanic*.

Hierophany

*God encompasses everything, including contradictions. God is coincidence and overcoming of all opposition. (German mystic Nicolas of Cusa, 15th C)*¹¹⁷

The term “hierophany” comes from the Greek words “hieros” (sacred) and “phainein” (to reveal, show, bring to light). The display or revelation of the sacred is called “hierophany.”

Partial Hierophany: Spiritual Dualism

In a dualistic conception of the universe, hierophany is partial. Only part of the universe is hierophanic. The rest is profane.

No Hierophany: A Desacralized Cosmos

In a paradigm of no hierophany, nothing is sacred: everything is profane, secular. Mircea Eliade refers to this as “a desacralized conception of the world.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ From “*pro-fano*” (Latin): *pro-* “in front of” + *fano*, “temple.” Literally, “outside of the temple.” It refers to all persons not allowed in the temple (with the initiated).

¹¹⁵ See page 27.

¹¹⁶ Matthew Fox, ed. *Passion for Creation: The Earth-Honoring Spirituality of Meister Eckhart*, (Rochester, USA: Inner Traditions International, 2000), 67.

¹¹⁷ Alicia Ortega, *La Mística y los Místicos*, (Argentina: Hypatia, 1979), 391.

¹¹⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Lo Sagrado y lo Profano*, 9th ed., (Colombia: Labor, 9^a ed., 1994), 20.

The cultures called “primitive” lived and live in a sacralized cosmos that is so manifest in the animal world, as in the vegetable and mineral. The human being of modern societies lives in a desacralized world.

For the modern inhabitant of our cities, the city or the house, nature, the utensils or the work, are just what they are and nothing more. They do not connect to anything outside of their own being. Their meaning runs itself out there.

*For modern consciousness, physiological acts, like for instance: eating, and sex, are no more than organic processes, no matter how many taboos inhibit them...*¹¹⁹

*The completely desacralized cosmos is a recent discovery of the human spirit...Desacralization characterizes the total experience of the non-religious man of modern societies. (Mircea Eliade)*¹²⁰

Science and Atheism

*The universe is the primary revelation of the divine, the primary Scripture, the primary locus of the divine-human communion. (Thomas Berry, contemporary cosmologist, USA)*¹²¹

In “primitive” societies, science and religion are not separated. The priest or shaman is also “the one who knows,” for example, which herbs cure illnesses. The separation of science and religion begins in the West in the 17th century. Although Descartes as well as Newton include God in their cosmological views, they give Him/Her a role of “deus ex machina” that prepares the posterior desacralized vision of nature. From that point on, a “scientific” vision of the world was seen to be necessarily atheistic.

The Meaning of Existence

*“The irreligious man rejects transcendence, going as far as to doubt the meaning of existence...Modern Western societies have totally developed the irreligious man.”(Mircea Eliade)*¹²²

Etymologically, the word “transcendent” means, “that which is outside,” and from there it went on to mean “that which is important.” Here Mircea Eliade refers to the spiritual, the divine, that which goes beyond the manifest universe.

An existence makes “sense” when it is not exhausted in itself, is not complete or finished, but rather evolutionarily projected toward something outside of itself, or of its actual state of being.

If the universe is considered sacred, nothing changes, except it gains gains sense: my life gains meaning. It makes sense to take care of the planet; it makes sense to take care of myself and of others. It makes sense to realize the project that is my life. I see myself immersed in a network of meaning.

*To my way of seeing, life has a sacred quality, and it has been the pathology of civilizations that separated sacred acts from profane ones. This pathology ended by desacralizing daily life, and charging with transcendent contents the obsessive rituals that rose up to escape the cosmic fear. (Rolando Toro, Chile, contemporary)*¹²³

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 20.

¹²¹ Matthew Fox, *Meditando con Meister Eckhart*, Translated by Ana Jachimowicz (Argentina: Uriel Satori, 2003), 36.

¹²² Mircea Eliade, *Lo Sagrado y lo Profano*, 9th ed., (Colombia: Labor, 9^a ed., 1994), 170-171.

¹²³ www.biodanza.org/es

“Cosmic fear” describes to the human sentiment when comparing our own smallness and finite nature with the immensity of the universe. Examples of “obsessive rituals to escape the cosmic fear” could be the routines of our society that impede thought (stressful work, any activity, as watching television, exercising, working or playing on the computer, done compulsively).

In a nutshell, we’ve just considered three spiritual paradigms:

- Holistic: Total hierophany. (Holistic spirituality, aboriginal traditions).
- Dualistic: Partial hierophany. (Big institutional Western religions).
- Desacralized: No hierophany. (Western science).

CHAPTER 13: PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY
PANENTHEISM I: DIVINE IMMANENCE

*In this earth vessel, there are bowers and forests, and within them is the Creator.
 / In this vessel are the seven oceans and the countless stars. /The touchstone
 who values and arrange the jewels is inside: and in this vessel the Eternal
 sounds and the fountain flows. Kabir says: Listen my friend, My beloved Lord is
 in the vessel (15th century Indian mystic Kabir).¹²⁴*

Principles of Holistic Spirituality

- 7) Panentheism: The divine is present in all things (immanence), and also outside of all things (transcendence).¹²⁵

Divine Immanence

*I state that God is immanent and not exterior, as the cause of everything.
 (Baruch Spinoza, 17th century, Holland)¹²⁶*

“Immanent” means “within.”The concept of “divine immanence” alludes to the belief that God is present in the totality of the universe.

If we use the term “God” for the power of being that makes everything exist, we won’t be able to conceive anything in the world in which God (the power of being) would be absent. If God, the power of being, removes itself from something, the thing immediately disappears.

*No creature has being, because the being of all depends on the
 presence of God. If God were to turn his back on them for an instant,
 they would be annihilated. (Meister Eckhart)¹²⁷*

In Chapter 12 we said that holistic spiritualities consider the universe to be a hierophany in its totality. Any holistic spirituality considers that God is immanent in the universe. It perceives God in all things:

*My Beloved the mountains,
 the wooded solitary valleys,
 the strange islands,
 the sonorous rivers,*

*The peaceful night
 along with the rising of the dawn
 the quiet music,
 the clear sound of solitude,*

¹²⁴ Kabir, *Poemas Místicas*, Translated by: no mention, (Spain: Obelisco, 1989), 22.

¹²⁵ In Chapter 8 we touched superficially on this subject. In this workshop and in the following one we look more deeply into it.

