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CHAPTER 1

Some Universal Aspects of Judaism[1]

Like all revealed religions and traditions, Judaism contains aspects which give it its special character and which constitute by definition its own way of affirming the Absolute. Its particularity involves the laws and rites specific to Israel, determined to a large extent by that nation's ethnological relationship with God, by the vocation of the "Chosen People" and by their sacred history. But if we examine the "doctrine" (*Torah*) of Judaism closely, as revealed by the Bible—or more precisely by its first part, known to Christians as the Old Testament—as well as by its traditional exegeses, exoteric and esoteric, we will uncover the universal foundation by which the Jewish religion is linked to all other genuine religions. This foundation, this common essence, is the real affirmation of the pure and supreme Reality, an affirmation through which man consciously binds himself to the only True and Real, an at-tachment destined to spiritualize man and finally reintegrate him with the Divine Absolute.

Universal Aspects of Monotheism and Messianism

In Judaism, this unitive affirmation of the Absolute takes on the monotheistic form which the Bible traces back to Abraham and, through Shem, Noah and their ancestors, to Adam, the first man. This monotheism was restored and crystallized by way of the Sinaitic theophany in the form of Mosaism, which came into being to save Jewish souls of every generation, starting with the one which Moses led, and to unite spiritually the elite[2] amongst them with the One—the ultimate monotheistic aim. Now, if this salvation and union could have been realized in principle in all post-Mosaic epochs, the Jewish prophets who have extended and revitalized Mosaism have in particular proclaimed the coming at the end of time of him who will bring the "lost tribes of Israel" back to the city of God and, with them, all non-Jews who

[1] Editor's note: This article originally appeared in English as a chapter in the book *The Unanimous Tradition* (Colombo: Sri Lanka Institute of Traditional Studies, 1991), edited by Ranjit Fernando. We have added the section headings and reformatted portions of the essay.

[2] Editor's note: The author uses the word "elite" here to refer to the most holy, or sanctified seekers after God in those faiths, those who have attained the highest spiritual stations.

might wish to follow them in such a return to and union with the One who is actually present in the mystical Jerusalem. It is here a question of the coming of him who in Psalm 2 is called both the "Anointed" (*Mashiach*, Messiah) and the "Son" (*Ben*) of God. To the monotheism of Israel is thus joined the other fundamental and universal aspect of its religion: messianism.

That monotheism and messianism are by nature truly universal springs from their universalization by Christianity and Islam. It was Islam that universalized Semitic monotheism to the highest degree by making it return, through its Abrahamic main-stem, to its Adamic or primordial root. In fact, Islam freed monotheism from the necessity for ethnic "election"; that is, from the need to belong to a "chosen" people in order to unite with the One. It also freed it from a worship dedicated to trinitarian and messianic intermediaries between humanity and the absolute Divinity. It allows every man to make contact with the one and universal God without any of these preliminary conditions. As to Christianity, its *credo in unum Deum* ("I believe in one God") implies the affirmation of the Trinity, and in particular of the "son incarnate," an affirmation completed in practice by recourse to the intercession of the Virgin Mary. It also involves the belief that Jesus of Nazareth, conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified and, having risen from the dead after his descent into Hell, ascended into Heaven, whence he will come again to judge the living and the dead. Finally, it involves the belief that the "son of God," according to the Psalm already cited, is also the Messiah (*Mashiach*), the "Anointed," or in Greek *Christós*. The Christian religion, whilst universalizing the monotheistic faith of Israel, thus eminently represents the universalization of its messianism, which is etymologically what the term "Christianity" means.

Christianity itself testifies everywhere in the Gospel to its having been proclaimed, and to a certain extent foreshadowed, by Judaism; and the Koran reveals that Islam came into being in order, amongst other things, to confirm the truth and saving power, not only of the Mosaic but also of the Christian revelation, both of them, in essence, at one with the pure monotheism of Abraham, which the Islamic message itself insistently calls to witness. If the Koran makes any criticism of Jews and Christians, it is precisely in respect of their deviations from the simple affirmation of the One made by Abraham. Unlike Judaism, Islam, without in its own heart interposing any messianic screen whatever between God and man—whom it calls upon to unite directly with that God—identifies Jesus of Nazareth with the Messiah (*al-Masīh*) proclaimed by

the Jewish prophets, and furthermore, with the "Word" (*Kalimah*) and the "Spirit" (*Rūh*) of God, "directed at Mary," the Virgin whom "no man has touched" (see Koran 4:171; 3:47). But it does this without sharing the Christian doctrine of the "son of God" and his "incarnation," thus cautioning Christians against the "divinization" of the man Jesus and his mother, as well as against a trinitarianism deviating into tritheism (see Koran 23:91; 4:171). Finally, the Koran (4:157) insists on the fact that the "crucified one" was not "with certainty" Jesus, that is to say in his "reality" or divine nature which is the "Word" and "Spirit" of God, directly conveyed by his inner and incorruptible body, that of the transfiguration and resurrection. His mortal and crucified body was that which according to the esoteric interpretation of the Koranic text "resembled" the inner and divine reality of Jesus. Besides, as we have just seen, this body which directly provided the vehicle for his human nature was not regarded by Islam as a "divine incarnation," but as a simple "manifestational support" (*mazhar*) of God, whose absoluteness does not permit being made relative by a "localization" (*hulūl*) in the flesh.

Therefore, Jewish monotheism and messianism, though fundamentally adopted by the independent revelations, direct or "vertical," of Christianity and Islam, have at the same time been adapted by them in different ways according to the varying needs of the immense human groups which they might reach before the end of time. To these different "variations on the same theme," which are twofold (monotheism complemented by messianism) and by nature universal, are added those which relate to the cosmology and anthropology of the Torah, two more doctrinal aspects whose universal character has in turn been revealed through their universalization by Christianity and Islam. It is this that was attested—despite the customary exclusivism of the Jews which treated these religions as simple "modifications" or deviations from Judaism—by the great spiritual authorities of Israel, like Maimonides (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, 1135–1204 C.E., called the "Eagle of the Synagogue"), who wrote in *Yad Hasaqa* ("The Strong Hand"): "Thanks to these new religions, the whole world is filled with the idea of a Redeemer-Messiah, and the words of the law and the Commandments; these words have spread to distant islands and amongst numerous peoples . . . all are now occupied with the Torah. . .". In fact, if the New Testament is regarded as an extension of the Old Testament, together constituting the Bible which in its entirety was "confirmed" by the Koran, the conclusion may be reached that a great part of the human race is "occupied with the Torah." On every page of the Gospel are echoed the words of the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and

the Hagiographs of Israel—thus its entire Holy Scripture—as also in the Koran from beginning to end.

Before mentioning in this category of ideas the essential aspects of Mosaic cosmology and anthropology, universalized by Christianity and Islam, let us return for a moment to the fundamental truth that unites the three Semitic religions, namely, the monotheistic faith which, according to them all, goes back through Abraham, Shem, and Noah to Adam. In Judaism, it is affirmed by the opening words of the Decalogue: "I am YHVH,[3] thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Exod. 20:2–3). This very statement by the one God, together with the rejection of "other gods," is repeated many times in the Torah, finally denying in Isaiah (45:5–6) reality to all that man—through his *idola mentis*—regards as being outside of Him who in truth alone is real: "I am YHVH and there is none else, there is no God beside Me. . . . That they may know from the rising and the setting of the sun, *that there is none beside Me*" (*ki-efes biladai*).

