Chapter 16 Epistemic Faith

1. The Purpose of Theology

People turn to religion in hope of obtaining: answers to deeply troubling questions; comfort for grief and sorrow; and reassurances to bolster one's courage and strength to persevere against daunting challenges. Religions turn to theology when proposed answers grow numerous and in their totality are found to be so lacking in internal self-consistency as to pose a threat to faith itself. All sub-contexts of the purpose of studying theology – e.g., clarifying holy texts, guarding and guiding a church, gaining converts to a faith, attaining spiritual maturity, etc. – stand under this fundamental *first* purpose. A simple faith like that of the Congo's BaMbuti people, who tend to take things as they come and not probe too deeply for explanations, requires no theology because there are few religious questions posed and those which are tend to be *ad hoc* and very specific to circumstances. Complex faiths – Christianity, Islam, Taoism, etc. – encounter many more questions and these questions tend to be much more vexing and intertwined. Out of this complexity comes a need for more systematic comprehension of one's faith. The manifold species of sects within a religious genus almost always arise over disagreement in doctrine, and these disagreements are raised up where the theology of a faith is discovered to be unsystematic. The questions, issues, and problems a religious doctrine tries to resolve matter deeply to people, and so it is unsurprising that disagreement over doctrine so often leads to deep seated enmity between different sects.

A scholar whose special field of scholarship is a doctrine constituting a system in accordance with a principle of a disciplined whole of faith is called a ***theologian***. It follows from this that a **theology** is a doctrine constituting a system in accordance with a principle of a disciplined whole of religious faith. Critical theology is a theology that derives its discipline from the metaphysical viewpoint and principles of Critical metaphysics. This is what makes Critical theology epistemology-centered and sets it in contrast to the traditionally ontology-centered theologies.

Just as every human being develops a personal metaphysic (how he looks at the world), so also every person develops for himself a personal theology (how he looks at noumenal supernature and God). This personal theology is always shaped and colored by his personal metaphysic. A person who is ontology-centered will think and reason in terms of substantial Objects he speculates to be the grounds of all other things. At some point in his reasoning, however, he comes up against these elementary Objects as things-regarded-as-they-are-in-themselves (what Kant called *Dinge an sich selbst*). Because these Objects are by definition *elementary* and *primitive*, when he comes to them all possibility of further explanation is at an absolute end and his reasoning can take him no further. Because of this, all ontology-centered systems of theology must end with ultimate and irresolvable mysteries of noumena. Here theological doctrines find themselves impaled on the horns of irresolvable transcendental antinomies and it therefore is no great wonder why different theologies come to diametrically opposed opinions over the same questions.

Epistemology-centered metaphysics rejects attempting to make our knowledge conform to such Objects and instead inquires into how Objects of human knowledge and speculation must conform to our human faculty for knowledge. It, too, has its primitives but these primitives are all required to flow from a single first principle, namely, that they *be necessary for the possibility of human experience* [Kant (1787) B: xvi-xvii]. This change in how one views the world has become known as "Kant's Copernican revolution." When a person's religious views are shaped by an epistemology-centered theology, this shaping can be called *epistemic faith*.

A person whose metaphysic is epistemology-centered takes his starting point from an understanding of the phenomenon of human mind and from other objectively valid evidence of experience to reason and speculate about things beyond the horizon of possible human experience. Aquinas, although his personal metaphysic and his theology were ontology-centered, nonetheless expressed a view not too dissimilar to this:

> The human intellect, to which it is connatural to derive its knowledge from sensible things, is not able through itself to reach the vision of the divine substance in itself, which is above all sensible things and, indeed, improportionately above all other things. Yet, because man's perfect good is that he somehow know God, lest such a noble creature might seem to be created to no purpose, as being unable to reach its own end, there is given to man a certain way through which he can rise to knowledge of God: so that, since the perfections of things descend in a certain order from the highest summit of things – God – man may progress in the knowledge of God by beginning with lower things and gradually ascending. [Aquinas (1259-64), vol. 5, Bk. IV, pg. 36]

Aquinas states his ideas of descending and ascending perfections as if they were facts; in Critical theology these ideas correspond to the making of inferences of reason. Episyllogisms are descending inferences from condition to conditioned, prosyllogisms are ascending inferences from conditioned to condition [Wells (2011)].

One of the things a formal theology tries to do is to bring about more objectivity in theological ideas inasmuch as adherents to a theology can come to agree with one another on a greater number of theological ideas and share a greater degree of common understanding about purpose and meaning in people's lives. I think it does not go too far astray to say that theology is about human **hope**. Hope is Desire accompanied by expectation of or trust in its fulfillment. Faith subsists in hope and is sustained by trust. **Trust** is reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.

What does it benefit a person to have faith? What does it benefit a person to trust in God? Here the answers must necessarily be personal. To make oneself Duty-bound to faith can never be anything else than Duty-to-oneself. No other person can ever obligate you to have faith or to be a person of faith. You alone determine your own obligations. To trust in God is to have confidence in God's supremely sublime benevolence. Confidence of this kind can only come out of subjectively sufficient grounds because the contingency of nature can not provide objectively sufficient grounds for it. Indeed, it often opposes it. Contingent experience often produces subjective reasons to lack faith or trust in God. If faith and trust are to be maintained in the face of calamities and grief, a person must have counterbalancing reasons to cling to them. Theology tries to offer people hope, to answer their questions, and to provide guidance for what to do when accidents of life seem to gainsay faith and trust. In this role, theology performs an *education* function because the answers people seek from religion are often very hard to find without counsel and assistance from others. But, in the end, *every person must decide for himself* what answers he finds satisfying and what answers he finds unsatisfying. Every person must decide for himself whether to abandon religious faith or cling to a hope of finding answers. How a theology performs its education function has a great deal to do with what decisions of this sort a person will reach. Its teachings have a great deal to do with a person's decision to hold these teachings to be true, and to what degree, or to reject its teachings and perhaps turn to some other theology.

Most traditional theologians try to teach by appeal to authority. There is a rationale underlying this. Authority is possession of the *Kraft* of causing something to become greater, to increase, to be strengthened, or to be reinforced in some way. The position of any authority figure in any Society is the position of an agent of leadership governance charged with the duty of causing the association's general success and welfare to become greater, to increase, to be strengthened, or to be reinforced in some way. In matters of religion, the authority figures are its priests, priestesses, pastors, ministers, recognized wise men and women, and, in matters of doctrine, its theologians. People look to them with an ***expectation of authority***, i.e., a *demand* that a person holding a position as a designated authority figure possess the *Kraft* of authority and will actualize it for the benefit of their common association. I have often wondered how many people who aspire to become authority figures would still hold this aspiration if they really understood the full extent of the responsibilities others will, justly, demand that they live up to. If you try to teach by appeal to authority, you must first earn and keep the learner's faith and trust *in you* or he will doubt your authority as a teacher and hold that what you teach is just another man's opinion out of many. To succeed as an authority figure in the long run, you must be a leader but never a ruler.

Whether or not a theologian can live up to people's expectation of authority depends in no small measure on how the education function is carried out. Typical works of theology have tended to produce long lists of prescriptions for how people should conduct their lives and proscriptions against particular kinds of conduct. One sees this in every genus of religion that has produced a recognizable theology. These prescriptions and proscriptions are almost always laid down either as: 1) rules dictated by fiat; or 2) rules deduced by dialectic reasoning. Traditional theologians thus make the error of rulership.

One effect of theology by prescription and proscription is that these for the most part remain external to the learner. It is implied that following them is more important than understanding them and trying to assimilate their purposes into your own living character. This is only a recipe for moral realism [Piaget (1932)]. Furthermore, I think it is impossible for prescription/proscription dogma to be adequately deduced to a sufficient state of perfection. Dogma is by its nature static and inflexible. It cannot possibly cover every contingent situation people encounter and it leaves no room for continual striving for perfection. Perhaps there is merit to prescriptive/proscriptive theology when people of a Society lack education and the religious needs of the Society can be satisfied by a very simple faith (such as that of the Congo's BaMbuti Pygmy groups). But as a Society grows and becomes more complex so too the challenges it faces grow and become increasingly intractable to old methods.

If an institute does not adapt and change in response to changes in Society, eventually it will suffer loss of allegiance as more and more of its followers fall away. To cite one example, from 1878 to 2006 *The Christian Herald*, published by the Alpha & Omega Christian Foundation, was perhaps the most widely circulated official publication of Evangelical Christianity. It published a major and widely respected work of prescriptive theology in 1914 in which it attempted to provide laymen and Bible study groups with answers to many difficult Bible questions [Christian Herald (1914)]. But, as the years passed, readership of *The Christian Herald* declined until, in 2006, it ceased publication and was dissolved.

Critical theology eschews prescription and proscription. It proposes articles of faith but does not deny the validity of doubt. It advances dialectic inferences that follow from articles of faith but does not claim divine inspiration or authority for its dialectic theorems. It tries to look forward to human perfection but does not forget human limitations. It recommends but does not try to compel. It holds that in the end *you* are responsible for *yourself* and the person you choose to make yourself become through your choices in life. It offers teachings but does not presume it can do the learning *for* you. It is not a static doctrine but rather a doctrine intended to be open to advancements from striving to perfect religious understanding. In this it follows the counsel of Paul,

> And do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. [Romans 12:2]

What answers can Critical theology propose for your consideration? Clearly this treatise cannot hope to present answers to all theological questions; the number of these questions seems to be limitless. What it can and properly should do is offer guidance and methodology for *seeking* answers. Let us consider two examples of notably widespread interest.

2. Why Does God Permit Evil in the World?

This is one of the most frequently asked questions people have raised down the centuries of organized religions. Proposed answers have been largely unsatisfactory for many people. If God is sublimely benevolent, evil seems to go against the supernature of God. If evil is visited upon the world through the agency of supernatural demons and devils, permitting *their Existenz* also seems contrary to the super-nature of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent author of the created universe. If the world is God's design, the *Dasein* of evil seems to imply God is not a very skillful designer. But what is evil *per se*?

In Critical metaphysics evil is the Object of practical Reason by which an object, called an objective

evil, is represented as a negative and necessary object of appetitive power. Evil is a practical representation of the power of Reason and refers to the choice to effect or maintain the non-actuality of some object of representation in judgment. An object is called evil when one's reaction to its perception exhibits qualities of aversion, disgust, repugnance, loathing, or abhorrence. The notion of evil is contained in the act of practical determination of appetitive power (as a means) according to a practical maxim. It is not contained in the outcome of the action expressed by the appetite [Kant (1788) 5: 58-61].

The number of evil things in Nature seems to defy counting: the death of a little child; the manifold horrors of war; shocking and heinous crimes; calamitous natural disasters; and many more things. We live in a world in which every creature, including our own species, must of necessity prey upon others just to survive. Where is the good in all this? *Is* there any good to be found in it?

To even attempt an answer, we must first understand what "good" means deontologically. In Critical metaphysics, good is the Object of practical Reason by which an object, called an objective good, is represented as a positive and necessary object of appetitive power. Good is a practical representation of the power of Reason and refers to the choice to effect or maintain the actuality of an object of representation in judgment. The notion of good is contained in the act of practical determination of appetitive power (as a means) according to a practical maxim and not in the outcome of the action [Kant (1788) 5: 58-61]. Human beings *judge* outcomes and things to be good or evil. Quoting Protagoras again, "Man is the measure of all things"; or, as Socrates maintained and Shakespeare phrased it,

> There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. [Shakespeare (c. 1600-1), Act 2, Scene 2]

But the fact that you or I judge something good or evil in no way implies God also judges it so. To presume so is a product of human egocentrism – the presupposition that others think and judge things the same way you do or I do. There enters into consideration at this point the 14th article of Critical faith: Life is an apprenticeship for afterlife; its lessons of virtue and morality are necessary preparations for afterlife *Existenz* by a being possessing free will. What, if anything, is *necessary* about evil when seen in this context? What *purpose* could it possibly serve? For this we turn to the 11th article of faith: divine purpose is fulfilled by humanity overall, not by individuals, and finds its expression in divine Community.

Contrary to popular opinion, *human beings have no innate social instinct* [Wells (2012), chaps. 7, 12]. This means we also have no innate ideas of reciprocal Duties or Obligations. These we develop out of Duties-to-Self and Obligations-to-Self. All people *do* have a capacity for a practical determination that something is an object of appetitive power with either an attractive or aversive character. *It is from our ability to make such determinations that Societies form* and maxims of reciprocal Duties and Obligations are made. A human being has no social instinct; he *does* have the capacity to *develop* social preferences and *construct* reciprocal social maxims.