¹²⁶ Alicia Ortega, *La Mística y los Místicos*, (Argentina: Hypatia, 1979), 468.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 319.

the whistle of loving tunes,

*the supper that amuses and causes to fall
in love.”*

(St. John of the Cross, Spain, 16th Century)¹²⁸

Spiritual Monism

*(God) is a light that cannot be compared to any thing in nature; light
without form, without limit, without measure, a light that is pure and
unchangeable, that penetrates all that exists and is always the same
everywhere...*
(Saint Rose of Lima, Peru, 16th century)¹²⁹

The word “monism” derives from the Greek “monos,” which means “one.” A monistic conception of reality will therefore consider that all of reality is composed on one same substance, or, in other words, that reality is the expression of one sole principle.

A spiritual monistic conception will consider that the universe is a manifestation of one unique principle, called “spirit.”

Go inside.

Listen the story of dawn from the Sun himself.

If there were no dawn inside,

I would have set long ago!

(Rumi, Turkey, 13th Century)¹³⁰

So we have till now three expressions, in this chapter and in the last, that apply to the paradigm of Holistic Spirituality:

- a total hierophany
- the belief in divine immanence
- a spiritual monism

In a holistic spirituality, everything is impregnated with God: everything is sacred.

*I see men and all creatures as forms delimited by the skin, moving the
heads, feet, hands, and legs of God Itself... I truly see that the Absolute has
become all things.*
(19th century Indian mystic Shri Ramakrishna)¹³¹

Spiritual Dualism

On the other hand, dualistic conceptions of the universe believe that two different principles constitute the universe.

René Descartes (France, 17th Century)¹³², for instance, considered that the world was composed of two different substances, one that occupied space (matter), and another, non-spatial (thought).

Speaking of spiritual paradigms, we will call “spiritual dualism,” the concept that God dwells in some things but not in others: in other words, that some things are sacred and others

¹²⁸ Gerald Brenan, *San Juan de la Cruz*, Translated by Jaume Reig, (Spain: Plaza y Janés 2000), 177-8.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 428.

¹³⁰ Djalal Ud Din Rumi, *En Brazos del Amado*, Translated by Alfonso Colodrón, (Spain: Arca de Sabiduría, 1998), 149.

¹³¹ Patrick Ravignat, *Los Locos por Dios*, Translated by María Inés Taulís, (México: Gali, 1992), 105-106.

¹³² René Descartes, *Méditations, Oeuvres et Lettres*. (Belgium: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1966), 276..

not. In “spiritual dualism” there are things from which God is absent, or “less present.” There are “good things,” full of Divine Presence, and there are “bad things,” devoid, or “less full” of Divine Presence.

It seems that the great saints of that epoch looked at the world and at God as irreconcilable opposites: in order to achieve salvation, one had to renounce the world and all natural affects. Vincent de Paul (France, 17th Century) who lived a life of charity and doing good works, asked God to rid him of his love for his parents. Jeanne Françoise de Chantal (France, 17th Century), founder of the Visitation Order, stepped on the prostrate body of her son, who had thrown himself across the threshold to stop her, when she left home to join the convent.¹³³

Vincent de Paul and Jeanne de Chantal can be called “spiritual dualists”, because both of them considered the world and natural fondness to be opposite to the sacred and the divine.

In holistic spiritualities, on the contrary, not only are God and the world not two irreconcilable opposites, but the world is the expression or the manifestation of God. God, understood as the power of being, cannot be “more” or “less” present in something, There cannot be a major or minor presence of God. Something “is” or “is not.” Nothing can exist “a little.” God is or is not present in something. If It is not present, the thing in question does not exist. And if the thing exists, it’s because God is present in it. Something cannot exist and at the same time, lack divine presence, because by definition, we call “God” the power that sustains the universe.

This center, this source, is, then, everywhere. Precisely because It is infinitely deep and punctiform, God is infinitely near and expanded everywhere. Precisely because It is the center, It occupies the entire sphere.
(Jesuit biologist Teilhard de Chardin, France, 20th Century)¹³⁴

God Within Us

The outward work will never be small if the inward one is big.
(Meister Eckhart, 13th C)¹³⁵

For holistic spiritualities, God also lives within human beings. The divine is present in all things, also within us. We are all carriers and expressions of the divine.

No human being could be ugly, unworthy, or less valuable than others. As manifestations of the sacred universe, we all possess dignity and beauty, and are sacred.

It happened that I had an ignorance at first, that I didn't know that God was in all things...It seems to me that this vision is beneficial to those with inner life, to teach them to consider the Lord deep in their soul . . .and this is very clearly better, that it's not necessary to go to heaven, nor any further than ourselves...
(Spanish mystic Saint Teresa of Jesus, 16th century)¹³⁶

¹³³ Karen Armstrong, *Una Historia de Dios*, Translated by Ramón Alfonso Díez Aragón, (Argentina: Paidós, 1995), 332.

¹³⁴ Alicia Ortega, *La Mística y los Místicos*, (Argentina: Hypatia, 1979), 571.

¹³⁵ Matthew Fox, *The Reinvention of Work*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 58.

¹³⁶ Alicia Ortega, *La Mística y los Místicos*, (Argentina: Hypatia, 1979), 418.

CHAPTER 14: PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY
PANENTHEISM II: DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE

*God hugs you.
 You are encircled by the arms
 of the mystery of God.*¹³⁷
 (Hildegard of Bingen, Germany, 11th century)

8. Panentheism: The divine is present in all things (immanence), and also outside of them (transcendence).

Divine Transcendence

Causa-Sui

Oh Lord, what a great variety of life you have made! / And with what wisdom you have made everything! The earth is full of your treasures. / Before me stretches the powerful ocean, full of all kinds of beings, large and small. / And look! I see the ships that come and go! And over there the whale you made to play in the ocean. / All of them await from you their daily bread. / You give it to them, and they receive it. You open your prodigal hand to feed them, and they are satisfied by your generous provisions.
 (Psalm 104, 24-28)¹³⁸

We call “spirituality” that attitude that perceives an internal presence manifesting itself in the universe.¹³⁹ Both religion and spirituality believe in an immaterial reality that in some way is the cause of material reality.¹⁴⁰

Here we will consider those two levels of reality from the viewpoint of *causality*.

A phenomenon A is the cause of phenomenon B when the existence of B depends upon the existence of A.