Here we have the ultimate spiritual conclusion of monotheism, which Jewish esoterism—the *Qabbalah* or direct "reception" of divine truth—takes literally, not by postulating as do the pantheists that everything is God, but by affirming that everything is in God, the Infinite (*Ein Sof*) who, as we have just seen, has revealed Himself in the words, "There is none beside Me." Thus, all is in Him, either essentially and absolutely in His pure transcendence or in the ontological and prototypic state of His causal Being which is that of the Creator, or, yet again, as a created and transitory form in His cosmic omnipresence.

Islamic monotheism reaches the same conclusion at the heart of its esoterism—*Tasawwuf* or Sufism—starting with the credo revealed by the Koran, the *Shahādah* or "testimony" rendered to the one Divinity, universal and absolute, which begins with the words: "There is no divinity but God (*Allāh*)"—(*Lā ilāha illā 'Llāh*, 47:19). That first part of the

[3] The Tetragrammaton YHVH represents, in Judaism, the sacrosanct name of God; it is not translatable literally, but is derived from *HaYaH* or *HoVeH*, "being" or "reality," and signifies the Divine Essence, at once transcendent and immanent, or the total-reality of God. Conforming to the Jewish usage, we will transcribe this name without vocalization, its pronunciation being forbidden to Israelites for more than two thousand years "because of their sins," excepting initiates who in every age represent the "chain of esoteric tradition" (*shalsheleth ha-qabbalah*) and alone know how to enunciate the word according to the rules of incantationary learning going back to Moses. Vocalizations like *YeHoVaH* and *YaHVeH* do not, by themselves, give the key to that learning; like other known vocalizations, they only indicate the different aspects or manifestations of the sole Divine Essence.

Shahādah is spiritually interpreted by the Sufis as: "There is no reality but the divine Reality," which comprises all realities, whether uncreated and eternal or in created and transitory form. Thus all is in the one God, the only Real. And if things in their created and finite state are distinguished from the Infinite in order to affirm it to the extent of becoming extinguished in it, they are in their essence uncreated and infinite, eternally one with Him whose "unity is without association" (*wahdahu lā sharīka lahu*). It is the Absolute One, attested elsewhere in the Koran by the revelation: "Say: He, God, is one" (*Qul Huwa 'Llāhu ahad*, 112:1) which also constitutes, *mutatis mutandis*, the content of the credo of Israel: "Hear, O Israel, YHVH, our god, YHVH is One" (*Shema Israel* YHVH *Elohenu* YHVH *Ehad*, Deut. 6:4). This credo was confirmed by Jesus in the Gospel who when he was asked: "Which is the first commandment of all" answered: "The first of all the commandments is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord'" (Mark 12:28–29). On another occasion Jesus effaced himself before the one God, saying: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mark 10:18).

These are the two characteristic forms of the monotheistic confession and spirituality, to be found alike in the Gospel, the Torah, and the Koran: that is, either the pure and simple affirmation of the "One God," or His affirmation through the denial of any "other god" and even of all other reality. This last affirmation of God as the only True and Real has led the elite of the three monotheistic faiths to the same end in their respective spiritual paths, even though these might vary in their methods of approach to the One and union with Him—a conclusion which the Christian mystics call *unio mystica* or *theosis*, the Kabbalists call *devekuth* (unitive adhesion) or *yihud* (union) [with God], and the Sufis call *tawhīd* (unification) or *ittihād* (union) [with the One].

Multiple Aspects of Being in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

As to variations in approaches to the One, we have seen that they are the product firstly of differences in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim ontology or theology, differences which nevertheless do not affect the basis of their common monotheistic faith: the absolute or supra-ontological unity of the Divine Essence. Their different ontological or theological views—those concerning the one and the same causal Being of God and His relations with His created effects, human beings in particular—are determined by their varied revelations, Mosaic, Evangelic, and Koranic: the diversification of the spiritual and universal manifestation of the One, which Judaism contains in germ in its simultaneously monotheistic and messianic metaphysics.

Thus, with regard to monotheism, Islam, like Israel, while insisting on the absolute unity of the Divine Essence, nevertheless affirms the multiple aspects of its one Being, called by the two sister religions His "Names" (*Shemot* in Hebrew, *Asmā'* in Arabic) or His "Attributes" (*Middot* in Hebrew, *Sifāt* in Arabic), or in Jewish esoterism His "Numerations" (*Sefirot*) or first self-determinations. Concerning the latter, which number ten, a prefiguration of the Christian Trinity may be found in the three supreme *Sefirot*, the triple transcendent unity of God insofar as it rests in itself, whereas in the other seven *Sefirot*, which are of an onto-cosmological nature, we discover the Trinity in that it descends towards the cosmos, which is either to be created or is already created.

Amongst other things to be discovered in the ten sefirotic numerations of the Kabbalah, which Jewish mystics contemplated long before Christianity came into existence, are notions of the "Father" (*Aw* or *Abba*) and the "Mother" (*Em* or *Imma*), as well as the "Son" (*Ben*) and the "Kingdom" (*Malkhut*), the divine immanence which in the revelatory state is also known as the "Holy Spirit" (*Ruah ha-qodesh*). And if we include—besides the Jewish idea of the *Memra* or "Word" of God—the scriptural relation between the "Son" and the "Anointed" or Messiah, to which we have already referred, it can be seen how Judaism already contains not only the metaphysics of the Names or Attributes of God, later characteristic in its own way of Islamic monotheism, but also—and above all in the esoteric or Kabbalistic domain—the trinitarian and messianic doctrine proper to Christianity. Hence the following statement which dates from the Christian Middle Ages: *Moysis doctrina velat quod Christi doctrina revelat*.[4]

Universal Aspects of Jewish Cosmology

Now, following this final glance at the Mosaic prefiguration of Christian and Muslim metaphysics and theology, let us briefly examine Jewish cosmology and anthropology, whose universal nature has also been confirmed by their adoption in the New Testament and the Koran.

So far as cosmology is concerned, we know that the biblical idea of Genesis or God's "creation of the heavens and the earth" was perpetuated by the two non-Jewish monotheistic faiths, and correlatively the

[4] "The teaching [or doctrine] of Moses conceals what the teaching of Christ reveals." The doctrine of *Sefirot* has been explained extensively in my *The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971; revised and corrected editions, Secaucus, New Jersey: University Books, 1972 and Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1973). (Editor's note: A more recent edition is by Sophia Perennis, 2005.)

division of the universe into celestial, terrestrial, and infernal levels; so also the angelology of the prophets of Israel, the triple structure—corporeal, psychic, and spiritual—of man, as well as his eschatological destiny, which on the collective level implies the resurrection of the body and the Last Judgment.

Individual eschatology is set in relation to the deeds committed by man in his life, deeds dictated by his reason (or lack of it) and free will, either in conformity or nonconformity with the divine Truth and Will, which from the beginning offered him a paradisal existence fed by the "Tree of Life" while forbidding him the mortal fruit of the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." Having rejected what God had offered him by eating the "forbidden fruit," man lost his paradisal access to Eternal Life and was driven from Eden. But, though He condemned man to death, God in His infinite mercy restored to him that paradisal access on the "cursed earth" in a purely spiritual form, and completely in the beyond, on condition that he should thenceforth choose the good and abstain from evil: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil . . . choose life, that thou may live. . ." (Deut. 30:15, 19).

