

# **GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED BY FRITHJOF SCHUON**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Books by Frithjof Schuon:

CI – Christianity / Islam: Essays on Esoteric Ecumenicism

EchPW – Echoes of Perennial Wisdom

EH – The Eye of the Heart

EPW – Esoterism as Principle and as Way

FDH – From the Divine to the Human

FS – The Feathered Sun

FSR – Form and Substance in the Religions

GDW – Gnosis: Divine Wisdom

IFA – In the Face of the Absolute

LAW – Light on the Ancient Worlds

LS – Language of the Self

LT – Logic and Transcendence

PM – The Play of Masks

RH – Road to the Heart

RHC – Roots of the Human Condition

SME – Survey of Metaphysics and Esoterism

SPHF – Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts

SVQ – Sufism: Veil and Quintessence

SW – Stations of Wisdom

TB – Treasures of Buddhism

THC – To Have a Center

TM – The Transfiguration of Man

TUR – The Transcendent Unity of Religions

UI – Understanding Islam

Other:

EW – The Essential Writings of Frithjof Schuon, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr

SCR – Studies in Comparative Religion

SG – Sword of Gnosis, ed. Jacob Needleman

SJ – Sophia: The Journal of Traditional Studies

UT – Unanimous Tradition, ed. Ranjit Fernando

“Like Universal Existence, which is its prototype, language encloses us ontologically in the truth, whether we wish it or not: before all words, its all-embracing meaning is ‘Be’ (*Kun*); it is Divine in its essence. ‘In the beginning was the Word.’” [SVQ, Ellipsis and Hyperbolism in Arab Rhetoric]

“One cannot help defining things, but care must be taken not to limit them too much in defining them.” [SJ, Volume 1, Number 1, Summer 1995, Norms and Paradoxes in Spiritual Alchemy]

“Formulation is not intended to be exhaustive – no formulation could be – but it does nonetheless provide an adequate reference point; in metaphysics, that is all one can ask of human thought.” [SME, Dimensions of Omnipotence]

“All expression is of necessity relative, but language is nonetheless capable of conveying the quality of absoluteness which has to be conveyed; expression contains all, like a seed; it opens all, like a master-key; what remains to be seen is to which capacity of understanding it is addressed.” [SW, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

“(A) further remark, this time of a more or less personal order: we grew up at a time when one could still say, without blushing on account of its naivety, that two and two make four; *when words still had a meaning and said what they meant to say* [emphasis added]; when one could conform to the laws of elementary logic or of common sense, without having to pass through psychology or biology, or so-called sociology, and so forth; in short, when there were still points of reference in the intellectual arsenal of men. By this we wish to point out that our way of thinking and our dialectic are deliberately out-of-date; and we know in advance, for it is only too evident, that the reader to whom we address ourselves will thank us for it.” [SME, Foreword]

“The frequent use of inverted commas in this book is due to the fact that expressions which are merely logical do not always keep step with spiritual reality – indeed this is far from being the case. It is also a fact that the meanings of many words have shrunk to some extent with usage, or else that they have come to suggest associations of ideas that are more or less restrictive; nor should we forget that the modern reader has more difficulty in ‘reading between the lines’ than his predecessor of olden times, so that greater precision and more shades of meaning are necessary.” [GDW, The Sense of the Absolute in Religions]

“One must know exactly what is meant by these terms.” [SVQ, The Exo-Esoteric Symbiosis]

**Absolute:** “In the Absolute, I am not, and you are not, and God (in His personal determination) is not, because He (the Absolute) is beyond the reach of all word and all thought.” {Sri Ramakrishna} [LS, A View of Yoga]

The Absolute is not the Absolute inasmuch as it contains aspects, but inasmuch as It transcends them. [UI, The Quran]

If we were to be asked what the Absolute is, we would reply first of all that it is necessary and not merely possible Reality; absolute Reality, hence infinite and perfect, precisely; and we would add – in conformity with the level of the question asked – that the Absolute is that which, in the world, is reflected as the existence of things. Without the Absolute, there is no existence; the aspect of absoluteness of a thing is what distinguishes it from inexistence, if one may so put it. Compared to empty space, each grain of sand is a miracle. [FDH, The Interplay of the Hypostases]