Homo sapiens is the only creature on earth for which we have objectively valid knowledge of social contracting and the establishment of *civil* Communities. There are many other species of animals we find exhibiting *community* behavior. Herds of buffalo, prides of lions, packs of dogs, troops of baboons and many other examples abound. Some of them even exhibit behaviors from which we can posit the *Dasein* of a Community because they exhibit patterns of conduct that can be called *cooperative*. Elephants are one example. Lions are another. Wild dog and wolf packs provide us with a third. African cape buffalo provide us with a more equivocal but still arguable example, as do some species of otters. For example, cape buffalo are known to sometimes come to the aid of a herd member being attacked by lions. But in none of these cases do we have sufficient objectively valid evidence to conclude that these animals engage in cooperative behaviors because of *contracting* with each other. Social contracting is what distinguishes a civil Community from a non-civil Community. So far as we know, only human beings make social contracts with one another and live in civil Communities.

The simple truth is that we do not know when, where, or why our species developed Communities and, presumably later, civil Communities. It is almost beyond reasonable doubt the first human Communities were composed of families. I say "almost" because there is a sort of "chicken and egg" puzzle entering into the question and this puzzle is centered on the unanswered question of *how* our species first appeared on earth. If the first human beings (*Homo sapiens*) appeared spontaneously, as creationism claims, then human family almost certainly appeared with them. But this *hypothesis* appears to contradict strongly compelling scientific evidence that our species first appeared through the biological mechanism called speciation (popularly if inaccurately called "evolution")[1]. The simple truth is we do not know for a fact how *Homo sapiens* were created. All we do know (with objective validity) is that current evidence places our appearance less than about 350,000 years ago and more than about 40,000 years ago based on discoveries of fossil remains and prehistoric artifacts [Hublin *et al*. (2017)]. Paleoanthropology, at present, is more akin to a natural history than a natural science[2] because it is *descriptive*, not *explanative*.

There is a compelling reason to hypothesize that the first human Communities comprised of more than one family unit were composed of members of extended families. We see this in hunter-gatherer Societies still existing today, e.g. BaMbuti and Kalahari Bushmen groups [Turnbull (1962); Barnard (1993)]. Both the BaMbuti and the Bushmen live in *Gemeinschaft* Societies and, furthermore, in civil Communities (even though their social contracts are unwritten). The latter, however, does not tell us *when* prehistoric people developed civil Communities. Neither can it be presumed all prehistoric Societies developed them at the same time. What *motivated* their development, on the other hand, does not seem at all mysterious. Human beings can more easily and more perfectly satisfy Duties-to-themselves by mutual cooperation and can better safeguard their own well-being by social contracting. Thomas Hobbes was the first Western philosopher to explicitly point this out and to introduce the idea of a social contract:

> Nature has made men so equal, in the faculties of body and mind, as that though there be found one man sometimes manifestly stronger in body or of quicker mind than another; yet when all is reckoned together, the difference between man and man is not so considerable as that one man can claim to himself any benefit to which another may not pretend as well as he. For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger with himself. . . . And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their End (which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only) endeavor to destroy or subdue one another. And hence it comes to pass, that where an invader has no more to fear than another man's single power; if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient Seat others may probably be expected to come with forces united to dispossess and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labor, but also his life or liberty. And the invader is again in like danger of another. [Hobbes

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[1] Biologists define speciation as "the origin of species. If species are not real ("objective") entities, speciation cannot be regarded as a real process. If, however, species are lineages with temporal continuity then speciation is whatever generates independence of lineages from one another" [Thain & Hickman (2004)]. If human beings were created *by means* of speciation then it logically follows that the first members of our species would have to have been peculiar individuals appearing within a community of some other species. In this case, some period of time would have been necessary before any "independence of our lineage" could have been established because, by definition, the parents of the first *Homo sapiens* would have belonged to that "parent species." My personal opinion is that our species *was* created by means of speciation. The reason I hold this opinion is that there is objective scientific evidence favoring the speciation hypothesis and no *scientific* evidence whatsoever supporting the hypothesis of spontaneous human appearance. But opinion is not fact and from a practical point of view it makes no difference to present human conditions which opinion, if either, is true. *Either* way, human beings were still created. The 2nd article of Critical faith says God created human beings and even Genesis says no more than that [Augustine (c. 397-400) Bk. XI].

[2] Natural history is a systematic presentation of facts about natural phenomena that are systematically ordered and classified according to their similarities, and the system of classifications is presented systematically. A natural history is descriptive and contains no causative explanations. A natural history is propaedeutic to development of a natural science. Natural science is a science in which the topic is some aspect of actual human experience and in which the fundamental principles and propositions are grounded in epistemology-centered Critical metaphysics.

(1651), pp. 76-77]

Because of the barbarous dangers of such a state-of-nature situation, where the life of an individual is, as Hobbes put it, "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short," human beings discover it to be to their own advantage to unite in association with other human beings for their mutual safety and well-being. Hobbes even went so far to call this a "law." His "law" stated

> That a man be willing, when others are so too, as farre-forth[3], as for Peace, and defense of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things and be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself. . . . But if other men will not lay down their Right, as well as he, then there is no Reason for anyone to divest himself of his. [*ibid*., pp. 80-81]

Rousseau later explained the idea of a social contract more broadly than Hobbes in that his explanation for social contracting took in more than the evils men do other men. There are natural calamities that befall people – storms, disease, accidental injuries, casualties to property, want of welfare, and so on – that move people to call for aid and assistance from other people. Hobbes' *Leviathan* was focused on why human beings need government; Rousseau's thesis, which also contains a major focus on government, nonetheless spoke more broadly to why human beings need Society and, more particularly, civil Community. Just fourteen years after Rousseau's treatise [Rousseau (1762)], Thomas Paine more clearly and explicitly stated how government stands in relationship to the general welfare of people in a Society:

> In order to gain a clear and just idea of the design and end of government, let us suppose a small number of persons settled in some sequestered part of the earth, unconnected with the rest; they will then represent the first peopling of any country, or of the world. In this state of natural liberty, society will be their first thought. A thousand motives will excite them thereto, the strength of any one man is so unequal to his wants, and his mind so unfitted for perpetual solitude, that he is soon obliged to seek assistance and relief of another, who in his turn requires the same. Four or five united would be able to raise a tolerable dwelling in the midst of a wilderness, but *one* man might labor out the common period of his life without accomplishing anything; when he felled his timber he could not remove it, nor erect it after it was removed; hunger in the meantime would urge him from his work, and every different want call him a different way. Disease, nay even misfortune, would be death, for though neither might be mortal, yet either would disable him from living and reduce him to a state in which he might rather be said to perish than to die.
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> Thus necessity, like a gravitating power, would soon form our newly arrived emigrants into society, the reciprocal blessings of which would supersede and render the obligations of law and government unnecessary while they remained perfectly just to each other; but as nothing but heaven is impregnable to vice, it will unavoidably happen, that in proportion as they surmount the first difficulties of emigration, which bound them together in a common cause, they will begin to relax in their duty and attachment to each other; and this remissness will point out the necessity of establishing some form of government to supply the defect of moral virtue. [Paine (1776), pp. 251-252]

Government is thus merely a necessitated byproduct of people's lack of fidelity to reciprocal Duty, which lack there could not be if human beings actually had an innate social instinct. Duty-to-Self is not a manifestation of a social instinct. Touching on this point, Santayana wrote,

> The moment . . . that society emerges from the early pressure of the environment and is tolerably secure against primary evils, morality grows lax. The forms that life will farther assume are not to be imposed by moral authority but are determined by the genius of the race, the opportunities of the moment, and the tastes and resources of individual minds. The reign of duty gives place to the reign of freedom, and the law and the covenant to the dispensation of grace. [Santayana (1896), pg. 17]

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[3] Farre-forth means onward in time, in order, or in series as, e.g., "from that day forth."

Now, God is not a ruler – because that contradicts valuing freedom (8th article of Critical faith) – but is instead to be seen as a supreme and supremely sublime benevolent leader (9th article of Critical faith). A leader is defined by actions (leader's actions) that evoke or provoke response behaviors in another (the follower) such that the follower behaves or acts differently than he would have if not for the leader's action [Wells (2010), chap. 7]. To say God is a supreme leader is to say God possesses the *Kraft* of leadership in the absolutely highest degree[4] – i.e., God is the highest *authority*, the supreme author of the universe – and to say God is supremely benevolent means God uses his authority to actualize the highest good (*summum bonum*) in humankind. The Chinese sage Lao Tzu taught,

> As for [the best leader], the people barely know he exists; then comes that which they know and love; then that which is feared; then that which is despised. . . . When [the best leader's] actions are performed without unnecessary speech, the people say, "We did it ourselves!" [Lao Tzu (6th cent. BC) v. 17]

If human beings discovered nothing evil in the world, they could have nothing motivating them to make a lasting self-commitment to other people in regard to reciprocal Duties and Obligations. There could still be Communities but, without social contracting, there would be no *civil* Communities. And because the idea of *divine* Community is the idea of the perfection of civil Community, the *Dasein* of evil in our temporal world *is seen to serve divine purpose*. *God values freedom*, and without evil as a motivating factor human beings – to whom the gift of the power of freedom is given – would have nothing to teach and persuade them to aspire to divine Community. Evil is that which is a negative and necessary object of a human being's appetitive power. As human beings have no innate social instinct, evil is that which provides a necessary motivating factor for orienting a person to desire living in divine Community.

Yes, but (one might ask) could God not achieve this expression of divine purpose in some other way by which evil was not necessary? Could he not bestow upon human beings a social instinct? Suppose that he did so. Then either human beings could not have the freedom to choose or to forebear from following God's leadership or else, if a person did still possess this freedom, then his choice to not consent to following God's leadership *would itself introduce evil into the world through moral transgression* if, indeed, morality itself could still have any comprehensible meaning at all not based on rulership. The gift of freedom necessitates the power *to be able to judge* things as good or evil. God does not visit evil upon humankind either directly or through some surrogate; he gives us the practical ability to make judgments of distinction between attractive and repulsive appetites; these judgments orient the development of each person's moral code; and thereby can move people toward a *free choice* of living in civil Community.

If afterlife exists[5] then in advancing through its stages all things regarded as evil come to be redressed because in advancing through afterlife we approach perfection. Life can be likened to a schooling, afterlife to higher levels of a journeyman's continuation of education. God values never-ending striving for perfection (6th article of Critical faith).

If life is an apprenticeship for afterlife (14th article of Critical faith), then the *practical purpose* of evil is nothing else than to serve as lessons of life preparing a being possessing the power of freedom for *Existenz* in afterlife. Ask yourself: How many little children dislike going to school and would not go if their parents didn't compel them to go? What child does not prefer playing to the classroom? Are we to deny that children's education provides benefits they will reap in their later years and that without it they

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[4] *Kraft* is: (1) in the context of a human being, the ability of a person to Self-determine his own accidents of *Existenz*. In Critical metaphysics, the human being as *homo noumenon* is regarded as the substance in which inhere all appearances of his *Existenz* as *homo phaenomenon*; (2) in general, the matter of an ability in terms of what the ability is able to do; (3) in many usages, *Kraft* refers to the ability of a person to do or to cause to be done something in particular that stands as the Object of the particular *Kraft*.

[5] If it does not then theology is moot and human *Existenz* is merely a passing phenomenon without lasting or higher or ultimate purpose because nothing in temporal life is preserved or permanent.

would be so hindered in adult life that life itself might seem not-worthwhile? Weighed in the balance, however much a little child might experience frustration or anxiety in learning to read, to do mathematics, to spell, &etc., this ultimately counts as nothing in relationship to the benefits of well-being later in life. Critical theology teaches that so too it is with evil in our *temporal* world. A child might think his teacher is mean or wicked because the teacher compels him to learn his lessons; the child's good parents know better. As it says in Proverbs,

> Train up a youth in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it. [Proverbs 22:6]

The human ability to make discerning judgments of good and evil is what empowers human beings to rise above the animals of the earth.

3. When Does A Human Being's Life Begin?

This is a question that becomes controversial when it is compounded with a related question, *viz.*, "What is a person?" The latter question, which is a very old one, has historically been found at the root of many debates over such questions as, e.g.: a) is a slave a person?; b) when does the soul enter the body?; c) is "ensoulment" progressive? (as Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas all speculated, a speculative process that can be called "hominization"). I hope that by this point in this treatise you can see that all these types of questions are questions regarding noumenal *Dinge an sich selbst* (things-regarded-as-they-are-in-themselves) beyond the horizon of possible human experience. They arise out of ontology-centered ways of looking at the world, and "person controversies" tend to be products of extravagances in reasoning.