All these sayings from the Torah concerning the original perfection of man, his fall and its consequences, as well as the choice between good and evil with its eschatological repercussions—that is to say, life after death either in paradise or in hell—were continued and universalized by both the Gospel and the Koran. Similarly, we find in them once more the universal commandments of the Decalogue, to which is added: ". . . love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18). Lastly, the spiritual methods of the Christian and Muslim elites (who like their Jewish counterparts seek the Absolute "here and now"), while diverging in their forms—whether rigorously ascetic or a mild integration of psycho-physical elements in the pure spirit—require the same affirmation of the One "with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:5) in order to attain final union with Him.

Thus, the fundamental truths of a metaphysical nature, and their application on cosmic and human levels as given in the Torah, have been spread throughout the world in one way or another by Christianity and Islam. In the revelation made to Israel these have been thrown into relief by the dialogue between the "Eternal and His people"; in the Gospel by the Message and the gift of the "Son of God" to this people and to "all the nations of the earth"; and in the Koran by its confirmation of the earlier revelations and its correction of deviations in their application. However, these fundamental truths have been emphasized

in the Koran chiefly by an untiring call to the polytheistic Arabs to turn to *Allāh*, the one God.

The doctrine of Israel is "judaically" monotheist, and it is messianic only in an eschatological and triumphant sense of the word; Christianity is centered upon the universal Messiah, pre-eschatological and suffering as well as eschatological and glorious; and Islam is the universal and absolute monotheism.

A further comparison (also non-exhaustive, but nevertheless elucidating a few characteristic features of the monotheistic triad) might be one in which Judaism is seen, symbolically, as man—personified in Moses—ascending towards God while raising the fallen world with him so as to unite everything with the One at the summit of the Mountain of Illumination, whereas with Christianity, on the other hand, God descends into the world, incarnate as man, to bear his sins, to atone for him, to be assimilated by him, until "man becomes God." In Islam, man is obedient to the One until his extinction in Him who is "God in Heaven and God on Earth"—He being the only real, the spiritual total-reality in which everything that seems to be "other than Him" is finally absorbed.

In these successive and complementary revelations of Semitic monotheism—accompanied by messianism—there is an undeniably logical sequence, a secret law obedient to eternal Providence and ruling over a great part of our world for nearly two millennia. It is from the "little point *Yod* (י)"—the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and the ideogram of both YHVH and Israel—that in the Near East emerged the universalization of Judaic monotheism and messianism, realized in the Occident mainly by Christianity and in the Orient primarily by Islam. Such is the evidence of a Judaism comprising universal aspects which, passing beyond their own frontiers, have become religious factors of world dimension and of essentially infinite reach.

The Universality of Judaism and Non-monotheistic Religions

The universal nature of Judaism is revealed in other ways when it is compared with the non-Semitic religions usually regarded as not monotheistic: those called "polytheist" or "natural" or even "atheist." Looked at superficially, these religions do not appear to have any relation to monotheism, either spiritually or historically; but if we eliminate the erroneous views expressed by many Westerners with regard to these religions, their essential relation to monotheism—and even to messianism—is revealed in one way or another.

Thus, if we refer to the Torah, the Gospel, and the Koran, all three of which, apart from the divine, "vertical," or direct origin of their respective revelations, trace their monotheistic—and messianic—belief through Abraham, Shem, and Noah to the first man, we shall see that Judaism and the two other Semitic religions are spiritually and historically connected with the roots, both of Hinduism—through its self-identification with the "perpetual tradition" (*Sanātana Dharma*)—and of Buddhism, whose "eternal law" (*Akālika Dharma*) was that of the "old road taken by the wholly awakened ones of old" and revealed afresh by Gautama Siddhartha. This is also true, amongst others, for the Chinese "Old Way," the "True doctrine of *Tao*" which according to Chu-li, "has always existed in the world and has never perished; except that, this doctrine, having been confided to men, some of them broke it while others maintained it scrupulously. That is why its fate in the world is to be sometimes brilliant and sometimes obscure."

According to the Torah itself, at the time of the Tower of Babel and therefore after the Flood, all humanity "was of one language and of one speech" (Gen. 11:1). This "language" according to Kabbalistic exegesis, signifies the "unanimous tradition" that descends from Adam, the first receiver of the revelation of the One, a revelation which was "saved from the waters" by Noah's material and spiritual Ark. It was handed down as a renewed and universal "alliance" between God and man by Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth who together with their father and mother, their wives, and the animal pairs were the sole survivors of the Flood. These three patriarchs of post-diluvian man passed on this "language" to the various races and peoples that descended from them (see Gen. 6–10). Now the latter, according to the Bible, formed, until the time of Babel, "a single people" (Gen. 11:6) despite their different ancestors, having "one language," that is to say one tradition known to Jewish exegesis as Noachism (the Hebrew form of Noah being *Noach*).

Thus, according to the Torah, all humanity was still united by a single traditional and monotheistic culture, although it was diverted by its immanentism and its magic—so the Kabbalah attests—to the point of opposing the divine transcendence. Human unity, strengthened by having usurped certain immanent powers of God, sought to rule the world in an autonomous fashion in its own name, thenceforth ignoring its dependence on the divine unity, transcendent and immanent, an infinite unity to which man is summoned to conform and unite himself spiritually.

This is what, according to the Kabbalah, is meant by the words of the men of Babel: "Go to, let us build a city, [a worldly city founded not

on theocracy but on autocracy][5] and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven [this "tower" signifies a "counter-ascension" to heaven, that is to say a magical over-reaching of natural human means, of which the "top" or principle is a usurpation of the powers of heaven], and let us make us a name [by the "science of letters," a name which represents this principle and constitutes the universal key which permits—by way of this onomatological magic—the aforesaid usurpation and, consequently, the autocratic domination of the world] lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth [a dispersal that signifies the breaking of the "magic circle" of that human unity, which believes itself protected by the circle and thereby capable of holding the divine unity in check]" (Gen. 11:4). Then the sole One, Himself confirming that in these conditions "nothing would be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen. 11:6), decided to go down to men in order to break the magic circle of a false human unity: "Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So YHVH scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth. . ." (Gen. 11:7–8).

In other words, human unity, initially traditional, by raising such a revolt against the divine Unity, compelled the latter to break it into ethnic fragments, dispersed over the entire earth and henceforth opposed one to another; and this through a lack of understanding caused by the confusion, or more precisely by the differentiation of their "language" or single tradition into several "languages" or divergent traditions, but with a foundation that remains unanimous thanks to its divine essence. Indeed, the transcendent One's "descent" is seen as His own multiform revelation come to institute a plurality of religions or traditions in response to the deep needs of the various races and ethnic groups descended from Noah's three sons, and taking the place of the single primordial tradition that goes back to God's revelation to Adam.

According to the Bible, then, this is the starting point on earth of the multitude of traditions, revealed simultaneously and later successively, but each having, from a trans-historical viewpoint, its direct root in Heaven. They perpetuate and renew the doctrine of primordial man like so many rays that every day spread afresh the light of the rising sun, symbol of eternal light or wisdom, the *Sophia perennis*. This wisdom, articulated by the spiritual language of the first man, has remained fundamental to the diverse post-Babel "languages" or traditions. It comes down to us through the millennia, through various and

[5] Throughout this essay square brackets signify interpretive insertions by the writer.

complementary expressions, each form of which is at the same time the synthesis of the others, and humanity always has this common spiritual language, despite differences of idiom or formal concept. This universal language constitutes the secret link that unites the entirety of religions: doctrines Jewish and non-Jewish, Semitic and non-Semitic. Judaism, as we have seen, calls this link "Noachism," that is to say the primordial and universal religion of the absolute One, as revealed to Adam and perpetuated by Noah and his three sons, themselves prefiguring the multitude of religions after Babel.