For example, the rotation of the Earth on its axis causes the succession of days and nights.

Now, upon what is the existence of the Earth itself dependent? A spiritual or religious paradigm will answer:

No creature has being, because the existence of all creatures depends on the presence of God. If God turned his back on them for one instant, they would be annihilated.
 (Meister Eckhart)¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing*, (New Mexico: Bear & Company Publishing, 1983), 89.

¹³⁸ André Chouraqui, ed., *Le Cantique des Cantiques, suivi des Psaumes*, Translated by André Chouraqui, (France: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), 230.

¹³⁹ Cf. *supra* p.24.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *supra* p.26.

This quotation defines God as the power that makes things be. Things, unlike that which we call “God,” do not have the power of their own existence. Things are not their own causation. God is as much the cause of Itself as It is of other things. In Medieval theology, this was expressed by describing God as *causa-sui*,¹⁴² while the world was not considered to be *causa-sui*.

Based upon this definition, “God” and “Things” respectively can be qualified as:

- God: causa-sui, independent, self-sustaining
- Things: not causa-sui, dependent, not self-sustaining

By definition, things are manifest, i.e. perceptible through the senses (external or internal). On the other hand, God (self-sustainability) is unmanifest or unmanifest? Theologies, religions and spiritualities through the ages have provided two large groups of responses:

Self-Sustainability is Manifest: Partial Divine Transcendence

For the conceptions that consider that the self-sustainable is manifest, divinity is seen as one thing within the universe with a very special relationship to the rest of things: being the cause of the existence of everything else.

This is what is called “theism.”¹⁴³ God is the “supreme entity,” a “thing,” a “something” manifest with qualities, that is the cause of the existence of everything else. As we have already seen¹⁴⁴, the term “transcendent”, from a philosophical point of view, means “outside.”

In this conception, we could speak of a “partial” transcendence of God in respect to the universe, because although the divine is seen as different from the rest of the existing things, It continues, nevertheless, to be manifest.

People stayed at a distance; however, Moses approached the dense cloud where Elohim was. (Exodus, 20:18)¹⁴⁵

Self-Sustainability as Not Manifest: Total Divine Transcendence

For the conceptions that see self-sustainability as something not-manifest, God cannot be one more thing within the universe.

[God] cannot be any of the existing things: It is rather previous to everything that exists. (Greek philosopher Plotinus, 3rd C.)¹⁴⁶

Because the nature of God, the power that creates things, is different from the nature of a thing, It is “transcendent” (it is not a “thing”: it is “outside” the whole of the manifest universe). It makes more sense here to speak of a total transcendence of God to the world, because being unmanifest in nature; God does not belong to the manifest world.

The essential is invisible to the eyes. (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)¹⁴⁷

Neti, neti. (“not this,” “not this”)

¹⁴² In Latin: “cause of itself.”

¹⁴³ Cf. supra p.27.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Supra p.30.

¹⁴⁵ Mordejai Edery, ed. *Exodo*, Translated by Mordejai Edery, (Argentina: Fundación Cabuli, 1984), 199.

¹⁴⁶ Plotinus, quoted in Frederick Copleston, *Historia de la Filosofía*, Translated by José Manuel García de la Mora, (Spain: Ariel, 1969), Vol. I, 456.

¹⁴⁷ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*, 28th ed., (France: Gallimard, 1999).

(Bṛhad-Aaranyaka-Upanishad, IV, 2,4, India, 7th Century B.C. E.)¹⁴⁸

The divine is nothing that can be found in the world. The divine is the radical “other one” that is expressed in “this one.” From this point of view, the divine is totally transcendent to things.

*We are in God
and God, whome we do not see,
is in us.*
(English mystic Julian of Norwich, 14-15th Centuries)¹⁴⁹

Review: Sacredness and Transcendence

*Love all creation./ The whole and every grain of sand in it.
Love every leaf,/ and every ray of light.
Love the plants./Love the animals.
Love everything./ If you love everything
you will perceive the Divine Mystery/ in all things.”*
(Russian writer Fedor Dostoevsky, 19th Century)¹⁵⁰

*As the Creator loves His creation,
Creation loves the Creator.
Creation of course, was fashioned to be adored,
To be showered, to be gifted with the love of the Creator. The entire world has been
embraced by this kiss. God has gifted Creation with everything that is necessary.*
(German mystic Hildegard of Bingen, 13th Century)¹⁵¹

Everything that manifests, reveals, or indicates the divine or the mystery is considered sacred. The sacred constitutes an “extra meaning” related to the divine.¹⁵²

The universe is sacred because it refers to a power “behind” or “within” itself, of which it is manifestation, vehicle, and testimony. The visible is a sign of the invisible. We give to that power “behind” or “within” what is manifest the names of Spirit, God, the mystery, the Ein Sof, the absolute, the Being, all the (inadequate) names for God.

In the sixth principle of Holistic Spirituality, we called the universe “sacred” for being the manifestation of that “X.” The entire universe is a hierophany.¹⁵³ By calling it “sacred” we mean to underline that it is a signal for something radically different from itself. In that sense, the divine is totally transcendent to the world. This world is the manifestation of something ontologically different from itself.

*He is not male, not female, nor eunuch
He cannot be seen: He is not existent, nor non-existent,
He assumes the form in which devotees desire to see Him:
He is not of such form,
It is extraordinarily difficult to speak of Him.*
(Indian religious poet Nammaalvaar, 10th Century)¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸S. Radhakrishnan, ed. *The Principal Upanishads*, 3rd ed., Translated by S. Radhakrishnan. (USA: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1953. Reprint, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1992), 254.

¹⁴⁹ Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing*, (New Mexico: Bear & Company Publishing, 1983), 107.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵¹ Matthew Fox, *One River, Many Wells*, (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2000), 33.

¹⁵² Cf. *supra* p.45.

¹⁵³ Cf. *supra* p. 50.

¹⁵⁴ K. R. Sundararajan and Bithika Mukerji, eds., *Hindu Spirituality II: Postclassical and Modern*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), Vol II, p.102.

Panentheism

God created all things, in such a way that they are not outside himself, as ignorant people falsely imagine. Rather, all creatures flow outward, but nonetheless remain within God.
(Meister Eckhart)¹⁵⁵

In the previous chapter we analyzed the divine immanence in the manifest world. In this chapter we saw its total transcendence. We find ourselves, then, confronting a contradictory situation for human reasoning: the simultaneity of the divine immanence and transcendence in the manifest universe.