The Absolute, or the Essence, intrinsically comprises Infinitude; it is as the Infinite that it radiates. Divine Radiation projects the Essence into the “void,” but without there being any “going out” whatsoever, for the Principle is immutable and indivisible, nothing can be taken away from it; by this projection on the surface of a nothingness that in itself is inexistent, the Essence is reflected in the mode of “forms” or “accidents.” But the “life” of the Infinite is not only centrifugal, it is also centripetal; it is alternately or simultaneously – depending on the relationships envisaged – Radiation and Reintegration; the latter is the apocatastatic “return” of forms and accidents into the Essence, without nevertheless there being anything added to the latter, for it is absolute Plenitude. Moreover, and even above all, Infinitude – like Perfection – is an intrinsic characteristic of the Absolute: it is as it were its inward life, or its love which by overflowing, so to speak prolongs itself and creates the world. [SVQ, Hypostatic Dimensions of Unity]

Only the definition of the Absolute as such is absolute, and every explanatory description belongs to relativity precisely on account of the differentiated nature of its content, which is not for that reason incorrect, to be sure, but rather, is limited and therefore replaceable; so that if one wishes to give an absolute definition of the Absolute, one has to say that God is One. “The testimony of Unity is one” (*At-Tawhidu wahid*), say the Sufis, and by this they mean that an expression, within the limits of its possibility, must be one with its content and its cause. [CI, Alternations in Semitic Monotheism]

**Absolute / Infinite:** In metaphysics, it is necessary to start from the idea that the Supreme Reality is absolute, and that being absolute it is infinite. That is absolute which allows of no augmentation or diminution, or of no repetition or division; it is therefore that which is at once solely itself and totally itself. And that is infinite which is not determined by any limiting factor and therefore does not end at any boundary; it is in the first place Potentiality or Possibility as such, and *ipso facto* the Possibility of things, hence Virtuality. Without All-Possibility, there would be neither Creator nor creation, neither *Maya* nor *Samsara*.

The Infinite is so to speak the intrinsic dimension of plenitude proper to the Absolute; to say Absolute is to say Infinite, the one being inconceivable without the other. We can symbolize the relation between these two aspects of Supreme Reality by the following images: in space, the absolute is the point, and the infinite is extension; in time, the absolute is the moment, and the infinite is duration. On the plane of matter, the absolute

is the ether – the underlying and omnipresent primordial substance – whereas the infinite is the indefinite series of substances; on the plane of form, the absolute is the sphere – the simple, perfect and primordial form – and the infinite is the indefinite series of more or less complex forms; finally, on the plane of number, the absolute will be unity or unicity, and the infinite will be the unlimited series of numbers or possible quantities, or totality. The distinction between the Absolute and the Infinite expresses the two fundamental aspects of the Real, that of essentiality and that of potentiality; this is the highest principial prefiguration of the masculine and feminine poles. Universal Radiation, thus *Maya* both divine and cosmic, springs from the second aspect, the Infinite, which coincides with All-Possibility. [SME, Summary of Integral Metaphysics]

**Absolute / Infinite / Perfection:** The Absolute, imperceptible as such, makes itself visible through the existence of things; in an analogous manner, the Infinite reveals itself through their inexhaustible diversity; and similarly, Perfection manifests itself through the qualities of things, and in so doing, it communicates both the rigor of the Absolute and the radiance of the Infinite, for things have their musicality as well as their geometry. [CI, Atomism and Creation]

**Absolutely Relative:** The notion ‘relatively absolute’ could not imply that there is an ‘absolutely relative’, for this expression – aside from its intrinsic absurdity – is practically synonymous with ‘nothingness’. [PM, The Play of Masks]

**Abstract:** Many notions that we call ‘abstract’ for reasons of convenience, because they lie outside our immediate daily experience, or which we describe as abstract provisionally to serve the needs of our logic, correspond to experiences that are deeper and more real than our own, experiences that are lived by the cosmic consciousness of which we are only exteriorisations or particles.

The notion of justice is an abstraction, granted; but the Universal Equilibrium whence it derives, and which particular acts of justice manifest, is as concrete as the Universe itself. [LT, Abuse of the Ideas of the Concrete and the Abstract]

**Abstract / Objective:** We term here “abstract” that which, escaping our direct experience, remains in fact more or less notional; no one can experience pure space, thus it will be in practice abstract in respect of the contents which measure it, either in a static or dynamic manner. By contrast, that is objective which, whether abstract or concrete, is exterior in relation to our observing consciousness; a thing is objective inasmuch as it exists independently of our individual or collective consciousness, while being subjective inasmuch as it is a possible content of that consciousness. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

**Adogmatism:** “Adogmatism” in reality is chiefly aimed at the mental crystallizations of partial truths and in no way confers *carte blanche* against Truth as such; if it closes the door against any fixation of half-truths, this does not mean that it opens the door to every error. For the modernistically minded spiritualist, this same adogmatism becomes a license to do anything he pleases, and this in the name of a tradition to which he yet

remains paradoxically attached out of atavism and sentimentality, or even out of sheer lack of imagination. [TB, A Defense of Zen]