Therefore, we repeat, it is through comparative metaphysics, cosmology, and anthropology that we are able to discover, behind the traditional forms (though antinomic in appearance) the link that is permanently established by the proper and primordial affirmation of the one and only Absolute. When we examine these forms thoroughly in order to make spiritual "translation" of their contents—whether such forms be abstract or clothed in symbolism—equivalent meanings are disclosed and it becomes clear finally that the doctrine of the only True and Real is the common basis of all genuine revelations. The distinction between the monotheistic and non-monotheistic religions is thus shown to be improper; we ought rather to speak of the Semitic triad and of the non-Semitic forms—or to use biblical language, Hamites and Japhetites—born of Noachism, the unique affirmation of the Absolute.

Although the triad we call monotheist insists on the divine unity, it nevertheless affirms, in one way or another, the multiple aspects of the One. In Judaism and Islam, as we have seen, these are especially His "names" or "attributes," and in Christianity it is "a single God in three persons," with whom are associated other mediatory aspects, such as the Holy Virgin. And even as in Christianity all the mediatory aspects between God and man are synthesized in Christ, who is at once "Son of God" and "Son of Man" (i.e., the archetype of man manifesting himself through human nature) or Man-God, in Judaism and Islam all the divine names and attributes are summed up, from an esoteric viewpoint, in the universal mediator called by the Kabbalah "Principial Man" (*Adam Qadmon*) or "Man above" (*Adam ilaah*), and by the Sufis "Perfect Man" or "Universal Man" (*al-Insān al-kāmil*).

The female aspect of this universal mediation between God and the created is regarded by Judaism as His *Shekhinah* or "Real Presence," and by Islam as His *Sakīnah* or "Great Peace," which He "causes to descend into the hearts of the faithful" (the term "Real Presence" is found literally in the Name *al-Hudūr*). In Christianity, as already stated, this same presence gives birth here below to the Christ who

incarnates it and is consequently its perfect dwelling-place—a presence which is also personified and conveyed by his human mother, the perfect manifestation of "virginal femininity" and of the "merciful motherhood" of God.

Universal Aspects of Judaism, Taoism, and Buddhism

Semitic monotheism, therefore, does not exclude a plurality, essentially one, of aspects through which the one and only Absolute is revealed and adored, just as in those religions mistakenly regarded as "polytheist" or "natural" or even—like Buddhism—as "atheist" or "based on nothingness." Clearly it is only when awareness of the one True and Real has been lost, and its aspects are disassociated from the unanimous essence and glorified as autonomous divinities, that monotheism (understood in the broadest sense of the word as the affirmation of the one and only Absolute on which all universal relativity depends) can be said to have degenerated into polytheism.

As for the idea of natural or even atheistic religions, this is, in both cases, a simple contradiction in terms, for a genuine religion cannot be "natural" in the sense of excluding the supernatural, nor atheistic in the sense of denying the Absolute. On the contrary, it is the intelligible and salvific link between relative man and the Absolute, being therefore itself supernatural and essentially absolute and therefore revealed by the Absolute and not the product of simple human thought, having as its object its own objectified and relative nature.

If a non-theistic (not "atheistic") religion exists, such as Buddhism, it is because the link between the relative and the Absolute is revealed there not under the aspect of a divine cause of existence, but under that of the Buddha-nature (*Buddhatā*) which frees man from existence—an existence full of suffering—and leads him to absolute Reality. *Nirvāna* ("Extinction"), or *Shūnya* (the "Void"), is not nothingness, but on the contrary it is that absolute and beatific Reality in which all relative existence is destined to be reintegrated. The same is true of *Ayin*, or the "nothingness" of Jewish esoterism, which describes this reality as "non-being" since it is actually a kind of supra-being that is both absolute and impersonal; it is the supra-essential and supra-intelligible essence of divine "Being" (*Ehyeh*; *Yesh*; *Havayah*), which is intelligible, causal, and personal.[6]

[6] Editor's note: The author is demonstrating that this state of existence cannot actually be considered "being" since it transcends all categories and concepts that we use to understand all other things that exist. Thus, "Nothingness" or "Void" become ways to

While this is the object of the "adoration of God by the mind" and of human faith—an adoration characteristic of Jewish exoterism—the final object of esoteric or Kabbalistic contemplation proceeds not only to the "surpassing" or "annihilation of human reason" but to the "cessation of existence" (*bittul ha-yesh*, which corresponds to the Buddhist *bhavanirodha*), the spiritual absorption, either transitory or definitive, into the "nothingness" of all nothingness, namely the absolute Reality. Whenever this Kabbalistic absorption into the Absolute is transitory and the Kabbalist returns to his relative existence, this return implies the instant restoration of his being, of his mind, and of all his individual faculties. But more important, he is thenceforth filled with the "luminous flux" of the causal and intelligible Being—of his own illumination, which rises finally to the more than luminous darkness of the "nothingness" or supra-intelligible non-being, for according to the Kabbalah, "Wisdom comes from the Nothingness," that is, from the Absolute.

The supreme principle in Judaism is the unity of "nothingness" or absolute Beyond-Being,[7] with causal Being acting as the origin of the relative. The same applies to the one Principle of contemplative Taoism, which goes back to the pure spirituality of the ancient Chinese Tradition and is distinct from popular and religious Taoism. The latter has as its supreme object the divine and causal Being under one or another "lordly" aspect or name, while the contemplative Principle has no proper name, because of its ineffable absoluteness, and is known symbolically as the "Way" (*Tao*) which leads to it.

But *Tao* is not only "non-being." It is a single Principle having two aspects, one which is supra-ontological and the other which is ontological: *Wu-ki*, the "Non-summit" or non-beginning, the absolute non-cause or non-manifestation, the Beyond-Being; and *Tai-ki*, the "Great Summit" of the cosmic edifice, the beginning or the cause of relative

describe that which defies our rational minds. This apophatic approach to conceiving the divine Essence is universally used in the esoterisms of other traditions such as in Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. Here the divine "Being" refers to the personal God who creates, legislates, and "speaks" to humanity, but not to the Essence beyond that Being.

[7] Editor's note: In English translations of Schaya's work, the term "Super-Being" or "Supra-Being" is often used. For the sake of clarity and uniformity, we have used the term "Beyond-Being" throughout this volume wherever the equivalent term was used in Schaya's French or German original writings. Those familiar with the sermons of Meister Eckhart will recognize that the distinction in Schaya's writings between Being and Beyond-Being is the same made by Eckhart between God and Godhead.

existence, the universal being, also called *Tai-i*, the "Great Unity" of all existing things. The contemplative way of the Taoist leads to the spiritual realization of this "Great Unity," a realization which implies the union of the principles at once opposite and complementary which govern the universe. These are "Heaven" (*tien*), the active principle, and "Earth" (*ti*), the passive or receptive principle, which the Taoist must unite in himself by conforming to their respective properties or laws: the *yang*, active, masculine, positive, and luminous, and the *yin*, passive, feminine, negative, and dark.