In Critical epistemology all real definitions and real explanations are **at root** *practical* and, as such, can only be regarded as objectively valid from the practical Standpoint of Critical metaphysics. This is because *meaning* is the coherence of perceptions and activities (a *Realerklärung* supported by psychology research [Piaget & Garcia (1987)]). All ontology-centered speculations belong to the *theoretical* Standpoint of Critical metaphysics, and a speculation presupposes practical meanings for its support.

In Critical epistemology, a *person* is the subject of a judgment who can be regarded with practical objective validity as the agent of his own actions and to who alone these actions can be attributed as effects for which he is the original cause. Critical **life** is the capacity of a being to take action in accordance with the laws of appetitive power. *Appetitive power* is the capacity of a being to be, through its representations, the cause of the actuality of the objects of those representations. *Representation* is the primitive act of mind describable as "something in me that refers to something else" [Kant (1794-95) 29: 970]. These are the fundamental real explanations as I use these terms in what follows.

This Critical *Realerklärung* (real explanation) of life does not by itself answer the question with which this section is concerned. As part of the question "When does a human being's life begin?" there is another important question that must be co-asked: "Is it possible to answer the main question *with objective validity*?" This is more or less tantamount to asking if this is a question *science* can answer. As I am about to explain, it *is* a valid question for science *but not one that science has definitively answered yet* and, I think, it will be quite some time before it can. At present, the best I can do here *scientifically* is narrow "when" down to within an *interval* of objective time.

I begin by reiterating something I said earlier in this treatise: biology and medical science do not currently have any *objectively valid* definition of "life" nor will they so long as ontology-centered meta-physics continues to be the "way they look at the world." Even viewing "life" as a "process" does not solve their fundamental conceptual problem – the problem being evidenced by scientists' lack of universal consensus regarding "what" life is – and merely ensnares science in a *diallelon*[6], *viz.*: "Life is a process. A

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[6] a circular explanation

process of what? A process of life" [cf. Kant (1800) 9:50]. Biologists' and physicians' attempts to explain "life" are descriptive, i.e., they describe physiological functions they look for that, taken together, they regard as "signs of life." These typically include: homeostasis; organization; metabolism; growth; adaptation; response to stimuli; and reproduction. Digging deeper into the biochemical and biophysical bases of these functions, we find that the presence of enzyme catalysts and nucleic acids appear to be necessary for these physiological functions to work; hence, the *biological* "definition" of "life" found in Thain & Hickman (2004). Note that "mentality" (phenomenon of mind) is not among these "signs of life." So it is that an amoeba and a human being are both biologically *declared* to be "life forms" [Wells (2006), chap. 11, pp. 951-960]. In each case we are given a *mathematical fiat*, not a *Realerklärung* of life. Metaphysically, biology has not advanced a single step in understanding "life" from the days of vitalism in the nineteenth century and still clings to Aristotle's philosophy [Aristotle (c. 335-322 BC)].

Certainly these descriptions have important practical applications (such as helping a biologist decide what is and what is not an object of biology or a physician pronounce an emergency room patient to be "dead" or "alive"). In point of fact, I have no issue or objection to any of these descriptions provided that, when they are used, the person using them understands *they are applied concepts of classification* and are not "definitions" or real explanations of life *per se*. Why is a bacteria "alive"? *Because we choose to say it is*. Why is a dog "alive"? *Because we choose to say it is*. Why did the ancient Greeks in the time of Homer say a river was "alive"? *Because they chose to say it was*.

Why do people make choices like these? To understand this one must understand that our ideas of "life" are *developed* early in childhood and, once developed, the idea is one of the great organizing concepts people use *habitually* to understand *other* things. The learned esoterica of the biomedical terms above tends to hide the fact that scientists come to them from the same root concepts of "life" you and I have. These terms actually do not denote any deeper fundamental knowledge the rest of us don't have any more than a carpenter's knowledge of the names of different kinds of hammers implies the rest of us don't know what a hammer is. Piaget found that children go through four stages of understanding in developing the idea of "life" they carry thereafter into adulthood [Piaget (1929), pp. 194-206]. It is instructive to take a brief look at the course of childish development of the idea of life.

In the first stage (up to the ages of 6 or 7), the child defines "life" in terms of activity of almost any sort but most particularly in terms of activities useful to man and clearly anthropomorphic. His basic "model" is himself. Activity thereafter remains fundamental to his conception of life. Of this basic notion Piaget made the following remarks:

> Is such an idea primitive or derived? In other words, is it already present in children of 3 or 4, that is to say in children too young to be able to answer our questions since not yet knowing the word "life"? It seems that it is. At least this is what a study of the language and behavior of children of this age seems to suggest. At all events, everything appears to suggest that as soon as the appearance of the word "life" gives rise to a systematization of the corresponding concept, the form of this concept is from the first that which is found in [stage 1]. [Piaget (1929), pp. 198-199]

In the second stage (ages 6 to 8), the child refines his definition of life so that he applies it to anything that *moves*. If a stone rolls down a hill, the stone is "alive"; if clouds drift across the sky, the clouds are "alive"; if water flows in a river, the river is "alive." In the third stage (ages 7 to 11 or 12), he refines his definition again, restricting life to things that move *spontaneously*. Clouds are no longer alive "because the wind drives them" [*ibid*., pg. 203]. Finally, in the fourth stage, "life" is restricted to animals or to animals and plants. This is the stage where the biologist and the physician remain. The above-mentioned physiological functions are "life functions" *because animals and plants exhibit them* and rivers and stones do not. From the very start the *biological* definition of life is just a mathematical classification scheme.

And here we could contentedly leave things were it not for religious, moral, legal, and philosophical controversies arising from lack of an objectively valid *Realerklärung* of life. So let us ask: why does a

child conceptualize "life" as he does in the first stage above? Where does he get this idea? I offer this for your consideration: whatever else you think is alive, there is one thing *and one thing only* **you** *are absolutely certain* is alive: *yourself. You* are your own *absolute* standard of life and you *define* "life" for everything else by fiat and in relationship to this standard. Again we come back to "Man is the measure of all things" – in this case, a particular human being: you. The epistemological ground of this one absolute certainty is what Kant called *transcendental apperception*: a human being's awareness of his own *Dasein* with no accompanying concept of his own *Existenz* [Kant (1781) A: 110-130], [Kant (1787) B: 129-143]. Transcendental apperception can be described as your "sense of aliveness" or your consciousness of 'I am' without knowing *what* you are (your *Existenz*). Understanding of this "what" – this unfilled blank – is called *experience* – the structured system of empirical cognitions. Every time you fill in the blank in "I am _____," you fill the blank with a *concept* of your *Existenz*; but the 'I am' part is consciousness of *Dasein*.

We know from scientific study this construction of experience begins with and remains fundamentally grounded in perceptions of actions [Piaget (1974)]. This is why all meanings are *practical* at their roots [Piaget & Garcia (1987)]. And it is why the child's first stage concept of "life" is grounded in activity. To obtain a *Realerklärung* of Critical life, only one more thing is needed and this is to make the connection between transcendental apperception and practical activity in the process of pure practical Reason. And thusly we come at last to the Critical real explanation of "life" stated above.

The controversies involving the idea of "life" arise from lack of sufficiency and real meaning in the *biological* and empirical ideas of life. This lack tends to lead to extravagances in reasoning in which it is usually not difficult to find gaps in the reasoning or leaps of judgment. For example, the American College of Pediatrics takes an unequivocal position that "life begins at conception" [Miranda & June (2017)]. But, it seems, the College's authority figures do not speak for all physicians, e.g., those doctors who, with a clear conscience, perform abortions. The key argument, upon which the College's official position depends, is

> An organism is defined as "(1) a complex structure of interdependent and subordinate elements whose relations and properties are largely determined by their function in the whole, and (2) an individual constituted to carry on the activities of life by means of organs separate in function but mutually dependent: a living being." [Miranda & June (2017)]

But notice that *right away* this pseudo-definition *equates* "being an organism" with "being an individual" and "being a living being." This is a classic *diallelon*. There is a logical *hiatus* in this position paper: it calls upon the idea of a "person" but it leaves "personhood" unexplained. Biology has *no* technical *Realerklärung* of what a "person" is and psychology uses the term "person" in a wholly different way:

> Psychology, in one guise or another, concerns itself with entities that behave, act, think, and emote and do so within the context of some social and physical environment. When such an entity is a member of the species *Homo sapiens* the term *person* is appropriately used as a label. [Reber & Reber (2001), "person"]

Miranda and June go on to flatly state, "the single-celled embryo is not just a cell, but an organism, a living being, a human being." Yes, a biological cell is an "organism" so far as connotation (1) above goes; but it is a logical *saltus* (leap) to connect this to "a living being, a human being" by fiat. The embryo cell most certainly does not "behave, act, think, and emote and do so within the context of some social and physical environment" – and so is not what psychology labels a "person." It also does not exhibit in any way, or by any theory of biology, *any* phenomenon of mind. It satisfies criteria biology uses to classify things as biological life, but is this "life" actually separate and distinct from the life of the mother? or is it only one special part of the mother's *Existenz*? This is a question Miranda & June fail to answer *with objective validity* because of the *hiatus* in their argument. The conclusion is an extravagance in reasoning.

Critical epistemology teaches that our objectively valid knowledge of being-a-human-being is holistic

and that the famous mind-body division is and can only be a *logical* division of being-a-human-being into two *purely mathematical* classifications (mind and body). The phenomenon of mind and the phenomenon of body must *both* be presented and exhibited when calling a human being a *living* human being in order for that concept to be objectively valid. To say an embryo cell is a living human being is not objectively valid. By saying it is, though, biology and pediatrics join themselves to one side of great controversies over *religious* issues such as abortion and what some call "the rights of the fetus."

Now, the *real indivisibility* of the phenomenon of mind and the phenomenon of body has an important epistemological consequence. This is called the principle of thorough-going *nous-soma* reciprocity. The general Idea of this principle is that *kinesis* (change of any kind) in *soma* accompanies *kinesis* in *nous* and vice versa because body and mind must be regarded as merely logical divisions of the holistic *real unity* of being-a-human-being. This idea clearly has limitations for *mind* and *body* because *their* reciprocity is apparently not-complete. For example, one does not impute a mental effect accompanying the growth of hair or fingernails nor can one "will" his beard not to grow. These are exceptions in experience that appear to stand outside the limitations of *nous-soma* reciprocity but do involve body *kinesis*. One's ideas of the *Existenz* of the Self are vested neither in the idea of body alone nor in that of mind alone but rather in the concept of the unity of mind-and-body = body-and-mind. For a *living human being* neither mind alone nor body alone can be represented *essentially* with objective validity. This is why it is called *nous-soma* reciprocity instead of mind-body reciprocity. Limitations of the principle pertain to *how* the combining of *nous* and *soma* is represented in the logical division of *psyche* [Wells (2009), chap. 1].

This principle of reciprocity opens the door for the possibility of an objectively valid scientific estimate of when a human life begins. Critical life requires both the ability to make mental representations and the ability for motoregulatory expressions of action practically grounded in these representation. As the study of neuroscience continues to develop more findings, one of the outcomes sought through this research is the ability to correlate somatic actions (brain activity) with psychological acts (mental acts). We have good reasons to posit that particular brain structures and activities have *relationships of correspondence* with mental activities. In other words, if we can detect the brain activity we will (someday) be able to assert an implication of mental activity corresponding to it. *Neuroscience is not there yet*, despite some scientists succumbing to overenthusiasm for press releases that convey impressions we are further along than we really are. But we *do* have very good reason to think the day will arrive when we can correlate these physiological and mental factors accurately and with objective validity. We have encountered nothing so far that presents us with any fundamental reason for *not* thinking so.

When this day will come, I cannot say. My personal opinion is that it is still a long time away. But what we *can* do *today* is set down some boundary lines between which the beginning of life must lie. Figure 1 is a developmental timeline of neurogenesis of anatomical and synaptic development in the hippocampus. (Other anatomical divisions of the brain admit to similar timeline determinations). We know that before there can be any mental representation, brain structures reciprocal with them must develop and be present and functioning. *We know today* that the earliest possible time for this is later than 8 weeks (roughly 2 months) after conception. By just slightly less than three months before birth, the neural substrates for life are almost certainly established [Stiles & Jernigan (2010)]. (See figure 1).