Matthew Fox reclaimed the krausistic term “panentheism” for this situation.¹⁵⁶

*God is in everything and everything is in God.*¹⁵⁷

The majority of mystics that have experienced God report this rationally contradictory situation. They say that the divine is in all things, but also, outside them.

He is in me, His servant, He is in my body. He is the soul of the universe. He is outside the universe.
(Indian religious poet Nammaalvaar, 10th Century)¹⁵⁸

Panentheism affirms simultaneously the divine immanence and the divine transcendence to the manifest world. God is in the world, and also outside of it. God is this world and more.

We are not hidden from God, nor is the pursuit of God an issue of distance. He is not far from any one of us; rather we will say that He is within us, as he is in all things created. We belong to Him more than we belong to ourselves... It would be better to say that God contains us than to say that we have Him inside us. We are actually thrown together into God, penetrated by divinity, sustained every moment by the divine power that saturates reality, exceeding it. God fills the world as the summer sun inundates a room; He is everywhere in the world, just as the soul is everywhere in the body; and where He is not, there is nothing. (Italian theologian Thomas Aquinas, 13th Century)¹⁵⁹

Physical and Metaphysical

*Creation is an extension of God.
Creation is God encountered in time and space.
Creation is the infinite dressed as the finite.*
(Pirke Avot, Rabbinical Teachings, 6:2)¹⁶⁰

If we call “physical” what refers to this world, and “metaphysical” what refers to “beyond (metá) the physical,” we can say that panentheism is simultaneously physical and metaphysical.

Into blinding darkness enter those who worship the unmanifest and into still greater darkness, as it were, enter those who delight in the manifest...He who understands the

¹⁵⁵ Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing*, (New Mexico: Bear & Company Publishing, 1983), 107.

¹⁵⁶ “Pan”: all; “en”:in; “theism”: God. Cf. *supra* p. 113.

¹⁵⁷ Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing*, (New Mexico: Bear & Company Publishing, 1983), 108.

¹⁵⁸ K.R. Sundararajan and Bithika Mukerji, eds. *Hindu Spirituality II: Postclassical and Modern*. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), Vol. II, 104.

¹⁵⁹ Alicia Ortega, *La Mística y los Místicos*, (Argentina: Hypatia, 1979), 291.

¹⁶⁰ Matthew Fox, *One River, Many Wells*, (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2000), 36.

manifest and the unmanifest both together crosses death through the unmanifest, and attains life eternal through the manifest. (Isha-Upanishad, II:12)¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ S. Radhakrishnan, ed., *The Principal Upanishads*, 3rd ed. Translated by S. Radhakrishnan. (USA: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1953. Reprint, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1992), 575-576.

CHAPTER 15: PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY A MEANINGFUL UNIVERSE

Principles of Holistic Spirituality

9. Life has meaning.

For human beings, meaning consists in fulfilling the mission for which we came to this earth. We are co-creators of this world with the Divine, each one with our unique and peculiar mission.

The discovery and realization of this mission will provide us basic happiness, giving meaning to our lives. Our creativity is one of the features by which we resemble the Creative Cause of everything: exercising that creativity will bring happiness to our lives.

What is Meaning?

“Meaning” is the *orientation*, the *direction* of our lives toward an aim. It means feeling that my life does not simply exhaust in itself, but rather points to something that transcend what it is today. Feeling that life has a meaning has to do with “progress” and “evolution.” A life project transcends my life, and gives it meaning.

Does the universe have meaning? The universe will also have meaning if it remits to something that transcends it.

Human Beings Need Meaning

Just as our eyes respond to light, and ears to sound, so our heart responds to meaning. The organ for meaning is the heart.
(Contemporary Austrian Benedictine monk David Steindl-Rast)¹⁶²

Human beings have what we call “basic biological needs”, such as breathing, eating, resting, having a shelter, having sex: they secure survival. But *survival*, satisfying basic biological needs, is not enough for the human being. The human also needs her life to have *meaning*.¹⁶³

The person who lacks meaning in their life falls into depression, becomes ill, mad, or even dies. Meaning can even become more important than the basic biological needs. The human being can more easily survive adversities than a lack of meaning in their life. They can give up food, drink, clothing, the company of others, and even their own life, if they find meaning in doing these things. As examples, we can mention the lives of Mahatma Gandhi, of the ascetics, and of those who die fighting for what they believe is a just cause.

Meaning and Happiness

¹⁶² Brother David Steindl-Rast, *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1984), 35.

¹⁶³ Ken Wilber, *La Conciencia sin Fronteras*, Translated by Marta I. Guastavino, (Argentina: Troquel, 1990), 157.

According to the mass media, we need wealth, status, power, fame, and physical beauty in order to be happy. But reality shows that there is no direct relationship between possessing all these things and being happy. Many people possess all these things, and even enjoy a good health and a family, but still do not achieve happiness because they don't succeed to give meaning to their lives.

And *viceversa*, there is still no relationship between not possessing those things and not being happy. Many people lacking of what the media want to impose on us as the indispensable conditions *sine qua non* of well being, enjoy nevertheless a joyful vital attitude, because they have found meaning to their lives.

That which we call the "meaning" of our lives is invisible, and intangible. However, it can become for us the most important of things, to the point of determining our basic vibration of happiness or unhappiness, whatever the particular circumstances of our lives may be. Just like *air*, *meaning* is ethereal and invisible, but indispensable for life.

Global Meaning: The Great Basic Existential Questions¹⁶⁴

In Chapter 3, we saw the great basic existential questions of the soul. Let's recall some of them: *why* is there something, rather than nothing? Does God exist? Does the world have meaning?

Answering these questions *will not bring us* material benefits, nor power, nor social status. Perhaps that's why they are not included in the Argentine official educational system, which, like any other educational system, transmits implicitly, a particular cosmic vision.

But our responses to these questions will determine the "color" of our life, especially the absence or the presence of meaning.

Here we can see there is a deep relationship between our spirituality and the meaning we give to our lives. Every spirituality furnishes a meaning to life, because it integrates the universe and the human being within a *significant structure*.

This means our possibility of being happy will also be related to our spiritual vision of the world. The spiritual paradigm we choose will form the basic cosmic vision that gives *significance* to each person's life, and for that same reason will provide our vital tone of basic happiness or unhappiness in this life.