We are reminded of the conformity required by Jewish spirituality to the positive and negative laws of the Torah, issuing respectively from the "grace" (*Hesed*) of God—which is His masculine aspect, affirmative or luminous—and "judgment" (*Din*), or His "terrible power" (*Geburah* or *Pahad*), His feminine, negative, or dark aspect. This conformity is the *sine qua non* of union with the One. And, just as the supreme aim of Jewish spirituality is the "nothingness," the supreme aim of purely spiritual Taoism is situated even beyond the "great unity" of all things, in their non-beginning, *Wu-ki*. It is at the heart of the deepest, contemplative "Non-action" (*Wu-Wei*) that the perfect Taoist is absorbed into his non-causal absoluteness, which is that of all things; and though he "descends again," this "non-action" will be reflected in his "non-active activity" (*wei-wu-wei*) at the core of a relative existence henceforth completely dominated by the Absolute. Furthermore, the non-active activity is also an essential element of the way that leads to this total and supreme non-action, which is none other, as already mentioned, than non-beginning itself, *Wu-ki*.

Like Judaism's "nothingness," this non-beginning relates to the Buddhist state of extinction (*Nirvāna*) or the void (*Shūnya*), the cessation of relative and painful existence through the "awakening" (*Bodhi*) in the supreme and absolute reality. In this reality, which surpasses all differentiation and multiple spiritual ways, the Taoist becomes "Transcendent Man" (*Shen-jen*), whose absolute condition then precedes (for in the "re-descent" it is followed by) the earthly condition of "True Man" (*Chen-jen*) situated at the spiritual center of this lower world, a center found within himself from which he dominates, spiritually, all human existence including his higher prolongations. Moreover, between the transcendent Absolute and the earthly relativity of man there is the intermediary or "mediator" state of Heaven, towards which contemplative man rises in order to realize not only these higher prolongations of human existence but to surpass them and become a "heavenly" man in the transposed sense of the word, that is to say,

a reality which "is no longer a man" but the "Great Unity" (*Tai-i*) of Heaven and Earth. Furthermore, the "way of Heaven" (*Tien-tao*) on which he has embarked and which is finally identified with the entirety of the "Middle Way" (*Tchung-tao*)—the spiritual axis of all reality—draws him, as we have said, even beyond the "Great Summit" (*Tai-ki*) of Heaven and Earth to the "Non-summit" (*Wu-ki*) or Beyond-Being. That is why on descending again from that supreme state by this very Middle Way—which corresponds to the "Middle Column" (*Amida-di-Netsiuta*) of Jewish esoterism—the contemplative is called not only "True Man" (*Chen-jen*) but also "son of Heaven" (*Tien-tse*) and "Transcendent Man" (*Shen-jen*). "In the body of a man there is a man no more," says Chuang-tzu: "infinitely small is he to the extent by which he is still a man, infinitely great is he to the extent by which he is one with heaven."

Now these three aspects of universal man are also found in Jewish esoterism, beginning with "Transcendent Man" (*Adam ilaah*) or "Principial Man" (*Adam Qadmon*), whose body is none other than the unity of divine aspects of ontological and supra-ontological order, since his "hidden brain" is *Ayin* ("Non-Being" or "Beyond-Being"). This unity of divine aspects, symbolized in an anthropomorphic fashion by the principal limbs or organs of the human terrestrial body, is also symbolized on the cosmological level, amongst others, by the infinite ocean of the Divine Reality before its separation into "upper waters" and "lower waters" (see Gen. 1:6–7), that is to say before its "waves" or manifestable possibilities have passed from their non-manifested or immobile state to their manifested or mobile condition. At the "eternal moment" when this separation, and thereby this manifestation took place, the lower or cosmic waters were "gathered together into one place and the dry land appeared" (see Gen. 1:9). This "one place" (*maqom ehad*) is that of the immanent "One" (*Ehad*), "gathering together" or concentrating all his waters or manifestations into an "instantaneous crystallization" which is the dry land, the "body," the "form," or the universal and luminous sphere of the *Shekhinah* or divine omnipresence. But the *Shekhinah*, being in itself supra-formal and infinite, is distinguished from its form or from this spiritual and universal body, called *Metatron*, which in its revelations to humanity (that is, to the prophets and the saints) takes the "likeness of an appearance of a man, [who is] above [the earth and even the celestial throne], on high [at the supreme level of creation]," as stated in Ezekiel (1:26). Ezekiel continues:

> And I saw as it were a shining surface [or a "burning eye," *ein hashmal*] as the appearance of fire within and around it, from the appearance of his loins and upward, and from the appearance of his loins and downwards, I saw as it were the appearance of fire and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow [or rainbow: the luminous and spherical form of the *Metatron* which in other respects takes sometimes the shape of celestial man, sometimes that of the supreme angel—a rainbow] that is in the cloud [or formless "immanence of God"] in the day of rain [when his "waters" or revelatory manifestations descended upon the earth to purify and illumine men], so was the appearance of the brightness round about [of *Metatron*]. This was the appearance of the likeness [heavenly and universal: *Metatron*] of the glory [or immanence] of YHVH [the transcendent essence of God, or "Transcendent Man"] (Ezekiel 1:27–28).

According to the Kabbalah, "Enoch, who walked with God and who was no more, for God took him" (see Gen. 5:24) was not only raised living into Heaven—like the prophet Elijah much later (see 2 Kings 2:1–18)—but transformed into the totality of celestial man: *Metatron*. Inversely, the creation of terrestrial man was like a divine descent, Adam being created in the "image of God" (see Gen. 1:26–27), of God who is at once transcendent and immanent, or in the image of "Transcendent Man" and his spiritual and universal manifestation, *Metatron*, taking the form "of an appearance of man," that of celestial man. That is why primordial and terrestrial man (*Adam ha-rishon*) was in the beginning perfect, and after his fall was called upon to seek his lost perfection and, in a sense, more than that. For God "sent him forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken" (Gen. 3:23), that is to say until he recovered in himself the Edenic earth or the paradisal state, not in its first perfection, which was passive and corruptible, but in its ultimate perfection, which is active and incorruptible. According to Judaism, this perfection will be personified in the highest degree by the Messiah.

This Kabbalistic doctrine of the three bodies, or the transcendent, heavenly, and primordially earthly states of man—symbolized by the three Hebrew consonants in the name *ADaM*—corresponds to the doctrine of the *Mahāyāna* school of Buddhism relating to the *Trikāya* or "triple body" of the Buddha. This "body" may be identified in the first place with the pure transcendence of the Buddha: it

is the *Dharmakāya* or transcendent "Body of Truth," which is itself manifested as the *Sambhogakāya*, or heavenly "Body of Beatitude" and universal compassion; and finally as the *Nirmānakāya*, the "Body of Transformation" of this truth or beatitude—or compassion—into the earthly appearance of the Buddha, a pure and perfect body, which also makes possible his transformation into his own celestial, universal, and transcendent reality.