Religion cannot make objectively valid statements about science because its proper theological territory is that of supernature. Likewise science, the study of nature, has nothing it can say about supernature with objective validity. The boundary line between theology and natural science occurs at the horizon of possible human experience. In regard to the question of when a human life begins, where this boundary line lies today is still quite fuzzy. If it weren't we would be able to say precisely when it begins. But a fuzzy boundary is still a boundary and all *just* discussions and considerations of legal and political policy must recognize and respect this boundary *or else they make themselves unjust* according to social contracts governing Community and mini-Community associations. If the doctrine of a religious mini-Community proscribes abortion, for example, because, let us say, abortion prevents the possible potential
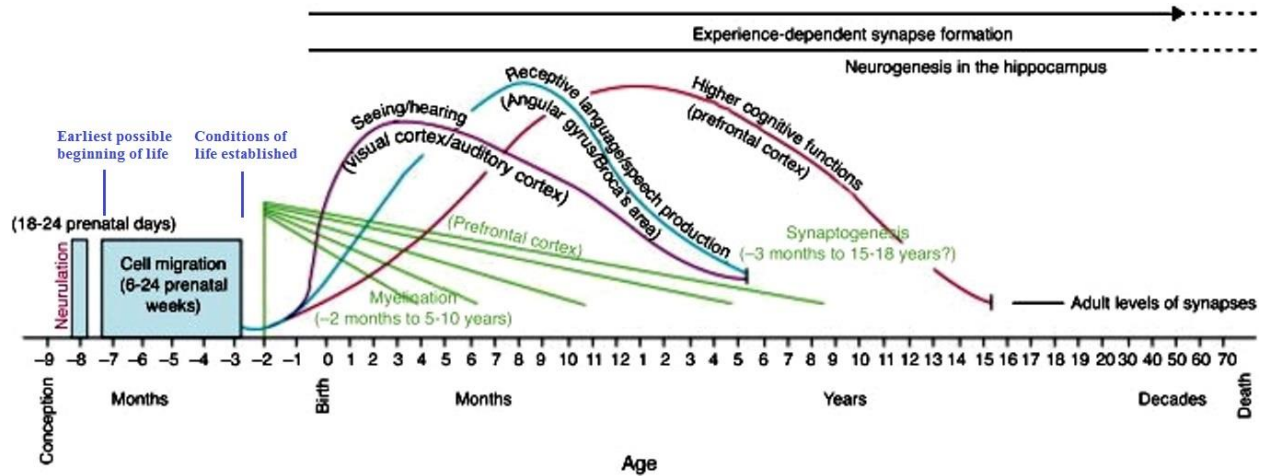
Experience-dependent synapse formation

Neurogenesis in the hippocampus

Seeing/hearing (visual cortex/auditory cortex)

Receptive language/speech production (Angular gyrus/Broca's area)

Higher cognitive functions (prefrontal cortex)

Earliest possible beginning of life

Conditions of life established

(18-24 prenatal days)

Neurulation

Cell migration (6-24 prenatal weeks)

(Prefrontal cortex)

Myelination (~2 months to 5-10 years)

Synaptogenesis (~3 months to 15-18 years?)

Adult levels of synapses

−9 −8 −7 −6 −5 −4 −3 −2 −1 Birth 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 30 40 50 60 70 Death

Conception Months Months Years Decades

Age

Figure 1: Timeline of neurogenesis in brain development. The detailed functions shown are hippocampus functions.

of a human life from becoming fulfilled then members of that mini-Community can justly proscribe abortion *within their mini-Community*. They cannot justly proscribe it for people who are not members of their religious mini-Community. If one of their members transgresses the proscription, they can justly expel that person from their mini-Community because the transgression is a moral crime violating their particular social contract. No *outside* authority figure can justly prohibit them from doing this assuming the parent Society makes *civic* freedom of religion part of its social contract.

How any particular individual feels about abortion is, of course, a very personal judgment and, in the final analysis, a judgment of taste. The only thing Critical analysis tells us today is that if an abortion is performed during the first 8 weeks after conception then the decision does not involve any life other than that of the woman, and if it is performed after a little over six months then it does involve the termination of a human life. But this arithmetic factor is not the only one involved in a decision. For example, my own personal (and subjective) judgment does not approve of abortions unless going to full term involves a great risk of fatality to the mother. This is because I *personally* value the potential I attribute to a new baby's birth. But this is a subjective personal opinion and, quite frankly, I regard myself as having no rightful standing in making the decision because it is biologically impossible for me to ever become pregnant. I *do* think that if the social contract of a civil Community or mini-Community *requires* a woman alienate her natural liberty to decide what she will do *then in exchange the Community has a Duty to provide any and all consequential support and assistance needed for the well-being of both the baby and the mother* because alienation of the mother's natural liberty is something *the Community* has demanded. If the Community proscribes abortion deontological *justice* requires *the Community* to assume moral responsibility for the consequences of this proscription. If it puts the full burden of these consequences on the mother *then it violates her civil rights* and by so doing the Community commits a moral crime. If a "pro-life" person refuses to fulfill this reciprocal Duty and abandons mother and child to face the consequences alone then this act of refusal is heinously uncivil and the refusal stands in contradiction to perfection of humanity (i.e., *it is a sin*).

Abortion is one of several controversial issues Societies face today that stem from lack of having an objectively valid *Realerklärung* of when a human life begins. Others pertain to such things as the legal status of a fetus, when a presumption of civil rights of the unborn can be justly applied, and a number of other things. Among them is the question of how much caution should be factored into policies and laws because of the fuzziness of the boundary I spoke of above. All of these, however, are separate and independent of the question "When does a human life begin?" because *that* question is asked and answered with objective scientific validity regardless of these issues. Just resolution of these other issues must follow, not precede or attempt to define, this *more fundamental* question.

4. Aesthetic, Spirituality, and Supernature

It is the nature of being-a-human-being that human affectivity is the driver of human cognition, and that objective sufficiency to hold-something-to-be-true is always preceded by *subjective* sufficiency for doing so. Critical epistemology comes to this conclusion as a transcendental necessity [Wells (2006), chap. 7, pp. 588-591]. Human beings are born with no innate concepts of objects. All our concepts of empirical objects have their first groundings in judgmentations of subjectively sufficient reasoning. The process of reflective judgment judges possible *expedience* of sensuous representations for the pure purpose of the process of Reason. This purpose is the categorical imperative of pure practical Reason: regulation for achieving and maintaining equilibrium. The categorical imperative of pure practical Reason can be called the mental homologue of homeostasis in biological organisms. Reason as the master regulator of all non-autonomic human behavior knows no objects of cognition and feels no feelings of affectivity. The process of determining judgment *serves* Reason by means of its determinant concepts that, reintroduced into the synthesis of apprehension, modify affectivity. It is from the harmonization of practical, reflective and determining judgment that a human being Self-organizes and so is said to be an Organized Being who self-accommodates to the environment of the natural world and self-assimilates this world into itself.

Affectivity is non-ontological yet grounds all development of ontology in human beings. Affectivity is non-cognitive yet drives cognition. Only the naive presuppositions of uncritical realism we all make from the earliest days of childhood, and to which most people cling throughout their lives, make it seem that ontology must be prior to epistemology and that therefore cognition ought to be the driver of affectivity. But the truth of human nature is just the opposite. Epistemology has priority over ontology. All our objects of experience are *made* to conform to laws of our power of cognition [Kant (1787) B: xvi].

If God created each of us and put us here in this world of temporal nature, would it not be utterly strange if this Critical nature of being-a-human-being is not somehow purposive for afterlife *Existenz*? If supernature is essentially ontological but human nature is non-ontologically grounded, by what stretch of imagination could one say Man is created as a reflection or image of God? The notion seems utterly incongruent in this case. Rather, congruence in this article of Critical faith seems to imply that ultimate supernature is *essentially* affective and non-ontological, and that ontological things – if there be any in supernature – must be secondary to this essence[7].

Here, then, is found a great difference between ontology-centered theology and epistemology-centered theology. We must of course *conceptualize* an ontology of supernature if we would try to understand our place in it after life because: •thinking is cognition through concepts; •concepts are representations of objects; and •objects, when regarded as being independent of the person who thinks them, are things. To think systematically about *things* is to think in the context of an ontology. For us to communicate at all with each other requires object concepts, and therefore an ontology, because affective perceptions are autistic in their essence[8]. Any ontology is a constituted system of all concepts and principles which: (1) are related to understanding objects in general; and (2) is regarded as a science of the properties of all things in general in the context of a particular applied metaphysic.

But human *need* to conceptualize a supernatural ontology is something quite different from supernature as a thing-regarded-as-it-is-in-itself (*Ding an sich selbst*). This treatise began as a work of faith-seeking-to-understand. It arrives now at the threshold of understanding what Anselm was seeking to learn when he prayed for instruction:

> Come then, Lord my God, teach my heart where and how to seek You, where and how to find You. [Anselm (1059), pp. 84-85]

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[7] Essence (*Wesen*) is the first inner ground of all that belongs to the possibility of a thing.
[8] Autistic means the representation cannot be communicated (put into words) because it is non-objective.

What am I trying to say when I say supernature is essentially non-ontological? Within what context does such a statement find any comprehensible meaning? I doubt if I or anyone else can offer to explain this in terms so clear and convincing as to win the conviction of everyone. After all, how does one *adequately* explain *Existenz* in terms of non-things without at least seeming to *center* the explanation *around* things? Many people, in point of fact, have tried to do so over the course of centuries of history and no one has yet succeeded in accomplishing this aim to the satisfaction of everyone. I think the best place to begin is by saying that this context is one generally associated with an idea people call ***spirituality***.

What is spirituality? In the English language this word has no widely agreed upon single definition. It is a noun denoting "the quality or state of being spiritual." The adjective "spiritual" means "non-corporeal" or "non-physical" with the prefix "non-" designating the logical Quality of the infinite function of judgment in Kantian Logic [Kant (1787) B: 97-98]. This infinite judgment asserts that the concept of "spiritual" is *excluded* from the sphere of concepts of "things that are corporeal" and from the sphere of concepts of "things that are physical." The English word derives from the Latin word *spiritus*, which the Vulgate Bible used to translate the Greek word πνεῦμα ("*pneuma*"). Some notion or notions of spirituality are found in every major genus of religion – Abrahamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Chinese – and many of the smaller ones as well. The expositions and descriptions in their theologies differ greatly, of course, but it must be noted that these differences are all rooted in their divers ontology-centered meta-physics. Put another way, they disagree about *things* but not about the Quality being non-corporeal.

For example, Aldous Huxley tells us the following about what he called "the Perennial Philosophy":

> At the core of the Perennial Philosophy we find four fundamental doctrines.
>
> First: the phenomenal world of matter and individualized consciousness – the world of things and animals and men and even gods – is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be nonexistent.
>
> Second: human beings are capable not merely of knowing *about* the Divine Ground by inference; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition, superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.
>
> Third: man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal Self, which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature with the spirit.
>
> Fourth: man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal Self and so come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground. [Huxley (1944), pg. 13]

I doubt if Huxley speaks for all Hindus here, and I think Buddhists would find disagreements with him. He certainly doesn't speak for the simple faith of the BaMbuti people. Still, there is somewhat of what he said found in every major genus of religion. Let us for example compare what he said with the philosophy of the Irish Anglican bishop and empiricist George Berkeley:

> It is evident to anyone who takes a survey of the *objects of human knowledge* that they are either *ideas* actually imprinted on the senses; or else such as are perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind; or lastly, *ideas* formed by help of memory and imagination – either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways. . . . And as several of these are observed to accompany each other, they come to be marked by one name, and so to be reputed as one *thing*. . . .
>
> But, besides all that endless variety of ideas or objects of knowledge, there is likewise Something which knows or perceives them; and exercises divers operations, as willing, imagining, remembering, about them. This perceiving, active being is what I call *mind*, *spirit*, *soul*, or *myself.* By which words I do not denote any one of my ideas, but a thing entirely distinct from them, wherein they exist, or,

which is the same thing, whereby they are perceived; for the existence of an idea consists in being perceived.

That neither our thoughts, nor passions, nor ideas formed by the imagination exist without the mind is what everyone will allow. And to me it seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the Sense, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever objects they compose), cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them. I think an intuitive knowledge may be obtained of this by anyone that shall attend to what is meant by the term *exist* when applied to sensible things. [Berkeley (1712), pp. 257-259]

This is the starting point for Berkeley's dialectic but not the end of it. Having designated the Something-which-perceives by the word "spirit," he then inquires into whether there are spirits other than oneself. After some lengthy preliminary arguments, he concludes there are. His principal dialectic inference is:

From what hath been said, it is plain that we cannot know the existence of *other spirits* otherwise than by their operations, or the ideas of them, excited in us. . . . Hence the knowledge I have of other spirits is not immediate, as is the knowledge of my ideas; but depending on the intervention of ideas, by me referred to agents or spirits distinct from myself, as effects or concomitant signs.