The Meaning of the Universe According to Holistic Spirituality

For Holistic Spirituality, there is a meaning in the *cosmic evolution*.

Observing the universe's evolution from the Big Bang up to now, the distinct evolutionary forms produced by the universe seem to be directing themselves toward greater:

- complexity
- consciousness
- diversity
- individuation
- interrelatedness

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter 3.

An example where we can see those tendencies is the evolution of living beings from the amoeba to the mammals.

Individual Meaning: The Realization of One's Own Essence

Our souls are not thirsty for fame, comfort, wealth, or power... Our souls are thirsty for meaning.
(Rabbi Kushner, contemporary, USA)¹⁶⁵

On a personal level, meaning of our life is the basic directionality, the orientation that organizes all our activities, conferring meaning upon them.

A meaningful life does not feel complete, or finished; on the contrary, it rather aims at something different from what it is right now.

A meaningful life will require development through time, which implies change.

Individual Meaning: A Dualistic Perspective

We have previously seen¹⁶⁶ that dualism always points to transcendence; according to theism (a dualistic spiritual paradigm), for instance, the Creative Cause is always "outside." In the case of individual life, its meaning will also be determined from outside: from a dualistic perspective, my individual life will have meaning if it points to be something different from itself. The meaning of life comes "from the outside."

Individual Meaning: A Holistic Perspective

Our vocations are part of the ordering principle of wisdom in the universe.
(Matthew Fox, contemporary, USA)¹⁶⁷

Panentheism simultaneously affirms divine immanence and transcendence in regards to the manifest world. God is in the world, and also outside of it. God is this world and more.¹⁶⁸

Therefore, Holistic Spirituality, which we have defined as a panentheism, will apply the same pattern of immanence-transcendence in the consideration of the meaning of an individual life. According to our perspective, we will call that meaning "vocation" or "mission."

Vocation: The meaning of personal life seen from "inside."

Your soul knows what the most evolutionary choice is in each situation.
(Contemporary North-American writer Laurel Beth Geise)¹⁶⁹

The vocation in someone's life is that internal calling that each person feels to fully realize, to attain a fuller form of themselves. It does not mean copying some external model, but rather actualizing one's own internal potential, one's own essence.¹⁷⁰ A vocation can be fulfilled in one or more life projects.

A life project is the external form I want my vocation to take. If my vocation, for instance, is to help others by restoring health, I could choose different life projects, like becoming a doctor, a nurse, a paramedic, making donations to a hospital, or producing vitamins.

¹⁶⁵ Harold Kushner, *Cuando Nada te Basta*, Translated by Raquel Albornoz, (Spain: Emecé, 1996), 49.

¹⁶⁶ Chapters 13 and 14.

¹⁶⁷ Matthew Fox, *The Reinvention of Work*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 103.

¹⁶⁸ Chapters 13 and 14.

¹⁶⁹ Laurel Beth Geise, *The Book of Life: Universal Truths for a New Millenium*, (USA: Xlibris Corporation, 2000) 31.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. pp. 72-73, the definition of "essence."

Mission: The meaning of personal life seen from “outside”

Our vocations are part of the ordering principle of wisdom in the universe.
(Matthew Fox)¹⁷¹

The personal mission is the role we should accomplish in order to contribute in the best possible way to the universal plan.¹⁷² A mission exists for which we came to this world. This mission is determined by the divine universal plan. While not yet accomplished, our mission is an “outside” to our present being: but it is an “outside” not foreign to our own essence. Moreover, our mission is rather our vocation when seen from the viewpoint of the totality.

For a vocation “to help others by restoring health”, the mission could be, for instance, to help speeding up human evolution.

Automatic Realization of the Own Essence

If we look all around us, we’ll see that all creatures automatically and inevitably realize their own essence. Pear trees, for instance, give pears; bees produce honey. Creatures all around us cannot choose different “life projects” to fulfill their essence. They fulfill their own essence always in the same way.

The pear tree does not produce apples. Bees do not construct the cells of their honeycombs square-shaped or triangle-shaped; they have been constructing them in hexagones since they existed as bees.

Freedom

Human beings, on the other hand, fulfill their essence partially “in automatic pilot,” and partially by means of different “life projects.”

The automatic part consists almost all functions of our biological body. But, for human beings, self-realization is not limited to their biological development. We also possess psychological, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs.

These are not automatically actualized. Contrary to the other beings on this planet, we possess beyond our biological being, a “plus” of realization that has been handed over to our free will. We’ve been given freedom.

Freedom, or free will is the capacity to choose between various available options, or even create new ones.¹⁷³

An example of automatic realization is for instance the interchange of oxygen in blood capillaries. An example of free behavior is the act of choosing to say or not say something to someone.

Creativity: Co-Creation

¹⁷¹ Matthew Fox, *The Reinvention of Work*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 103.

¹⁷² In his science fiction novel, *A Happy World*, Aldous Huxley describes the intention of a totalitarian state to force the concurrence of the vocation and the mission of each citizen.

¹⁷³ In that freedom resides the possibility of history and its corollary, progress, specifically human progress, which is a change toward an objective considered positive.

*The world was created
by the downward flow of letters;
our task is to form those letters into words
and take them back to God.*
(Hasidic¹⁷⁴ teachings, 19th Century)¹⁷⁵

The human being can go even further than the act of choosing between available options: she can create new behaviors. This is called creativity. For example, the work of an artist.

If we compare human creativity to divine creativity, we will see that God can create and maintain material things right out of nothing. The human being can create ideas, images, or sensations, and shape them into existing materials. In comparison to the “total creativity” of the Creative Cause of the universe, we could call this one, “partial creativity,”

Elohim created the human being in His image, in the image of Elohim he was created... (Gen. 1:27)¹⁷⁶

Though partial, we can consider our creativity one of those features by which we resemble the Creative Cause of everything. So, the Creative Cause is not the only creator in the universe: the human being also creates new things, even with partial creativity.

Any cultural product: for example, the telephone, is a result of human creativity. Abraham Joschua Heschel¹⁷⁷ (Poland, 20th Century), as well as David A. Cooper¹⁷⁸ (U.S. A., contemporary), describe this situation as “co-creation” of the world between God and human beings.

¹⁷⁴ Haisidism is a popular Jewish mystic movement founded by Baal Shem Tov in Poland in the 18th Century.

¹⁷⁵ Arthur Green and Barry W. Holtz, eds., *Your Word is Fire: The Hasidic Masters on Contemplative Prayers*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1977, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993), 49.