There are very many definitions or descriptions of the *Trikāya*, but we cannot deal with them all here; we will restrict ourselves to the following, the first of which recalls in a striking way the symbolism of the Adamic body: "The *Dharmakāya* is symbolized . . . by an infinite ocean, calm and waveless, from which rise mists, clouds, and a rainbow symbolizing the *Sambhogakāya*; these clouds, lit by the rainbow's glory, condense and fall as rain symbolizing the *Nirmānakāya*."[8] We should add that the *Nirmānakāya* is the primordial and incorruptible body that is concealed in our perishable body and conveys in it the spirit. "With our physical (and corruptible) body we take refuge in the body of transformation or body of incarnation of the Buddha (*Nirmānakāya*)," said Hui-neng (628–712 C.E.), and he adds: "our physical body might be compared to a hostelry, that is to say a temporary habitation: therefore we cannot take refuge there. It is in our own nature (inner, spiritual, and universal) that the *Trikāya* of the Buddha can be found, and it is common to all."[9] It is the total-reality envisaged and realized through archetypal man, like the triple body of *ADaM*, whose name has indeed the same numerical and consequently spiritual value (that is, 45) as that of the divine total-reality, YHVH, when these letters are written out fully in this way: *YVD HA VAV HA*. The Buddha came to show the way to the realization of the *Trikāya*, which coincides with the way to escape from an existence that is painful because of "ignorance" (*avidyā*) and a "thirst" (*trishnā*) for that existence.

Buddhist truth is conveyed by universal compassion, whose salvific rays are personified by "all the Buddhas" and the Bodhisattvas (or future Buddhas), who themselves take the vow not to enter into the supreme and final *Nirvāna* before all beings have been saved:

[8] *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, ed. Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, from the French translation by M. La Fuente (Paris, 1938).

[9] From the French translation by L. Houlmé, *Houei-Neng, Discours et Sermons* (Paris, 1963).

> I have taken that vow that all beings shall obtain purity and omniscience; my practices are destined to procure for them omniscience; it is not for myself at all that I seek Liberation. . . . I accept all pain for all beings so that they may emerge from the indefinite number of transmigrations and from the vale of suffering; for all beings I will experience all pain in all the worlds, in all the worst destinations, until the end of future periods, and it is for them that I will ceaselessly cultivate the roots of good. For it is best that I should experience alone all suffering and that the beings shall not fall into Hell. In Hell, among the animals, in the Kingdom of Yama, in all difficult places, I shall make a hostage of my body and will ransom all things in the worst destinations" (*Mahāparināmanasūtra*).

In Buddhism, therefore, we find the very essence of the soteriology of messianism including the role of the salvific "body," not only that which the Bodhisattva offers as "hostage" for the salvation of all beings, but also—and above all—the body of the Buddha which, as *Trikāya*, gives itself totally and inwardly to every Buddhist as his "own nature," while outwardly assuming form and substance in sacred images or sculptures as objects for contemplation and veneration of the delivering splendor of the Truth. In exoteric Judaism, the body of man only occasionally appears in anthropomorphic symbolism applied to God; in esoterism it constitutes the object of spiritual contemplation and the realization of "Principial Man" (*Adam Qadmon*) with repercussions on the physical plane, where contemplative man regains, in the very heart of his mortal body, his primordial body, which is Edenic and incorruptible. Indeed, the contemplation and spiritual realization of the "body" of principial or transcendent man and that of its cosmic and heavenly manifestation, *Metatron*—which occurs in a "vision" while descending into the depths of the heart, a descent which is simultaneously an ascent towards the "chariot" (*merkabah*) or "throne" (*kisse*) of the immanent Divinity—this contemplation and vision, supported by penitence and an obedience to the Commandments, and deepened by the mysteries of the Torah, "frees men from the [four corporeal] elements from which they were made [after the original sin]" (see *Zohar*, *Bereshith*, 27a). It also, and in an inner fashion, gives to them their terrestrial, paradisal, and imperishable body, which serves as a vehicle for the bodies or higher aspects of the universal Adam.

Finally, in Christianity, the soteriological function assumed by the body of the Messiah or Christ, the "Word made flesh," the incarnate

and teaching truth—the living and divine archetype of man, which must be contemplated and imitated—is not only that of a hostage for the salvation of all beings but that of the redeeming universal sacrifice; his expiatory death eminently perpetuated by the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist allows every man who receives them to participate in this salvific body and to commune with it, even so far as to become it himself spiritually. For, according to the words of the Apostle Paul: "Ye are the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27), and "Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11) so that all Christians can in principle reach "the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, thus becoming a perfect [or spiritually complete] man, with the measure of the stature of the [universal] fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

Now, like the body of universal man as envisaged by those other traditions of which we have spoken, according to Christian tradition the body of Christ also implies a *triplex modus corporis*.[10] The three aspects of the Body of Christ or *Triforme Corpus Christi*, although they cannot be identified entirely with those of integral man as viewed respectively by Judaism, Taoism, and Buddhism, nevertheless join these in a global sense. In descending order, it is firstly a matter of the *Corpus Mysticum*, the mystical and ecclesiastic body of which Christ is the "head" or principle, at once transcendent and immanent—or divine and human—who unites in himself all the "members" of the Church, each of whom for his own part is called upon to become in spirit the entirety of that body. Next is the *Corpus sacramentale* or *eucharisticum*, that of the Transubstantiation, which through the Communion makes possible for all members this transformation into the totality of the Christly body. The last is the *Corpus natum* of the Son, begotten by the Father and born, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, of the Virgin Mary; this is intrinsically his glorious and incorruptible body which, extrinsically and sacrificially, "assumes" the mortality of the body of fallen man. In other words—inversely—although he might be outwardly the suffering and crucified body, inwardly he is the *Corpus gloriosum* of Christ transfigured on Mount Tabor.

If the crucified Christ is an essential object of Christian contemplation, the "glorified" Christ is another, joining not only the image of the Buddha, but before that, and more directly, the description in Ezekiel quoted above (1:26–27) concerning the "likeness as an appearance of a man, above on high [the divine throne]," a form surrounded

[10] See Jean Borella, "Du mystère des plaies du Christ," *Études Traditionnelles*, No. 460 (Paris, 1978).

by "fire" and a "brightness round about," like "the appearance of a bow [rainbow]." In fact, this symbolism occurs again in Revelation (4:2–3), where Christ is moreover surrounded by the Tetramorph, described in Ezekiel (1:5–14), which we shall not discuss here. Occasionally, the circumference of Christ's halo is presented in Christian iconography not in the form of a rainbow but of a mandorla or "almond," which in Judaism symbolizes the "kernel of immortality." For *luz*, the "almond tree," also means, etymologically, the "vital element" or the "quintessence," and in the Jewish tradition designates, furthermore, an indestructible bone in the human vertebral column which will survive until the resurrection of the dead so as to give birth to the glorified body. But in Ezekiel's vision, as in the Apostle John's, celestial man is surrounded by a rainbow whose colors symbolize the divine qualities of his spherical and universal body. In other words, at the center of this macrocosmic body is manifested the microcosmic "likeness of an appearance of a man," that is the celestial and individual prototype of the terrestrial human body—the anthropomorphic image of the "Middle Column," or the central axis around which all worlds revolve. This individual prototype, which detaches itself from the spiritual and universal sphere of "man on high," is not only the symbol of the transmutation and extrinsic particularization of universal man into individual man, but also that of the man who "represents" God and who, as His more perfect image or symbolic form, dominates all forms of existence created through it. Viewed from below, it is also the image of terrestrial man, raised up and transfigured firstly as celestial man, then in his own spherical irradiation or glory which symbolizes or prefigures his transformation or spiritual totalization as universal man. This irradiation or halo surrounding the "likeness of an appearance of a man" and encircled by a rainbow, therefore finally signifies, at one and the same time, the spiritual and universal sphere of macrocosmic man manifesting in his heart microcosmic man considered as the "image of God"—at first celestial, then terrestrial—and inversely the glorified body of terrestrial man raised to heaven and transformed there into the universal body.