But though there be some things which convince us human agents are concerned in producing them, yet it is evident to everyone that those things which are called Works of Nature, that is, the far greater part of the ideas or sensations perceived by us, are *not* produced by, or dependent on, the wills of *men*. There is therefore some other Spirit that causes them since it is repugnant that they should subsist by themselves. But if we attentively consider the constant regularity, order, and concatenation of natural things, the surprising magnificence, beauty, and perfection of the larger, and the exquisite contrivance of the smaller parts of creation, together with the exact harmony and correspondence of the whole . . . I say that if we consider all these things and at the same time attend to the meaning and import of the attributes One, Eternal, Infinitely Wise, Good, and Perfect, we shall clearly perceive that they belong to the aforesaid Spirit, 'who works all in all' and 'by whom all things consist.'

Hence, it is evident that God is known as certainly and immediately as any other mind or spirit whatsoever, distinct from us. . . . There is not any one mark that denotes a man, or effect produced by him, which does not more strongly evince the being of that Spirit who is the Author of Nature. For it is evident that, in affecting other persons, the will of man hath no other object than barely the motion of the limbs of his body; but that such a motion should be attended by, or excite any idea in the mind of another, depends wholly on the will of the Creator. He alone it is who, 'upholding all things by the word of his Power,' maintains that intercourse between spirits whereby they are able to perceive the existence of each other. And yet this pure and clear Light which enlightens everyone is itself invisible to the greatest part of mankind. [*ibid.*, pp. 339-341]

For an Anglican priest to draw this conclusion is unsurprising. My point here lies in the comparison of Berkeley's doctrine with that of Huxley's quoted above. With minor terminology changes, they are more or less exactly the same. It seems to me also that an adage spoken by Islamic sage Imam Ali is very much "in the same spirit" as that of Huxley and Berkeley:

The completeness of the human is his mind. [Ali ibn Abi Talib (7th cent.), pg. 77, Adage 73]

As for Taoism, I think it could hardly be more clear there are parallels found in the Tao with Huxley's Divine Ground and Abrahamic notions of God-as-divine-ground even if its ideas tend to seem mystic and its ontology is often expressed in terms of syntheses of opposites that leave many Westerners scratching their heads, e.g.:

Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub;
It is the center hole that makes it useful.
Shape clay into a vessel;
It is the space within that makes it useful.

> Cut doors and windows for a room;
> It is the holes which make it useful.
> Therefore profit comes from what is there,
> Usefulness from what is not there. [Lao Tzu (6th cent. BC), v. 11]

The texts of Taoism present many such oppositions. But all of them refer back to the idea of the Tao:

> The principal focus of Taoism is the Tao (meaning 'Way,' or 'path'), which refers to a nameless, formless, all-pervasive power which brings all things into being and reverts them back to non-being in an eternal cycle. [Oldstone-Moore (2005), pg. 214]

For Westerners, finding parallels to the spiritualism inherent in Buddhism, phrased in ways someone raised in the West easily grasps, is a considerable challenge. Most of the reason parallels are difficult to draw is because Buddhism focuses on personal spiritual development and therefore upon what is subjective and without reference to objective concepts such as the idea of a creator god. A key doctrinal principle of Buddhism is the doctrine of *dukkha* – the idea that we crave and cling to the impermanent things that constitute all of the mundane world. Buddhist *nirvana* is cessation of *dukkha*, i.e., giving up trying to cling to and find happiness in impermanent things. In a number of striking ways, Buddhist theology exhibits similarities to the thought of the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus (c. 544-484 BC), who earned the nickname "Heraclitus the Obscure." Heraclitus regarded the world as something undergoing incessant change and ever subject to new modifications. According to him: •one can never step twice into the same river; •we are and are not; •all is one; •God is day and night, summer and winter, war and peace, repletion and hunger [Haxton (2001)], [Zeller (1883), pp. 44-48]. Neither Buddhism nor Taoism would strongly dispute these pronouncements.

Buddhist theology does not agree with Heraclitus' philosophy on all points but similarities on many points may be easily noted. Buddhists do not deny the existence of the universe or of deities but do regard them as impermanent. If things are not permanent, why focus on them? Is it not better to focus on cultivating one's mind to achieve a state of restraint and self-control by which one can let go of clinging to the impermanent (where no lasting satisfaction can ever be achieved) and thereby liberate oneself from endless cycles of fruitless craving? The majority of Buddhist traditions assert a person's consciousness, though always evolving, exists as a continuum and is the basis for what undergoes rebirth, re-becoming, and re-death. This is not-incongruent with Huxley's principles even though the ontologies differ.

As an object, supernature is by definition a thing beyond the horizon of possible human experience. An epistemology-centered ontology of supernature can therefore be expressed and understood only by means of metaphors and similes. To put this another way, all our inferences in regard to supernature can only be what Kant called *inferences of judgment*. An inference of judgment is an inference produced through the process of reflective judgment by which previous particular representations are subsumed into a general intuition, which is re-cognized as a general concept. It is by such an inference that new general concepts are produced for use in determining judgment (which always subsumes particulars under a *made* general concept). The three *modi* of inferences of judgment are ideation, induction, and analogy. Because inferences of judgment fall under the process of reflective judgment, all such inferences have only a subjectively sufficient ground (formal expedience) and not an objectively sufficient ground [Wells (2006), chap. 14, pp. 1265-1269; chap. 18, pp. 1669-1686, 1757-1760, 1781-1784].

All similes and metaphors are products of inferences of *analogy*. Kant explained the difference between induction and analogy in the following way:

> Induction is the inference where I hold for true what comes from many as if it came from all under a general inference and concept. I infer thus: what is due to as many things as I have ever known must also be due to all that are of this species and genus . . .
>
>   Secondly, as for what concerns inference according to analogy, this is nothing other than an

induction, but an induction only in respect to the predicate. Namely, when two things have come together in respect of all properties I have been able to know in them, then they will also come together in the remaining properties, which I have not known in them, and thus runs inference according to analogy. Analogy and induction are merely crutches for our understanding. [Kant (early 1770s) 24: 287]

Crutches they may be, but if so they are very important ones. Induction connects concepts (in the manifold of concepts) in a *series* of inferences but analogy *coordinates* them by basing characteristics of a concept of one thing on a concept of another thing. For example, fire is red and my friend Steve has red hair. Therefore, goes the analogy, Steve is like fire (e.g., "Steve has a fiery temper"). A thing for which characteristics are being inferred must share some characteristics with the thing from which the inference is drawn, and the inference of analogy then assigns other characteristics of that thing to the first thing as well. Characteristics are predicated of a thing, and this is why Kant described analogy as an induction in respect to the predicate [Wells (2006), chap. 18, pg. 1759].

Metaphors have a very great influence over natural languages because they are used to gradually add to or alter the meanings of words in a language for as long as that language is a "living language" (by which I mean a language real people actually speak in everyday life; this itself is an example of the word "living" being given a metaphorical language connotation). Even a casual inspection of a dictionary will quickly demonstrate usages of metaphorical connotations for a large fraction of words. You might be surprised to see the extent to which this is found. Over time, these metaphorical connotations tend to make words that originally had very crisp and specific definitions fuzzy and ambiguous.

To present just one example, the English word "kink" has at least five different connotations: 1) a short tight twist or curl caused by a doubling or winding of something upon itself; 2) a mental or physical peculiarity; 3) a clever unusual way of doing something; 4) a cramp in some part of the body; and 5) an imperfection likely to cause difficulties in the operation of something. It is conjectured today that the first connotation was the original meaning of the word "kink" and that it derived from the Dutch word *kinken*. But this is a conjecture *and we aren't certain today* this is where the English word came from. How did the word "kink" go from being a short tight twist in something to being a clever or unusual way of doing something? *By metaphor* produced through inference of analogy.

It would be very hard to dispute that new metaphorical connotations for old words contribute to depth and beauty of a language. Great poets are often called "great" because of their skill in moving your emotions by means of clever metaphors. (And "moving your emotions" is another example of metaphor). But they also have a downside because they can obscure an author's or user's meaning, particularly in old texts and speeches. For example, suppose you are reading the minutes of a meeting and come across the following statement: "The people do not want virtue but are the dupes of pretended patriots." These words were spoken on May 31st, 1787, by one of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia during debate over one of the most important issues for the U.S. Constitution[9] [Farrand (1911), vol. I, pg. 48]. What was this delegate saying? Was he saying Americans wished to be unvirtuous? Not at all. By saying "the people do not want virtue" he *meant* quite the opposite and was saying the American people *were* virtuous.

Words are signifiers and symbols of concepts. When the meaning of a word is ambiguous the concept it signifies is unclear. This is why Kant advised that when an author wanted to prevent the meanings of his words from being misunderstood through changing connotations over time he should express his idea in a dead language (such as Latin had become by Kant's day). 17th and 18th century authors of philosophical and scientific works frequently dropped out their native language and into Latin for exactly this purpose. Present day authors of scientific or technical works are doing the same thing when they suddenly insert

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[9] The point under debate was whether members of the House of Representatives should be elected by the people or appointed by the state legislatures.

mathematical symbols into the middle of their sentences or paragraphs. (Mathematics is a peculiar "dead language," useless for whispering in your beloved's ear but just the right one for explaining the law of gravity). The flaw in Kant's advice is that Latin was once a living language, and while it was "alive" its words underwent the same metamorphoses of connotations. The same is true of ancient Greek, ancient Arabic, and every other natural language.

This feature of languages has pronouncedly important implications for language translators, including those who translate religious texts. For example, I just did a quick Internet check on one particular passage in the New Testament. I found 36 different English Bible translations and most of them differed from each other in how they translated from a Greek language New Testament. It is true enough that, with sufficient effort, a person can find commonalities of congruence in these different translations if he wants to but it's also true that sometimes finding them takes strenuous work. There are many Christians who say "the Bible must be interpreted exactly as written," but, if so, *which version*? They *all* differ from one another. Some of these differences have historically contributed to mass persecutions, pogroms, and wars. Does that mean a Christian must read the New Testament in Greek and the Old Testament in Hebrew and Aramaic? That wouldn't help. Those languages also exhibit the ambiguities of metaphors. To see a proof of this, one only needs to consult *Strong's Concordance* [Strong (1890)].

The simple truth is: how a translator translates a religious text depends on the theology he follows. His theology *influences* his interpretations. Furthermore, it depends on the individual's personal metaphysic (the way he looks at the world). A Christian who relies on an ontology-centered metaphysic and a Christian who relies on an epistemology-centered metaphysic can arrive at quite different interpretations of the very same Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic text. The same is true for Arabic texts, Hindu texts, Buddhist texts, the texts of Taoism, and so on. Indeed, some Islamic scholars tell us one can truly under-stand the Quran *only* by reading it in its ancient Arabic language. I would add to this my own opinion that even this is not a guaranteed success if one person's metaphysic is epistemology-centered and another's is ontology-centered. When all is said and done, the fact is *metaphysics makes a difference*.

As an example pertinent to the segue I am about to make back to the main topic of this section, let us consider the connotations of two Greek words of significant importance in the New Testament. The first word is πνυμα ("*pneuma*"). The second is δυναμις ("*dynamis*"). According to Liddell & Scott (1996) there are no fewer than *11* connotations for πνυμα in ancient Greek: blast, wind; breathed air, breath; breathing, respiration; breath of life; that which is breathed forth or exhaled; divine inspiration; the spirit of God; spirit of man; spiritual or immaterial being; air, breeze; living being. *Strong's Concordance* adds a few more connotations: spirit; soul; vital principle by which a body is animated; the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, or desire.

Similarly, Liddell & Scott provide *15* connotations for δυναμις: power, might; strength, power, ability to do something; outward power, influence, authority; force for war, forces; means; power, faculty, capacity; elementary force; property, quality; productive power; function, faculty; function, meaning of part in a whole; faculty, art, or craft; a medicine; worth or value; capability of existing or acting. *Strong's* adds to these the following additional connotations: miraculous power; abundance; meaning; might; (worker of) miracles; violence; mighty work.