¹⁷⁶ Mordejai Edery, ed., *Génesis*, (Argentina: Fundación Cabuli, 1991), 24.

¹⁷⁷ Abraham Joschua Heschel, *Dios en Busca del Hombre*, Translated by Teresa Snajer, (Argentina: Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano, 1984), 529.

¹⁷⁸ David A Cooper, *God is a Verb*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), 75.

CHAPTER 16: PRINCIPLES OF HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY THE UNIVERSE AS A MESSAGE

The worldview we hold makes a difference in how we relate to the world we live in.
(Matthew Fox)¹⁷⁹

Principles of Holistic Spirituality

10) The universe speaks. We can decipher its message and dialog with the universe because being part of it, we are made of the same elements.

A Change of Paradigm

With the twenty two letters, giving them a form and a figure, mixing and combining them in diverse manners, God has made the soul of everything that is or will be formed.

(Sefer letzirah, a cabalistic book of the Xth Century)¹⁸⁰

Holistic Spirituality proposes a change of paradigm.

As we have already seen¹⁸¹, a paradigm is a system of values, ideas, prejudices, and preconceptions that, like a pair of glasses, determine the form in which we see reality. In most cases, we are not conscious of it.

For example, the Darwinian paradigm of natural selection: as many more individuals are produced, than can possibly survive, there must, in every case, be a struggle for existence, either one individual with another of the same species, or with the individuals of other species, or with the physical conditions of life.¹⁸² Struggle is considered the basis for survival.

But at the beginning of the 20th century a new way of seeing things arose. In his book *Holistics and Evolution*, Jan Smuts indicated, *“relationship is everything. It is impossible to understand a cell, a rat, a cerebral structure, a family, or a culture if we isolate it from its context.”*¹⁸³

Within this worldview arises in the middle of the 20th Century the ecological paradigm in biology, that sees the relationship between individuals and between species as interdependent more than oppositional. The way we see the relationship between species –either as competition, or as cooperative effort – will decide on our interpretation of the observed behaviors. The paradigm is previous to the observation of the behavior, and makes a difference in its interpretation.

¹⁷⁹ Matthew Fox, *The Reinvention of Work*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 74.

¹⁸⁰ A. Franck, *La Kabbala*, Translated by Jorge Guerra, (Spain: Humanitas, 1983), 116.

¹⁸¹ See p 31.

¹⁸² Philip W. Goetz., ed. in chief, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1990), Vol 18, 156.

¹⁸³ Marilyn Ferguson, *La Conspiración de Acuario*, 2nd ed., Translated by Pedro de Casso, (Argentina: Troquel, 1991), 174.

*Our philosophies limit what we permit ourselves to see.*¹⁸⁴

A paradigm cannot be demonstrated rationally or by experimentation. The beliefs implicit in a paradigm cannot be demonstrated: they are rather previous, conditioning any demonstration within that paradigm.

Holistic Spirituality proposes a paradigm change, that is to say, a change in the viewpoint, a change in the attitude toward life. It proposes us to see the world as a message to be deciphered. Anthony de Mello, a XXth Century Indian Jesuit priest:

*What happens when you are awakened? Nothing changes, everything happens the same, but you are the one who has changed your way of approaching reality. Everything becomes clear.*¹⁸⁵

Human Words

Anthropologists believe the spoken word appeared with the Homo Sapiens, some 40,000 years ago.¹⁸⁶ As for the written word, it appeared in Sumeria (Mesopotamia) in cuneiform, some 5,500 years ago.¹⁸⁷

As for the written word, the Japanese and the Chinese regularly used wood blocks carved in relief to produce Buddhist charms as early as the Vth century CE. Gutenberg (Germany, XVth century) invented the movable types.

Today, the modern world is sustained thanks to the word: we find words in books, in the media, in publicity, in food labels, in computation and Internet, in maps, stations, and airports, or in the instructions for use of artifacts.

Dabar: The Creative Word of God

According to the Old Testament, God created the world by speaking.

*It is the divine word, the voice of the living God that has produced the beings in their diverse forms, exterior and interior; to that the following words allude: Elohim said: 'Let there be light', and light appeared. (Genesis 1:3)*¹⁸⁸

The world has been created through ten phrases of the Divine Verb.
(Discussion of Principles, chap. 5, Mishnáh)¹⁸⁹

*Blessed be He who made the world with His Verb.*¹⁹⁰

Has God gone silent, or does He continue to speak?

According to Holistic Spirituality, God continues to speak through the universe. All the beings of the universe can be seen as words of God. The word "dabar" in Hebrew, means both "word" and "thing." Bede Griffiths, an English monk of the XXth century, wrote:

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 177.

¹⁸⁵ Anthony De Mello, *Autoliberación Interior*, (Spain: Vida Nueva, 1988. Reprint, Argentina: Lumen, 1992), 10

¹⁸⁶ Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story*, (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 274.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 190

¹⁸⁸ A. Franck, *La Kabbala*, Translated by Jorge Guerra, (Spain: Humanitas, 1983), 112.

¹⁸⁹ Mordejai Edery, ed., *Génesis*, (Argentina: Fundación Cabuli, 1991), 16.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 16.

*I am a thought of God, a word of God... every created being is a thought of God, a word of God to which it gives expression.*¹⁹¹

If we consider the universe as the Word of God, God has been speaking a language available to humans for fifteen billion years, estimated date our science can reach with the “Big Bang.”¹⁹²

Martin Buber: The Dialog Between the Divine and the Human

All creatures are words of God. (Meister Eckhart)¹⁹³

Martin Buber, a German Jewish thinker of the XXth Century set out two basic ways in which we can deal with “the other.”¹⁹⁴

1) We can see “the other” as a “that,” an inanimate thing, an object. We treat nature this way when we exploit it uncontrollably, and at times, we treat human beings the same way.

2) We see “the other” as “thou” when we consider it gifted with life and with a consciousness capable of response. For instance, our relationship with our dear ones. Many people relate to their pets, or plants, as “thou.”

Martin Buber proposes us to consider the entire universe as a huge “thou.” The planet Earth, for example, is seen as a stage for the dialog between God and the human being. How is that? God speaks placing us in our circumstances, our existential situation, and we respond with our actions.