To return once more to Buddhism, this transformation is that of the *Nirmānakāya*, the earthly "body of transformation," transfigured as *Sambhogakāya* or celestial "body of beatitude"; now this celestial body, synonymous with "rainbow body," is said to be the highest body obtainable by the *yogī* (a Sanskrit term transposed from Hinduism in order to designate here the Tibetan Buddhist consecrated to *yoga*, the spiritual "union" with absolute Reality) while still in *samsāra* (the circle of existence) and comparable to the glorified body of the *Christós*

which the disciples had seen on the Mount of Transfiguration. In this "body of glory" the yogic Master is said to be able to exist for eons, having the power to appear or disappear at will in numerous spheres of existence throughout the entire universe (as Christ showed after his resurrection, and as Jewish tradition attests in the case of the prophet Elijah, who was raised to Heaven, coming back to earth again many times through the centuries in order to reveal the "mysteries of the Torah" to the élite).[11]

Universal Aspects of Judaism and Hinduism

We cannot conclude this survey of the fundamental and universal aspects of Judaism—so far as they appear not only in other Abrahamic religions but also in non-Semitic traditions—without briefly mentioning Hinduism. We have seen how the Jewish doctrine of *Adam Qadmon* is to be found everywhere, and how, in particular, it appears in Christianity in the aspect of "God made man" or "Word made flesh," sacrificing himself for the redemption of the created, and coming at the end of the world in the form of the Messiah. In Hinduism, according to the *Rig-Veda* (10:90), the supreme principle, *Brahma*, appears as universal man or *Purusha*, who is sacrificed at the beginning, so that by his sacrifice or "sub-division" all worlds and beings were created. We should add, however, that this symbolism likewise joins by direct analogy that of *Adam Qadmon*, whose universal manifestation implies the creation; and so also that of Christ as the "Word," by which, according to John (1:3), "all things were made."

In Hinduism, according to the *Purusha-Sukta* in the *Rig-Veda*, the manifest universe—embracing the three worlds, corporeal, subtle, and spiritual—represents only one "quarter" of *Purusha*, while the other three "quarters" are related to his transcendence, which is symbolically the "fourth" world. The same division of the total-reality into four parts—its sub-division into four "worlds" or "states"—is found in the *Maitri Upanishad* (7:11), where *Purusha* is *Ātmā*, the "Self"—at once transcendent and immanent—of everything that exists, and which is itself identical with *Brahma*, the only Real and All-Real. Here we are involved with the "four states of *Ātmā*. The greatest [or highest] of these is the fourth (*Turīya*). In the other three states *Brahma* lives with one of His *pāda* ["foot" or "quarter"]; He has [the other] three quarters [or feet] in the last [*Turīya*]." This signifies that *Brahma*, *Ātmā*, or *Purusha* comprises, in His transcendence or non-manifestation, the three

[11] *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines.*

worlds of His manifestation; He is their infinite and absolute essence, which is equally true of *Adam Qadmon* who is identical with the highest level of the "four worlds" of the Kabbalah, to wit, the transcendent "world of emanation" (*Olam-ha-Atsilut*), the undifferentiated reality of which is *Ayin*, the "nothingness" or the Absolute, which corresponds to the Hindu definitions of *Turīya*.

But even though, or because, this world nevertheless implies every possibility of manifestation in a state of absolute undifferentiation, these are intellectually projected by the Kabbalists in meditation, starting from the state of differentiated manifestation and ending with the heart of the supreme and undifferentiated world, which thus becomes in their eyes, and at the same time, the world of the transcendent archetypes of all things, united in the archetype of archetypes, the divine "Being" (*Ehyeh*) united with "Non-Being" or "Beyond-Being" (*Ayin*).

Here—*in divinis*[12]—the first emanation of "Being" or of the archetypes which He comprises, also takes place, and this is why this transcendent level of the total-reality is called the "World of Divine Emanation." But the Kabbalists insist on the fact that "everything there is one," that "everything there is God, and God is everything there." They use this same definition for the first spiritual and cosmological manifestation of the transcendent world, which is itself the "descent" of the divine immanence, comprising in potentiality all the archetypes of the created, ready to pass immediately to the act of creation operating within itself.

In this transition to the creative act—thus immediately before the celestial and earthly universe is created—the immanent Divinity, which is itself formless, at first takes spiritual and universal "form" or "body" as *Metatron*, the divine man, cosmic, omniscient, and all-powerful, called among other names YHVH *qatan*, the "little YHVH," that is to say the transcendent and invisible Essence in its immanent aspect, likely to become the object of the spiritual vision of earthly man. This is therefore celestial man in his universal aspect, within which his individual shape is released, the man who, before this individuation, then "around" it, is (to use that famous Hermetic formula) a luminous "sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere."

[12] Editor's note: The term *in divinis* means, literally, "in or among divine things." Thus, the author is here being careful to distinguish that this emanation is occurring in a metaphysical realm that is still within the vast realm of the Divine and not properly in the realm of lower things, or manifestation. This important distinction emphasizes that although this emanation is, of course, a kind of "manifestation," it occurs at the highest level of manifestation, the level at which, because of its proximity to the Divine, any existence or emanation must still be considered to be "among divine things."

This purely spiritual sphere of the divine immanence or omnipresence which the Kabbalah calls *Olam ha-Beriyah*, the "world of [prototypic] creation," corresponds to the third Hindu world called *Prajñā*, "He who knows" [all in His cognitive unity]. "He is the Lord (*Īshvara*) of all; He is the origin and the end of the universality of beings," says the *Māndūkya Upanishad* (5:6). Then, in the Kabbalah, comes the world of the first differentiated manifestation of the immanent Divinity, at the center of which His Universal "form," *Metatron*, appears as individual celestial Man, surrounded by all celestial creation; it is *Olam ha-Yetzirah*, the subtle "World of Formation" of beings and things, the world of spirits, angels, and souls, which corresponds in the Hindu world to *Taijasa*, the "luminous" world where everything that will be found on earth is "pre-distinguished" or "pre-differentiated" (*pravivikta*).

We have just seen in fact that terrestrial man is prefigured in heaven by the first individual manifestation of Universal Man, at the center of the luminous sphere which is the inner aspect of the celestial and earthly macrocosm. The Hindus symbolize the light of this sphere by gold, reminding us on the one hand of the Latin etymology of *aureola* ("golden color") and on the other hand of the fact that in Hebrew the word *aur* (pronounced *or*) signifies "light." In the Hindu pantheon, the heavenly Lord, *Brahmā* (the creative manifestation of *Brahma*, the Absolute), is Himself compared to the "golden embryo" (*Hiranyagarbha*) which encloses itself in its own luminous sphere like an "egg," *Brahmanda*, the celestial and terrestrial "Egg of the World." This is reminiscent of the verse in Psalms (104:2): "Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain."

Finally, the terrestrial world is called by the Kabbalah *Olam ha-Asiyah*, the "World of [sensory] Fact" where *Adam Qadmon*, after his manifestation in heaven is "created" and "shaped" as the "first man" (*Adam ha-rishon*) in the earthly paradise. There his primordial and glorious body, made of "ether" (*Avira*, corresponding to the *Ākāsha* of Hindu cosmology), is coextensive with the entire corporeal universe, such that "its light fills the world from one end to the other." This is, in Hinduism, too, the world of the terrestrial manifestation of the "Universal Man," *Vaishvānara*, a world known by his very own name, just as *Olam ha-Asiyah*, which, as Adam's world, is called *Adamah*, the "earth."