These two words are not even close to being the only ones in the New Testament having many differing connotations in meanings (metaphors). Sacred texts in other languages share this same feature. This brings me back around (at last) to the topic at hand: our metaphors and similes for supernatural noumena. Earlier in this section I presented some metaphorical examples found in divers religions. Now I will add another – not for the sake of dreary repetition but because it pertains to the idea of divine Community in Critical theology. The example is provided by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:4-12; the Greek text I use is the one in Zondervan (2011):

> Now there are diversities of gifts but the same *pneuma*; and there are diversities of service but the

> same supreme authority, and there are diversities of operation but the same God who effects all of them in everyone. But the manifestation of the *pneumatos* is given for the good of all. For to one is given through the *pneumatos* a word of wisdom, to another a word of knowledge according to the same *pneuma*, to another persuasion by the same *pneumati*, to another gifts of healing by the one *pneumati*, to another effecting of *dynameon*, to another prediction, to another discerning of rational *pneumaton*, to another kindred languages, and to another interpretation of languages but it is performed with one and the same *pneuma*, distributing to each as he be willing. For just as the body is one yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also is the body of Christ. [1 Corinthians 12:4-12]

The highlighted phonetical Greek words here (in Romanized font) are those for which the aforementioned remarks about πνυμα[10] and δυναμις make a difference in the translation. In typical interpretations *pneuma*, *pneumatos* and *pneumati* are translated into English as "Spirit" while *pneumaton* is rendered as "spirits." The capitalized "Spirit" is interpreted as referring to God while "spirits" typically refers to human spirits. The word *dynameon* (genitive plural of *dynamis*) is often rendered as "miracles." These words are the ones I wish to discuss here.

The translation I give here is not the one found in Zondervan or other traditional English translations of the New Testament; but neither does it radically depart from them[11]. What specifically differs about this translation is the connotations given to the Greek text are selected from an epistemology-centered view of supernature (as an ontological metaphor). You may agree or disagree with my rendering as you wish; my intent is not to convert you but to present an epistemological metaphor of supernature according to Critical theology. There is no reason to doubt Paul wrote his letter from an ontology-centered "way of looking at the world" and was thinking in concretely objective terms.

However, when one shifts to an affective and epistemological way of interpreting Paul's words this amounts to a shift away from the primacy of object-centeredness to a primacy given over to aesthetical judgments of taste. Taste is a judicial selection of that which is generally engaging according to laws of sensibility. The affective perceptions to which a judgment of taste is bound are essentially autistic (unable to be communicated by words or turned into an object because they are non-objective), and so to *express* a judgment of taste we must, like a poet, resort to simile and metaphor.

In this "spirit of translating," the word *pneuma*, rather than ontologically suggesting an idea of a Spirit[12], is more congruent with aesthetical perception if it is regarded as a metaphor for a vital principle by which bodies are animated. The noumenal *cause* of this vital principle is the theological archetype (God) and its manifestations in human beings are regarded as *effects* of this cause. This interpretation is one that is congruent with Kant's usage of the word "soul" (*Seele*), i.e., that which is said to be animated by spirit [Kant (1783) 29: 913-915]. In the Critical theory of the phenomenon of mind, "spirit" (*Geist*) is the inner principle of animation for a living being. As Kant himself said, we cannot dispense with analogy in trying to objectively understand the notion of "spirit." We can and should, however, guard against extravagances in our analogies. I will say more about this below.

As for *dynameon*, rendering this word as "mighty works" is epistemologically preferable to rendering it

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[10] Note: *pneuma*, *pneumatos*, *pneumaton*, and *pneumati* are merely different grammatical cases of the word *pneuma*; *pneuma* is a 3rd declension neuter noun; *pneumatos* is its genitive case; *pneumaton* is its genitive plural; *pneumati* is its dative singular case [Mounce (2019)].

[11] These minor departures involve the words κύριος ("supreme authority") and διακονιων ("diversities of service").

[12] The notion of *pneuma* ("air") as a metaphor for soul or spirit traces back to the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Anaximenes (c. 585-528 BC) [Zeller (1883), pp. 30-31]. Early Christian theologians retained this metaphor. On the other hand, Heraclitus used "fire" (πυρ) as his metaphor. He wrote, "The cosmos . . . always was and is and will be everlasting fire, replenished in measure as it burns away" [Haxton (2001), pg. 14, 15]. Both metaphors attempt to express a notion of some *one* eternal thing which nonetheless is manifested by qualities of endless change (*kinesis*). In Critical terminology, both metaphors are syntheses of a unity regarded as a plurality, which Kant called a totality.

as "miracles." Works performed by a human being are visible and apparent to us. For example, Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* is regarded by many people, myself included, as a "mighty work" of the mind. The Catholic Church regarded it as such a mighty work that Pope John XXII pronounced him a saint on grounds that it was miraculous that any man could have produced *Summa Theologica*. During his canonization process, one of the cardinals said, "There are as many miracles [in Aquinas' life] as articles [in *Summa Theologica*]." Rendering *dynameon* as "mighty works" explicitly recognizes achievements but without trying to supply an ontological explanation for *how* people are able to perform them.

What can be drawn from Paul's quotation in view of all this and in relationship to Critical articles of faith? Paul's words say, either directly or by implication, that all individual gifts, services, abilities, and skills are effects (manifestations) of one and the same source, which he calls *pneuma*. But, he says, "the same God *effects* all of them in everyone." Does this mean *pneuma* and God are one and the same thing? No. The notion of God is a notion of metaphysical substance – the *causer* of the effect. The notion of *pneuma* is the notion of the *matter* of an *ability* in terms of what the ability is able to do. This is what Kant called a *Kraft*. Thus, *pneuma* is regarded as a *Kraft* (power) of God – a subtle but important distinction. In making this distinction, *pneuma* has to be viewed as a *principle* rather than an ontological *thing*. If it was a *thing* then it would have an *Existenz* of its own independent of God, and that is not consistent with Paul's words. To regard it as a *Kraft* means to regard its *Existenz* as *inherent in* God.

Thus far, what Paul wrote is wholly consistent with two Critical articles of faith: 1) God exists; and 2) God created human beings and the temporal universe and did so for some purpose. The first is obvious, the second slightly less so. The manifestations are "performed with one and the same *pneuma*, distributing to each as he be willing." God does not immediately and directly cause people to act in this way or that; his *influence* is indirect (mediate) "to each as he is willing." The relationship through *pneuma* is one of *commercium* (reciprocal combination or action) between a person and God. As a principle, *pneuma* is a *principle of reciprocity*. Perhaps you wondered earlier in this treatise: if it is not innate in human nature for individuals to construct reciprocal obligations out of obligations-to-Self, then what is it that orients or moves a person to do so? I offer for your consideration the idea that *pneuma* is the principle of aesthetic motivation for this and through this principle a human being can, as Huxley put it, "identify himself with his spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground" or, as Berkeley might have put it, "maintain an intercourse between spirits."

Paul did not stop here. He tells us, "the body is one yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body." He is expressing, in metaphorical terms, the notion of a totality, i.e., the synthesis of a plurality regarded as a unity, as a principle of *e pluribus unum* ("out of many, one"). What else would one call this notion if not "divine Community"? The 11th article of Critical faith does not say divine Community *is* God's purpose; it says divine purpose is *expressed in* divine Community and fulfilled *by* humanity overall.

The ontology-centered metaphysics of the Abrahamic faiths more or less combine with our human experiences of kingdoms and rulers to incline people to personify God and relationships between God and human beings. One might call this the prevailing Western and Middle Eastern metaphor. Eastern faiths, on the other hand, use different metaphors (as we have seen in this treatise). Those of Hinduism, Taoism, and Buddhism are more closely akin to Heraclitus' metaphors:

> From the strain of binding opposites comes harmony. [Haxton (2001), pg. 31]

> The cosmos works by harmony of tensions, like the lyre and the bow. Therefore good and evil are the same. [*ibid.*, pg. 37]

For example,

> That which shrinks must first expand.
> That which fails must first be strong.

> That which is cast down must first be raised.
> Before receiving there must be giving.
> This is called the perception of the nature of things.
> Soft and weak overcome hard and strong. [Lao Tzu (6th cent. BC), v. 36]

In Bhagavad-Gita we find,

> Realize that pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat are all one and the same. [Bhagavad-Gita (c. 5th to 2nd cent. BC), pg. 39]

In these, too, is found that synthesis of opposites seen in Paul above. It is also found in the synthesis of the primitive notions of understanding (the categories of understanding) in Critical metaphysics:

> unity + plurality $\rightarrow$ totality
> reality + negation $\rightarrow$ limitation
> substance & accident + causality & dependency $\rightarrow$ community
> possibility & impossibility + actuality & non-being $\rightarrow$ necessity & contingency
>   [Kant (1787) B: 110-112], [Wells (2006), chap. 10, pg. 856-860]

These categories are the primitive functions of human understanding by which we understand objects through the combination of concepts. But concepts all have their origin in acts of reflective judgment, and these acts are all affective judgments. They are aesthetical in regard to formal expedience in cognition and teleological in regard to formal expedience for actions [Wells (2006), chaps. 14-18]. Objectivity itself is the functional result of a synthesis of aesthetical reflective judgment and *psyche* (the faculty of animating principles for *nous-soma* reciprocity) [Wells (2006), chap. 16, pp. 1460-1469].

What are the conclusion to be drawn from this lengthy section? First, speculative ontology in regard to supernature has the mystic and spiritual character we see in the major religions because the objects of these speculations are grounded in non-objective (reflective) judgment. No better way to say this comes to my mind than to say our understandings of supernature are *naturally poetic* through metaphor and simile. William James said,

> I do believe that feeling is the deeper source of religion, and that philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products, like translation of a text into another tongue. . . . Feeling is private and dumb, and unable to give an account of itself. It allows that its results are mysteries and enigmas, declines to justify them rationally, and on occasion is willing that they should even pass for paradoxical and absurd. Philosophy takes just the opposite attitude. Her aspiration is to reclaim from mystery and paradox whatever territory she touches. To find an escape from obscure and wayward personal persuasion to truth objectively valid for all thinking men has ever been the intellect's most cherished ideal. . . . Religious experience, in other words, spontaneously and inevitably engenders myths, super-stitions, dogmas, creeds, and metaphysical theologies, and criticisms of one set of these by the adherents of another. . . . But all these intellectual operations, whether they be constructive or comparative and critical, presuppose immediate experiences as their subject-matter. They are interpretive and inductive operations, operations after the fact, consequent upon religious feeling, not coordinate with, not independent of what it ascertains. [James (1902), pp. 148-149]

The word essence means the first inner ground of all that belongs to the possibility of a thing. In this sense, spirituality is the essence of faith and religion. But this essence is an essence of affectivity and the aesthetic of human taste. To say this in no way diminishes faith and religion. Affectivity is personal and private, a root part of the nature of being-a-human-being. If God created you and put you here, he created you an *affective* being *with* cognitive intelligence. If you are created as a reflection or image of God, then God too, the Object of the theological archetype, must equally be regarded as an affective being with cognitive intelligence. The dialectic implication of this is a person's relationship with God *is* a personal

relationship. You need no other person to define this for you or on your behalf because *you* have the power to feel this within yourself. This is the moral lesson one can take from

Behold, the kingdom of God is within you. [Luke 17:21]

If this is so, is there more that can be inferred from it based upon the nature of being-a-human-being? Is there some anticipation one might expect for this relationship in afterlife? That, too, is a question of wide concern in theology. Let us examine it dialectically taking care to avoid extravagance in reasoning.

5. Dialectic Anticipations of God and Afterlife

In Critical theology, the theological archetype is one's cognizance of an unconditioned Ideal of everything in the highest measure of an essence that: (1) rejects every deficiency; (2) contains all realities in itself; and (3) is regarded as the highest good (*summum bonum*). "God" is the word I use for the Object of the theological archetype [Kant (1783-84) 28: 993-995], [Kant (1804) 21: 19]. As an Object, God is a super-natural noumenon so far beyond the horizon of possible human experience that any predication of God's *Existenz* can only be logically problematic. But an idea of the *Dasein* of God is an objectively valid concept because God is held-to-be the essential cause of everything human beings experience as real. Positing the *Dasein* of a cause of real experience is empirically necessitated (by the category of necessity & contingency in human understanding) for systematic coherence in the Reality of phenomena [Wells (2006), chap. 10, pg. 858]. But no predication of God's *Existenz* (manner of existing) can be made with objective validity from the theoretical Standpoint. Therefore, whatever your ideas about the supernature of God might be, no one else can prove them wrong, nor can you prove to someone else that they are correct. Such ideas are, of course, *subjectively* valid – i.e., a person has a subjectively sufficient ground for holding the idea to be true – because otherwise a person would not conceptualize the idea in the first place. Subjective validity means the representation of an intuition is grounded in transcendental principles of the Critical doctrine of the laws of sensibility (and, therefore, in human nature).