In this respect, Thomas Berry (USA, contemporary), a historian of cultures, says: “[It is necessary] to sensitize people to the story that every river and every star and every animal are telling. The goal is not to read a book, the goal is to read the story taking place all around us.”¹⁹⁵

Martin Buber synthesizes it as follows:

*In God's response, everything, and the Whole itself, are revealed as language.*¹⁹⁶

Zalman Schachter Shalomi: God as an Interactive Verb

Our children need to learn not only how to read not books composed by human genius, but also how to read the Great Book of the World. Reading this great book is natural to children. (Thomas Berry)¹⁹⁷

Let's consider the grammatical difference between “transitive” and “intransitive” verbs: verbs that need a direct object (for example, to drink, to love, etc.) are called “transitive” verbs. “Intransitive” verbs are those that cannot accept a direct object (for example, to return, to laugh, etc.).

¹⁹¹ Bede Griffiths, *Return to the Center*, (Great Britain: Collins, 1976. Reprint, Illinois, Templegate Publishers, 1977), 36.

²⁴¹ The last thing I read from Brian Swimme uses the figure of about thirteen billion years ago. (Mel Bricker, private mail)

¹⁹³ Matthew Fox, ed., *Passion for Creation: The Earth-Honoring Spirituality of Meister Eckhart*, (Rochester, USA: Inner Traditions International, 2000), 58.

¹⁹⁴ Martin Buber, *La Vie en Dialogue*, Translated by Jean Loewenson-Lavi, (Paris: Aubier, 1956).

¹⁹⁵ Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry, *The Universe Story*, (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 3.

¹⁹⁶ Martin Buber, *La Vie en Dialogue*, Translated by Jean Loewenson-Lavi, (Paris: Aubier, 1956), 77.

¹⁹⁷ Matthew Fox, *Original Blessing*. New Mexico: Bear & Company, 1983), 35.

Other examples of transitive verbs could be: to grab, to eat, to touch, and of intransitive: to fall, to bark.

Schachter-Shalomi proposes a subgroup within transitive verbs, which he calls “interactive.” These would be verbs that imply interdependence between two subjects (for example, to love, to share, to dance, to kiss, to fight, to educate).

Other examples of “interactive” verbs could be: to dialog, to embrace, to relate with.

The Subjects as Interactive Verbs

The whole world and all creatures will be to you nothing else than an open book and a living Bible, in which you may study, without any previous instruction, the science of God and from which you may learn His will.

(Sebastian Franck, Germany, XVIth Century)¹⁹⁸

Moreover, Schachter-Shalomi proposes we consider subjects, too, as interactive verbs.¹⁹⁹ Each one of us, for example, can be seen as a center of interactive activity, rather than an isolated subject enclosed in its own borders.

In kind of an amusing way, he points out that in place of a name, we could refer to each of us as a verb. For example, in place of “Zalman,” “to zalman,” the specific and peculiar way of acting that only Zalman can do. Zalman would always be “zalmaning,” Ana would always be “aneing” with the world, and with the others, and so would everyone else. Rather than considering the universe as a union of parts or isolated elements, we can see it as a network of interactive relationships.

Taking this a step further, he proposes that we consider God as an interactive verb of this type. God is always “goddling.” And each one of us responds to God by “zalmaning,” “aneing,” or “cristining.” Ways of interacting with God could be: love It, hate It, rebuke It, talk with It, dance with It.

The Interactive Universe

*The Father’s speaking is his giving birth;
the Son’s listening is his being born.*

(Meister Eckhart)²⁰⁰

Some activities each one of us do in our peculiar “our name-ing” way could be to write, eat, walk, dialog, wound, console, destroy, construct.

On the other hand, the “goddling” of God creates and sustains every object in the universe, therefore, also my body and my circumstances. If we put together the idea of Buber with that of Schachter-Shalomi, our own way of responding to the “goddling” of God, (the universe itself), would be our own “Zalmaning,” “aneing,” or “cristining” (our words, thoughts, feelings and deeds).

Humanity as an Interlocutor:

The moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too.

(Goethe, Germany, XVIIIth Century)²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 35.

¹⁹⁹ David A. Cooper, *God is a Verb*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 1997), 69-74.

²⁰⁰ Matthew Fox, ed., *Passion for Creation: The Earth-Honoring Spirituality of Meister Eckhart*, (Rochester, USA: Inner Traditions International, 2000), 316.

What are the elements that come into play in a communication between two human subjects? Any communication, to be such, should consist of a minimum of two emissions, each of them with the following structure:

EMISSION: emitter-receptor-message-deciphering code
RESPONSE: emitter-receptor-message-deciphering code

In the case of a dialog between two persons:

EMISSION: person 1, person 2, spoken phrase, common language
RESPONSE: person 2, person 1, spoken phrase, common language

If the universe were the message, as in the paradigm of Holistic Spirituality, the elements of the communication would be:

EMISSION: God; human beings; universe; soul language.
RESPONSE: Human beings; God; our deeds, feelings, words and thoughts; soul language.

What do you think is?

We have called "Soul Language" the common code that God and humans use to communicate, understanding under "soul" the interiority of any manifested being. This would be the common language between God, all human beings, and all living things. It is an interior code, expressed in the exterior: the same language of inner soul to inner soul that we use to communicate within human beings, and with all other things. It is the same interior language that expresses verbally, physically, artistically, through handicrafts, or in some other way.

²⁰¹ Matthew Fox, *The Reinvention of Work*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 103.

CHAPTER 17: CONCLUSION

Does this work have a conclusion? I don't think so. It is inscribed within the history of the human quest for meaning, which will continue as long as there are human beings.

Perhaps Adam and Eve, whose story we read in Genesis, when expelled from the Garden of Eden, didn't go to some other geographic place, but rather to another level of consciousness. In paradise they lived in perfect harmony with nature, that gave them abundant food and clothing. They communicated directly with God, the Supreme Fountain: God was close and available: they didn't feel separated from Her.

Perhaps paradise is right here, in this marvelous place called Earth, plethoric with minerals, plants, and animals of exquisite beauty, and with all the resources necessary to live, provided we never fall into the "hybris" ("excessiveness") against which the ancient Greeks already warned us. If we looked for happiness in our creativity rather than in status or power, if we searched for doing what we like instead of buying it, sharing instead of competing, being instead of having, dialoging lovingly with other forms of consciousness rather than using them exclusively for our personal benefit, wouldn't we transform our planet into an authentic Garden of Eden?