Just as *Adam Qadmon* or *Adam ilaah* ("Transcendent Man") is thus immanent in the three manifested worlds and rules them from the "Middle Column," of which he is the personification, so *Purushottama*, the "supreme *Purusha*," is immanent in the three worlds which represent His manifested "quarter" or "foot." Thus, though He is in

Himself their transcendent Essence, He is also the immanent One, universal and indestructible, who dwells in them and penetrates them to the point of being Himself considered—only under an extrinsic aspect which does not in the least affect His undifferentiated reality, immutable and imperishable—as "cut up" or "shared out" amongst all manifest and destructible things. Thus the *Bhagavad Gītā* (15:16–18) speaks of two aspects of *Purusha*,

> the one destructible and the other indestructible; the first [extrinsic] is divided between all beings, the second [intrinsic] is [the] immutable [Immanence of *Purusha*]. But there is [still] another [aspect of] *Purusha*, the highest [*uttama*, transcendent] called [consequently] *Purushottama*, [the supreme *Purusha*] or *Paramātmā* [the "Supreme Self" of all that exists], who, as imperishable Lord, penetrates and supports the three [manifest] worlds. As I pass beyond the destructible [extrinsic aspect] and even the indestructible [Immanence in all things], I am celebrated in the world and in the *Veda* by the name *Purushottama* [the transcendent *Purusha*].

Nevertheless, it is *Purushottama* or *Paramātmā* who by His manifestation or immanence is "incorporated" (*sharīra*) in the three worlds; and by the light of this symbolism, arising from the corporeal, the spiritual world is called *kārana-sharīra*, the "causal and universal body," while the subtle world of individualities is that of the "subtle body," *shūkshma-sharīra*, or *linga-sharīra*, and the terrestrial world that of the "crude body," *sthūla-sharīra*.

Thus, contrary to Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism, and certain branches of Muslim esoterism, too, which transpose the symbolism of the body to the transcendent Principle, Hinduism reserves it for the three manifested worlds, the fourth (*Turīya*) being in itself "indefinable" (*alakshana*), "beyond thought" (*achintya*), and consequently "beyond description" (*avyapadēsha*). The doctrine of integral man therefore arises here, not under a triple aspect or as a "triple body," but through a quaternary, that of the four worlds, which is also to be found in Judaism as we have seen. The same holds true of esoteric Islam, where the "Perfect Man" or the "Universal Man" (*al-Insān al-kāmil*) is identified with the combination of the four worlds, beginning with *ʿālam al-ʿizzah*, God's transcendent "World of Glory," followed by *ʿālam al-jabarūt*, the divine and immanent "World of Power," then by *ʿālam al-malakūt*, the celestial "World of Royalty," and finally by *ʿālam*

al-mulk, *Allāh*'s terrestrial "World of Possession."

But to pass from comparative anthropology and cosmology to Hindu metaphysics, *Ayin*, the "Non-Being" or "Beyond-Being" of Judaism is found there as *Brahma nirguna* or "non-qualified" *Brahma*, while *Ehyeh*, the Being, corresponds to *Brahma saguna*, the "qualified" *Brahma*, who is *Sat*, "Being," or *Sachchidānanda* (*Sat-Chit-Ānanda*), "Being-Consciousness-Bliss." Contrary to the false idea that the Hindu tradition is polytheistic because of its multitude of divinities, these correspond to the multitude of divine aspects and their spiritual and cosmic manifestations to be found in Jewish monotheism, summarized under the name of the Universal Cause, *Elohim*, literally "the gods," a name which designates the unique God-Creator throughout the first chapter of Genesis. On this subject Jewish esoterism has this to say:

> This Name has been transmitted [in its universal reality] to beings of this earth below; it has been given in shares to the leaders and to the angels charged with governing other peoples [while the name YHVH designates the Divine Essence, insofar as it has revealed itself, directly or through *Elohim*, especially to Israel]. . . . All the principalities and powers appointed to the nations of the Gentiles—all are included in this Name [or in the reality of *Elohim*], even the objects of idolatry [through which the idolaters unknowingly adore the only Real, the unique God] (*Zohar*, *Mishpatim*, 96a).

Similarly the *Bhagavad Gītā* (9:23) reveals—without taking into consideration idolaters—the following words of Krishna, personifying Vishnu and through Him the one God: "Those who piously adore other gods, of whom they are faithful followers, [in truth they] adore Myself alone [though] not knowing the appropriate rites." Whoever these Hindu gods might be, and by extension the gods of other religions, they are regarded—as in the passage quoted above from the *Zohar*—as so many aspects of, or approaches to the "One who is without nuances" in Himself, but who "might appear by secret intent under various colors, the effect of His multiple power" (*Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*, 4:1–4).

That the whole "multitude of [Hindu] gods" (*vishvēdēva*) may be reduced in fact to the "One without another" (*ekamevādvitīyam*) results not only from the explicit affirmation that "the worshipful Divinity of resplendent beings is unique" (*mahaddevānam asuratvan ekam*), but in an exhaustive fashion—too long to be quoted here *in*

extenso—by the *Brihad-Āranyaka Upanishad* (3:9), which reduces the "three-thousand-three-hundred-and-six gods" of the Hindu pantheon to "That which is called *Brahma*," the Absolute, which transcends all its particular aspects. Similarly, Sri Shankarāchārya, the great spokesman of Hindu spirituality, summarizes this in the following passage from *Viveka-Chūda-Māni* (464): "Alone in *Brahma*, the One without another, the infinite *Brahma*, without beginning or end, transcendent and changeless; in Him there is no trace of duality." Is there any need to emphasize the identity between this and the following statement concerning Judaism: "He is one without another" (*hu ehad we-en sheni*, which corresponds to the Islamic formula quoted at the beginning of this essay, *wahdāhu lā sharīka lahu*)?

In truth, alone is YHVH, alone is *Brahma*. And if we descend from the supreme truth of Judaism and Hinduism—from *yihud*, the "union" which unites all things to YHVH, or the *advaita*, the universal "non-duality" of *Brahma*—to the soteriology of messianism, we find it once more in the descent of the *Avatāra* or divine incarnations, coming successively to bring saving light to humanity. Invoking their very Names is—together with the contemplative incantation of the sacred monosyllable *AUM* (pronounced *OM*), each letter of which symbolizes in ascending manner one of the three manifested worlds and their entirety, the non-manifested fourth—one of Hinduism's ways to salvation and spiritual deliverance. The same is true, in Buddhism and Christianity, of the names of Buddha and Jesus—the latter being sometimes accompanied by the name of Mary—while in Islam the name of *Allāh* is invoked, or one of His "most beautiful Names" (*Asmā' al-husna*). Similarly, in Judaism is invoked one of the Names of the Divine Essence, YHVH, according to the words of the Psalmist (145:18): "YHVH is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all them that call upon Him in truth," or those of the prophet Joel, referring particularly to those living through the terrible events of the end of time: "whosoever shall call on the Name of YHVH shall be saved" (2:32).

What is fundamentally true of Judaism is also true of all genuine religions and traditions: there is but one Absolute, one Real, one God, the basis of all the revelations and their formal antinomies, the basis of all apparent dualism. As Ananda Coomaraswamy has expressed it in a simple but limpid phrase: "God is an Essence without duality."[13]

Translated by Malcolm Barnes

[13] Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1943), p. 10; French edition, *Hindouisme et Bouddhisme* (Paris, 1949).

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Universal Aspects of the Kabbalah & Judaism

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