This being so, is there any possibility for human beings to come to agreement *of any kind* in regard to their ideas about God or afterlife? Subjective validity is private and personal; agreement of any kind in regard to ideas about God means people must share some *object of agreement*. But if all ideas about God's *Existenz* lack theoretical objective validity, does that not mean agreement can never be reached? No, it does not because there is another kind of objective validity – **practical** objective validity. This is objective validity from the **practical Standpoint** of Critical epistemology. The practical Standpoint is the Stand-point from which one evaluates concepts in regard to practical Reason and the appetitive power of human beings, and is the Standpoint for human beings' power to act spontaneously as agents. Its concern is with *intelligible* objects inasmuch as these objects are causes of a human's determination of actions. In Critical epistemology, *intelligible* means "that in respect of an object of sense which is not an appearance." All ideas of intelligible objects are ideas of *mathematical* objects (noumena) because their representations lack actual contribution from receptivity of the senses. Disagreements over the *Existenz* of God or afterlife are over nothing else than *mathematical details* in our concepts.

To speculate, as I do above, that God should be regarded as an affective being *is* a speculation in regard to the *Existenz* of God. It lacks objective validity as an ontological Object; but as an idea of *epistemology*, what *practical* objective validity, if any, can be found for it? In other words, what practical implications are contained under an Idea that God is *essentially* an affective being? What practical difference does this Idea make for you or me? William James wrote,

The serious meaning of a concept, says Mr. Pierce, lies in the concrete difference to someone which its being true will make. Strive to bring all debated conceptions to that 'pragmatic' test and you will escape vain wrangling: if it can make no practical difference which of two statements be true, then they are really one statement in two verbal forms; if it can make no practical difference whether a

given statement be true or false, then the statement has no real meaning. In neither case is there anything fit to quarrel about [James (1909), pp. 51-52].

And so let us inquire: is there anything we can find, despite the diversities and differences of human affectivity and judgments of aesthetic taste in religion, that seems to be common in human affective nature? If there is, and if human beings are a reflection or image of God, then such commonalities would have dialectic significance for theology and provide affective essentials for ideas of God's *Existenz*.

I think a good place to explore this is the diversity of ideas people have about afterlife and what they think afterlife will be like. For this we need not take into consideration the minority of human beings who hold all ideas of supernature, God, and afterlife to be false. This is because here there is no idea with which to make a comparison other than to note that this holding-to-be-false is as much a speculative judgment lacking theoretical objective validity as its opposite. The ontological predication "there is no supernature" can no more be proved than can the predication "there is a supernature" [Kant (1787) B: 618-670]. In both cases the individual comes to a subjectively sufficient reason for making his judgment, and in both cases the judgment is grounded in a judgment of taste. For some people, this reason might be due to personal repugnance over hypocrisies, vices, or intolerances sometimes exhibited by religious authority figures. For some it might be repugnance they feel about extravagances in religion. For some it might be an extravagance of faith-in-science, ignoring the fact that science deals strictly and only with objects of nature and can say nothing whatsoever about supernature with objective validity. Subjectively sufficient reasons vary from person to person and always, ultimately, come down to judgments of aesthetical taste acting in concert with individuals' private and personal metaphysics.

Neither need we linger for long over those people who hold to a religious faith but are keenly aware they can never be certain about their holding-to-be-true during their lifetimes and, so, do not speculate about supernature, God, or afterlife. These people do not deny the *Dasein*, as an atheist does, but do choose to leave predications of *Existenz* unexamined. Some of them might say to you, "I'll either find out eventually if there is an afterlife or else I won't." This is a form of type-α compensation but one closer akin to Cusa's rational "learned ignorance" than it is to willful ignórance:

> For nothing more perfect comes to a person, even the most zealous in learning, than to be found most learned in the ignorance that is uniquely one's own. One will be the more learned the more one knows that one is ignorant. [Nicholas of Cusa (1438), pg. 89]

By means of it they are able *subjectively* to maintain equilibrium (as the categorical imperative requires). For these *people of faith* the logical Quality of the judgment is not an affirmative judgment nor is it a negative judgment but, rather, its logical Quality is an infinite judgment [Wells (2006), chap. 8]. For some of them one might say there is, as there also is for many people in all the major sects of organized religion, perhaps the flavor of a Hamlet to be found here in terms of virtue – i.e., that

> . . . the dread of something after death,
> The undiscovered country from whose bourn
> No traveler returns, puzzles the will [Shakespeare (c. 1600-1) Act III, Scene 1] –

in regard to grounding compliance with moral customs in Duties-to-Self rather than in deontological commitment to reciprocal Obligation and Duty. But, when so, this does not differentiate them from many other people. Others of them ground their actions in commitment-to-obligation (*Verpflichtung*)[13] and act out of deontological virtue[14] rather than from grounds in self-love[15]. Neither atheism nor agnosticism can be broadly painted with a single brush stroke regarding merit, virtue, or morality with objective validity.

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[13] the binding of oneself as beholden to observing and acting in accordance with duties of moral custom.

[14] the individual's constant disposition (unwavering attention) to carry out his duties.

[15] determination of a choice on the subjective ground of happiness.

And so, then, let us turn to the divers ideas of afterlife found in different organized religious faiths. In no other sphere of intellection is there found greater diversity of opinion and speculation than in the sphere of religion. An initial survey of the divers religions can easily lead the surveyor to think many of these have nothing whatsoever in common with each other because in their details one can find points of view that seem utterly contradictory to one another.

Such a first impression is misleading. There is in truth a number of core commonalities one can find shared by every major genera of religion for which some recognizable theology has been formulated. The first of these, in practical importance, is that they all, without exception, arise out of foundations in ontology-centered ways of looking at the world. The ones we have today all have their roots planted in even more ancient religions back to the dawn of history and into prehistory. It is almost beyond reasonable doubt that this means their origins go back to times when human Societies were of the kind Santayana called "natural societies" (socialization grounded in personal affective judgments reciprocated among a group of people). Their theologies have evolved and developed over the centuries as Societies progressed through Santayana's stages of natural to free to ideal societies.

Second, it is almost beyond reasonable doubt that in their primitive stages the presumptive metaphysics people based their earliest speculations on were characterized by outlooks of naive realism because every human being, without exception, begins life as a naive realist. There were and are dangerous phenomena people of every era encounter in experience; and in primitive ages, no less than in modern times, people want explanations for their causes for the practical reason that they want to prevent their reoccurrences. There are phenomena that bring people to grief – death is probably the chief example – and every person will seek to find some means of comforting themselves because grief is, above all else, an unacceptable disturbance to a human being's equilibrium that the process of practical Reason will not tolerate. When you consider the idiosyncratic character of people's self-developed personal metaphysics then it cannot be called surprising that such almost endless diversity of opinion and speculation over religion exists. This diversity makes looking at the finest details of religious theology an extravagance of over-specialization because these details are almost as individualized as people themselves.

Nonetheless, one can find there are a number of common *themes* that appear in the theologies of all the major religious genera. They are, of course, expressed in different languages, in different terminologies, and different descriptions of supernatural *Existenz*. Their origins occur at different times. Yet if one sets aside ontological differences and looks at them from an epistemology-centered point of view, thematic commonalities emerge.

The most striking of these is that all of them hold-it-to-be-true that some essential part of an individual's personal identity continues after death of the physical body *for at least some* people. Some faiths hold it to be true for all individuals, others hold it is not necessarily true for all individuals. This condition can be taken as a practical explanation of "afterlife" even if in some cases this continuation is called rebirth, reincarnation, or something else. As discussed above, this holding-to-be-true has none but subjectively sufficient reasons to support it (and therefore is grounded in affectivity).

A second striking common theme is that all these divers faiths hold-it-to-be-true that afterlife *Existenz* must be earned through merit. Various sects differ from one another about what does and what does not constitute "merit" but all of them contain a moral theme. In Hinduism this is called *dharma* (truth, right-eousness, duty, law, and justice). In Buddhism it is called *karma* (moral actions). In Chinese folk religion it is called *bao ying* (cosmic and moral reciprocity). In the Abrahamic faiths it is called "righteousness."

A third common theme is that what a person earns through merit is an *Existenz* in a condition that in English is called "paradise." The connotation of the word is that the condition is one of bliss, felicity, or delight. Bliss and felicity, in turn, denote complete happiness. There is, however, a shortcoming in this idea. That shortcoming is that "happiness" is an extremely vague concept when it comes down to trying to explain it *objectively* (i.e., what does or does not constitute "happiness"). In Critical epistemology, the notion of happiness is threefold according to whether it is viewed from the judicial Standpoint, the

practical Standpoint, or the theoretical Standpoint. The Critical Standpoints of happiness are: (1) from the judicial Standpoint, the consciousness of the pleasantness of life uninterruptedly accompanying a person's whole *Dasein*; (2) from the practical Standpoint, the expedience of the disposition of a human being to act on the basis of the matter of desire; (3) from the theoretical Standpoint, the problematic Object to which one theoretically refers in references to his state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Theoretical happiness is a unity of all an individual's concepts of empirical representations of matters-of-happiness. The first two Standpoints are common to all the divers faiths. Not surprisingly, it is only in the third (theoretical) Standpoint where they differ from one another. I call it "not surprising" because it is in this third Standpoint where ontology enters in. Kant wrote,

> The idea of happiness is not one such as man has abstracted by chance from his instincts and so derived from the animality in himself; on the contrary, it is a mere Idea of a state to which he would make the latter [his animality] adequate under merely empirical conditions (which is impossible). He sorts this out himself and indeed in different ways through his complicated understanding by imagination and the senses; yes, and what is more he amends these so often that this nature, even if it were to be totally subjugated to his choice, nevertheless could by no means undertake to determine a general law with this unstable concept, and so harmonize with the purpose that each arbitrarily intends for himself. But even if we either reduce this to the genuine urge of nature in which our species generally agrees, or, on the other hand, raise our skill so high as to provide for such an imagined purpose, yet even so what man understands by happiness, and what is in fact his own proper natural purpose (not purpose of freedom) would never be attained by him; for his nature is not of the type to stop anywhere in possession and enjoyment and to be gratified. [Kant (1790) 5: 430]

The two Standpoints from which divers religions agree about happiness (and so, mediately, on what a paradisiacal condition would be like) are affective and regulative[16], and are congruent with the Idea of God as an affective being if human beings are in some way reflections or images of God. For the purpose of comparison, let us look at some of the theoretical views of paradisiacal *Existenz* found among the divers religions.

Abrahamic interpretations more or less agree paradise is a place of peace, prosperity, happiness, contentment, luxury, and fulfillment. Paradise is often metaphorically described as a garden or gardens, with an inherent implication that paradisiacal *Existenz* would be similar in some way to the Garden of Eden described in Genesis:

> And Jehovah God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground made Jehovah God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; . . . And a river went out of Eden to water the garden [Genesis 2:8-9].

> And Jehovah God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to work it and attend to it. [Genesis 2:15]

However, nowhere in the Bible is it stated that afterlife *Existenz* will be a return to Adam's stationing in the Garden of Eden. Christian doctrine is extremely vague about paradisiacal *Existenz* and has no general doctrine about it that is accepted by all the various sects of Christianity. The only *specific* descriptions found in the New Testament are in Revelations, and here most of what it says is focused on describing architectural features of New Jerusalem. Concerning the *Existenz* of people it says only:

> They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more, and there will be no more mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the former things have passed away. [Revelation 21:4]

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[16] Note that in the quote Kant called happiness an Idea of a state of being. In Critical terminology, an Idea is a regulative principle of actions.

To one who thirsts I will give from the spring of the water of life. [Revelation 21:6]

The Quran goes into notably more detail regarding afterlife *Existenz*:

Give those who believe and do good the news that they will have Gardens graced with flowing streams. Whenever they are given sustenance from the fruits of these Gardens they will say, 'We have been given this before,' because they were provided with something like it. They will have pure spouses and there they will stay. [Quran 2:25]

We shall have removed all ill feeling from their hearts; streams will flow at their feet. [Quran 7:43]

No soul knows what joy is kept hidden in store for them as a reward for what they have done. [Quran 32:17]

They will have familiar provisions – fruits – and will be honored in gardens of delight; seated on couches, facing one another. A drink will be passed round among them from a flowing spring; white, delicious to those who taste it, causing no headiness or intoxication. With them will be spouses – modest of gaze and beautiful to the eye – like protected eggs. [Quran 37:41-49]

'Enter Paradise, you and your spouses: you will be filled with joy.' Dishes and goblets of gold will be passed around them with all that their souls desire and their eyes delight in. 'There you will remain: this is the Garden you are given as your own, because of what you used to do, and there is abundant fruit in it for you to eat.' [Quran 43:70-73]

Here is a picture of the Garden promised to the pious: rivers of water forever pure, rivers of milk forever fresh, rivers of wine, a delight for those who drink, rivers of honey clarified and pure flow into it; there they will find fruit of every kind [Quran 47:15].