Violence, injustice, desperation, depression, addiction reign upon the "first world" societies, though the basic needs of their people (in addition to many superfluous ones), are provided. In order to be healed, couldn't they simply try to restore authentic communication with the Primal Fountain?

Let's imagine for one moment a world where fierce individualism were replaced by solidarity, competition by cooperation, unlimited exploitation by respect for the Earth's beauty. All this is at the reach of our hands, if we just wanted it. The key for happiness lies in our own interior. The Kingdom of God is inside us.

In my opinion, Holistic Spirituality constitutes an efficacious response for attaining as well social justice, as the personal experience of the divine. We need a spiritual education according to the needs of the twenty first century, with holistic methods that put into play all of the human faculties. Even though spirituality has depreciated in our society, as if it were something superfluous with no practical use, it turns out to be, quite to the contrary, the most useful thing in the world, because it would allow us to restore and even improve, with our scientific, technical, and artistic contributions to the paradise God intended for us.

**Wishing for peace and light
From the heart of
Ana**

APPENDIX

DIFFERENT NAMES FOR HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY

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DIFFERENT NAMES FOR HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY

The Great Traditions

The holistic approach in spirituality is not new: it existed under many names in different traditions. Taking as a starting point the classification of Matthew Fox²⁰², I made up the following waybill for a first approach.

- Part of the Hebrew Bible: The Yahwist author - J source, Proverbs, part of the Psalms, Prophets, and the Song of Songs.
- Part of the New Testament: The teachings of Jesus, the prologue to the Gospel of St. John, the story of the birth in Luke, the Paulist theme of the Cosmic Christ.
- Ancient India: The Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Giitaa, the Vishishta-advaita-vedanta of Raamaanuja, Tantrism and its offspring, Hatha Yoga.
- Ancient Greece: Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Socrates, and the Mystery Schools.
- All the Aboriginal Traditions: Traditions of Native America, South America, African, Celtic, Australian, Asian, Pagan European, and pre-Christian, with their rituals of thanksgiving and celebration for the gifts of nature.
- The Islamic World: The Sufi Mevlevi Order founded by Rumi with his ecstatic twirling, Kabir, Hafiz, Ibn-Arabi, Hazrat Inayat Khan.
- Buddhism: Tibetan and Zen Buddhism.
- China: the systems of Kung Fu, the Tao Te Ching and Taoist practices, Qi Gung, and Tai Chi.
- Christianity: John Scotus Eriugena, Hildegard of Bingen, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Thomas Aquinas, Mechtild of Magdeburg, Meister Eckhart, the anonymous author of "Theologica Germanica," Julian of Norwich, St. Thomas Moore, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, George Fox.
- Judaism: the Kabbalist tradition, the Hassidic movement founded by Baal Shem Tov in Poland (17th Century).
- All of the sacred arts.
- Dance: the sacred dances of fertility of the Egyptian priestesses, that are still echoed in belly dance; the ecstatic dance of the Mevlevi Sufi order, Paneurythmia (Beinsa Dunó), the Ecstatic Dance of Gabrielle Roth, Dances of Universal Peace, the different sacred dances of all traditions.

Modern y Contemporary Ages:

Europe:

- George W. F. Hegel, Friedrich W. J. Schelling (Germany, XIXth C.), Ralph W. Emerson (USA, XIXth C.), Henri Bergson (France, XIXth y XXth C.)

²⁰² Fox, *Original...*, pp. 321-327.

- Gabriel Marcel: Christian existentialism.
- Teilhard de Chardin and humanity's evolution.
- Aldous Huxley: searching for the perennial.
- C.G. Jung: a theory about archetypes.
- Michael Aivanhoh: the solar religion.
- Abraham Jeoschua Heschel: renewal of Jewish tradition.
- Martin Buber: the I-Thou philosophy and the reinterpretation of Hasidism.

- Psychosynthesis by Roberto Assagioli.
- Psychology of art: Otto Rank.
- Meaning as healing: Viktor Frankl.
- Diarmuid O'Murchu: evolutionary faith.
- James Lovelock: the living Earth.
- David Steindl-Rast: a holistic contemplation life.
-

United States:

- Transcendentalism: Ralph Waldo Emerson, H.D. Thoreau.
- Alan Watts: the wise man's laughter.
- M.C. Richards: pottery as centering.
- Marilyn Ferguson: the new paradigms.
- Novelized spirituality: Richard Bach, James Redfield.
- Eileen Caddy, Neale Donald Walsch: XXth C.'s revelations.
- Thanatology: Raymond Moody, Elizabeth Kübler-Ross.
- The Goddess rebirth: Robert Graves, Wicca, and women's spirituality.
- Creation Spirituality: Matthew Fox.
- Neo-Judaism: Zalman Schachter Schalomi, Harold Kushner, Schlomo Carlebach.
- An Economy as if human beings mattered: E. F. Schumacher, Hazel Henderson.
- Humanist psychology: Abraham Maslow.
- Transpersonal psychology: Ken Wilber, Frances Vaughan, Stanislav Grof.
- Gestalt psychology:
- Ecopsychology: Gregory Bateson.
- A militant Christianity: Howard Thurman.
-

Latin-America:

- Novelized spirituality: Paolo Coelho, Hania Czajkowski.
- Spirituality out of the great Western religions: José S. Croatto. Hugo Mujica, Rubén Nisenbom, Frei Betto.
- Good dying: Benito Reyes, Hugo Dopaso.
- Recovering the Andine tradition: Antonio Ponce Paiva de León.
- Carlos Warter: recovering the sacred.
- Leonardo Boff: liberation theology.

Towards the Global Village: Spiritual Convergences

- Hinduism and Islam: Kabîr, Rumi, Hafiz, Sai Baba de Shirdi, Mahatma Gandhi.
- Yoga and Christianity: Ismael Quiles, Anthony de Mello, Walter Gardini, Paramahansa Yogananda, and Bede Griffiths.
- Judaism and Buddhism: Rodger Kamenetz.
- Uniting all religions: Shri Raamakrishna, Sarada Devi, Mahatma Gandhi, Mataji Indra Devi, Shri Satya Sai Baba, various contemporary Christian movements.

- Science and Spirituality: Albert Einstein, Fritjof Capra, Maharishi Mahesh Yogui, Rupert Sheldrake, David Bohm, Ilya Prigogine, Deepak Chopra, Thomas Berry, Peter Russell, Brian Swimme

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