On couches of well-woven cloth they will sit facing each other; everlasting youths will go round among them with glasses, flagons, and cups of pure drink that causes no headaches or intoxication; any fruits they choose; the meat of any bird they like; and beautiful wide-eyed maidens like hidden pearls: a reward for what they used to do. They will hear no idle or sinful talk there, only clean and wholesome speech. [Quran 56:15-26]

They will dwell amid thornless lote trees and clustered acacia with spreading shade, constantly flowing water, abundant fruit, unfailing, unforbidden, with incomparable companions We have specially created – virginal, loving, of matching age – for those on the Right, many from the past and many from later generations. [Quran 56:28-40]

One might perhaps form an impression from all this that afterlife *Existenz* is to be an *Existenz* without labors or duties of any sort; but before forming such an impression, note that nowhere above does it say this. It says anything you would be doing will be something pleasing to you. The quotes above do not metaphorically describe a hedonistic or layabout *Existenz*. The correct simile for what sorts of activities a person is to engage in during afterlife is to compare it to the sorts of activities a person might choose to engage in during retirement years. It does, after all, say in Genesis 2:15 that Adam was to work and attend to the Garden of Eden, and Islam regards Genesis as part of its religious foundation. "Labor" in the sense of "in the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground" [Genesis 3:19] was a punishment and has to be differentiated from Adam's appointed duties in Genesis 2:15. Neither does any of the above say any such duties necessarily involve gardening activities; these texts were written in the pre-industrial age when gardening and agriculture were the most common occupations for most people. Neither do any of these passages say or imply, whatever one's afterlife duties or occupations might be, that these are appointed to a person by God like a master assigns work to a slave. The overarching theme is rather one of civil Community with people living cooperatively, peacefully, and tranquilly with each other. I return to this theme in the concluding chapter of this treatise.

Now let us turn to the Eastern religions with their very different ontologies compared to the Abrahamic ones. None of them draw a sharp ontological distinction between nature and supernature like Western

ontologies do. What Western ontology regards as *two* things – nature and supernature – Eastern ontology regards as *one* thing. A distinction is drawn between a person's life from birth to biological death and a person's *Existenz* after biological death, but this distinction is regarded as a differentiation in *cycles* or *modes* of continuing *Existenz*.

Hinduism and Buddhism both take their original orientations from the earlier Vedic period in the northern Indian subcontinent (c. 1500-500 BC). However, as they developed they evolved into two quite different doctrines which seem in many ways to be ontological opposites of each other. Chinese folk religion developed independently of both.

In Hinduism the core first principle of the doctrine is the notion of *atman* (essence, breath, or soul). Hindus hold that every being possesses it. But true *atman* is beyond identification with phenomena – a point of view not entirely unlike Berkeley's philosophy. The goal of a Hindu is a state of *moksha*, which means: freedom from ignorance; self-realization; self-actualization; and self-knowledge – Huxley's fourth doctrinal principle in his Perennial Philosophy. *Existenz* in a state of *moksha* is a person's ultimate aim and is achieved through three paths: *dharma* (virtuous, proper, moral life); *artha* (material prosperity; means of life); and *kama* (pleasure; sensuality; emotional fulfillment). Comparing the notions of *kama* and *artha* with the descriptions of paradise quoted from the Quran above, I think the similarities are evident enough to require no expounding upon here. As for *dharma*, the correspondence of this notion with the Abrahamic notion of "righteousness" is also quite obvious. Achievement of *moksha* – unitive knowledge of what Huxley called the Divine Ground (i.e., God) – and the Abrahamic notion of Man dwelling with and in the presence of God (as, e.g., in New Jerusalem) are likewise close and perhaps even identical metaphors.

In contrast, the teachings of Buddhism are extremely difficult for people raised in Western cultures to grasp. This is because the core teaching of Buddhism *bans **ontological** thinking about* Existenz. This doctrine is not only the metaphysical opposite of Hindu metaphysics but of the dominant Western metaphysic as well. The entire focus of Buddhist doctrine is to find happiness and contentment and to banish misery and suffering. It would be hard to name another religion more subjectively focused than this. Nor is it easy to describe any *Existenz* more paradisiacal than this. The core notion of Buddhism is the notion of *anatta*. This is the teaching that there is no permanent, unchanging, eternal or autonomous "self." However, *this is not the same thing as denial of* the *Dasein* of the "self." An ontology-centered thinker would respond to this teaching along the lines of, "well, if there is no 'me' and no 'you' then who am I and who are you? This *anatta* notion of yours is absurd!" And so it is from an ontology-centered viewpoint. But Buddhist teachings are thoroughly *non*-ontological at the deepest level. Buddhist doctrine teaches that it is a cardinal error *to think about* "self" and "no-self" *as ontological things* because thinking about an ontological "self" creates selfish desires, cravings, attachments, hatreds, ill-wills, conceit, pride, and egoism. The Buddhist counterpart to Hindu *moksha* is *nirvana*, which means a state of *Existenz* in which "the three fires" of passion, aversion, and ignorance are extinguished. A person who can achieve this can be said to live in a state of bliss.

In Western philosophical traditions, the notion of *nirvana* is reflected in parts of Stoic philosophy:

> The wise man must shed all his passions in order to acquire imperturbability, *apathia*, *ataraxia*. The wise man is master of himself, he lets nothing overwhelm him, he is not at the mercy of external events; he can be happy in the midst of the severest pains and ills. The good things of life may be, at the most, desirable and worthy to be sought after, but they do not have true value or importance – only virtue has these qualities. [Marías (1967), pg. 93]

But, at the same time, the doctrine of *anatta* can be viewed in a way reflected in the philosophy of Heraclitus,

> The soul is undiscovered, though explored forever to a depth beyond report. [Haxton (2001), pg. 45]

When one of Buddha's disciples asked him if there is a self, Buddha refused to answer, explaining that to hold either that there is a self or there is no self both lead to extreme views of wrong-thinking that make enlightenment impossible.

Banning all ontological thinking in regard to the "self" is perhaps the most difficult thing any person can be asked to do. An infant's *entire* construction of his understanding of nature and reality begins with an all important conceptual division he makes between two objects: "me" and "not-me" [Piaget (1929), pp. 124-131]. The infant regards this division, from the very first, as a real division and thus sets up at the very roots of his manifold of concepts the concepts of the *Dasein* of self and the *Dasein* of not-self. *Every other object* will thereafter stand in either the sphere of "me" or that of "not-me." Buddhism asks you *to stop thinking about this as a real division* and regard it as merely a logical division. It is little to be wondered at that some Buddhist teachers teach that the question of "self" is unanswerable.

Personally, I am a little skeptical most Buddhists are entirely comfortable with this. I myself am unable to do it in any *phenomenal* way. I find myself limited to at best dialectical and mathematical speculation of a "hmm . . . suppose I suppose I don't know "me" and "not-me" is a real division; then what?" sort. If making this supposition leads to making a different choice of action than that which would be chosen otherwise, then this difference in action would constitute a moral maxim of selfless *anatta*. Although it takes some meditative effort, a Westerner might catch a faint taste of the flavor of Buddhist *anatta* from the song "If'n I was God" in the 1973 musical *Tom Sawyer*. In it the 12-year-old lead character, Tom Sawyer, (played by Johnny Whitaker) tells God,

If'n I was God
Well, just for spite
I wouldn't set the sun at night
Till everyone was treated right
By everyone else they see.

If'n I was God
I'd fix it so's
Without explainin', folks would know.
They'd know what's goin' on inside
Of everyone else like me.

Nobody'd hurt nobody else,
I wouldn't let it be.
Nobody'd have a need to pray
Except for thankin' me.

If'n I was God
I'd make us wise
So's everyone could realize
That everywhere beneath the sun
Everyone needs everyone
And God,
That ain't half what I would do
If'n I was you.   ["If'n I was God" (1973) by Robert B. Sherman and Richard M. Sherman]

These would be this little boy's maxims "if'n he was God." We have here an example of poetry using *metaphors of empathy* – transformations of one's *affective* self into *another's* self – and that **is** *anatta*.

I think I'd make a poor Buddhist but knowing this epistemological character of Buddhism at least helps me understand why Thich Quang Duc did not commit an irrationally insane action in 1963 according to his religion. He was a Buddhist monk protesting persecution of Buddhists by the South Vietnamese

government of Ngo Dinh Diem. On June 11th, he drenched himself with gasoline on a Saigon street and set himself on fire. Back in 1963, everyone I knew thought he was crazy to do that. Including me. But if one can get past the difficult ontology issue and focus upon what Buddhist doctrine is trying to achieve, Buddhist *nirvana* and Abrahamic paradise can be recognized as *Existenz* similes of one another.

Finally we come to Chinese folk religion (CFR). Just as Hinduism has been called a "confederacy of religions" under a common genus of faith, so too is the case with Chinese folk religion. There is no single religious text or theological doctrine that covers all of CFR. Most Chinese follow some form of local cult worship of gods and ancestors (~754 million people by one estimate). An estimated 185 million follow some form of Taoism. These figures compare with an estimated 202 million Chinese Buddhists. The genus "Chinese folk religion" is only definable in a meaningful way because of four common ideas held by its many cults. These are: (1) *Tian*, the transcendent source of moral meanings; (2) *qi*, the breath or energy or "vital matter" that animates the universe; (3) *jingzu*, the veneration of ancestors; and (4) *bao ying*, moral reciprocity. Like Hinduism and Buddhism, CFR draws no distinction between nature and supernature. There is a general belief that a rational structure orders the universe and that this order can be influenced by human beings. Every person is held-to-be an eternal being and boundaries between the living and the dead are relatively fluid. Human souls are regarded as having a twofold aspect. *Ying qi* represents the bodily animating principle (the "*po* soul"); *yang qi* represents the spiritual and intellectual aspect (the "*hun* soul").

The idea of *Tian* is the idea of the primordial god *and* the physical heavens *and* the home of "gods" and ancestors. The Western penchant for ontologically dividing these three characteristics into neatly distinct *things* is absent in Chinese folk religions. Thus, CFR is monotheistic *but* the theological archetype is not *personified* in the same manner as a human person. In the Critical definition of person, "the subject of a judgment who can be regarded with practical objective validity as the agent of his own actions and to who alone these actions can be attributed as effects for which that subject is the original cause," *Tian* **is** to be regarded as a "person." This point might strike you as a bit confusing but the idea is not absent in Abrahamic theology. For example, in *Summa Theologica* Aquinas wrote,

> Person signifies what is most perfect in all nature – that is, a subsistent individual of a rational nature. Hence, since everything that is perfect must be attributed to God; because His essence contains every perfection, this name person is fittingly applied to God; not, however, as it is applied to creatures, but in a more excellent way [Aquinas (1267-1273), First Part, Q. 19, Art. 3].

In all the Abrahamic faiths, God is regarded as omnipresent, all-powerful, all-knowing, and the creator of all things. The union of these four attributes means the "personhood" of God cannot possibly be regarded in the same manner as a human person is regarded. From a practical Standpoint, *Tian* is no different.

In Chinese folk religion, human beings are endowed with a role in completing creation (an idea of a process of perfection). Spiritual perfection involves doing good for others, contributing to the common-wealth of humanity and awakening to the harmony of *Tian*. The principle of *bao ying* holds that people dwell in a moral universe that is kept ordained by mores and good actions. Thus, any moral retribution is seen as a *cosmic* retribution. The doer of good is showered with blessings, the doer of evil with calamity.

I think it is not very difficult to see in these summaries the aforementioned agreements found in all the major genera of religious faith: (1) continuation of some essential part of an individual's personal identity after death of the physical body; (2) faith that afterlife *Existenz* must be earned through merit; and (3) that what a person earns through merit is uninterrupted consciousness of pleasantness in *Existenz*. There are different *ontological* concepts in the major religious genera but a *spiritual* commonality among them. An *ontological* concept of the theological archetype defies human understanding but we do see commonality in the *essence of its epistemology*, and this essence is in affective feelings rather than conceptual nature. Still, there seems to remain something unsatisfying if we were to stop here because we have not yet captured the "flavor" of what is held-to-be-earned by merit. We must therefor discuss one more topic.

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