**Aesthetics:** By ‘integral aesthetics’ we mean in fact a science that takes account not only of sensible beauty but also of the spiritual foundations of this beauty, these foundations explaining the frequent connection between the arts and initiatic methods. [EPW, Foundation of an Integral Aesthetics]

**Alternativism:** Alternativism – that is, the prejudice of seeing in every relative and therefore reconcilable opposition a fundamental and irreconcilable one that would force us spiritually and morally to a violent choice – induced the early rationalists of Islam, namely the Mutazilites, to see an incompatibility between the Qualities of God and His Unity; from this there resulted a tendency either to deny the diversity of these qualities or even to deny them altogether. With the Mutazilites, one finds the same alternative between Justice and Predestination, and the same incapacity to see that here are two faces of a single reality, or two different relationships. The inability to reconcile the pure spirituality of God – or His “non-materiality” – with the possibility of a beatific vision stems from the same intellectual limitation. [CI, Dilemmas of Moslem Scholasticism]

**Analogy / Identity:** Analogy is a discontinuous identity, and identity a continuous analogy. [UI, The Path]

The relationship of analogy is that of discontinuity between center and periphery: created things, including thoughts – everything indeed that constitutes cosmic manifestation – are separated from the Principle . . .

The relationship of identity on the contrary is that of continuity between center and periphery, it is consequently distinguished from the relationship of analogy as radii are distinguished from concentric circles. Divine manifestation, around us and in us, prolongs and projects the Principle and is identified with it precisely in respect of the immanent divine quality. [EPW, Understanding Esoterism]

**Ancestor:** Among the peoples of the Far East, the ancestor is at once the origin and the spiritual or moral norm; he is, for his descendants, the essential personality, that is to say the substance of which they are like the accidents; and piety consists precisely in viewing him thus and in seeing in him but the bridge connecting them – his descendants – with the Divine . . . Ancestors are the human imprints of angelic substances and, for that reason, also of divine Qualities; to be true to them is to be true to God; they oblige us to remain in conformity with the eternal “idea” whence we came forth, and which is the law of our existence and the goal of our life.

This connection between the ancestor and his angelic and divine prototypes is moreover apparent in the Japanese word *kami*, which denotes the ancestor and the literal meaning of which is “located above”; in sacred language, this word means “divine aspect,” “cosmic principle,” “spirit.” The Shinto tradition is called *Kami-no-Michi* or “Way of the Gods,” which implies that it is also the way of the ancestors. [TB, The Meaning of Ancestors]

**Anger (holy / passionate):** Holy anger is a movement of concentration and not a going outside oneself; it is like an “incarnation” of the divine Wrath in the human microcosm, which must at that moment be free from passionate anger. The inner criterion of holy anger is precisely calmness, whereas passionate anger carries away the entire being and brings forgetfulness of God; it has no centre, that is to say it is entirely peripheral and dissipated. Holy anger exists only by virtue of a motionless centre, an implacable truth which determines it; when driving the money-changers from the Temple, Christ was impassible. [SW, Nature and Arguments of Faith]

**Antinomic Theology:** “Antinomic” theology which consists in confronting two contradictory affirmations concerning God in view of a superior, possibly ineffable, truth, but without intending to negate either of the two affirmations; for the purpose is to confront, not a truth and an error, since that would not lead to a new conclusion, but two truths, each of which is valid in itself but insufficient in respect to their antinomy. [IFA, Observations on Dialectical Antinomism]

**Archangel Gabriel:** The Archangel Gabriel is a personification of a function of the Spirit, the celestial ray which reaches the Prophets on earth. [UI, The Prophet]

**Archetype:** The archetypes represent uniquely perfections and totalities, and not privative and hence fragmentary manifestations, and that in consequence there are earthly phenomena which are not to be found as such in the Platonic ideas precisely because they are either privative or existentially fragmentary by virtue of privation. [LT, Rationalism, Real and Apparent]

**Argument:** The Greek word *kategoria*, “argument,” means in the last analysis: an ultimate form of thought, that is to say a key-notion capable of classifying other notions, or even all the notions having a bearing on existence. [THC, Universal Categories]

**Aristocratic / Plebeian Nature:** The man of “aristocratic” nature – we are not speaking of social classes – is he who masters himself and who loves to master himself; the “plebeian” by nature – with the same reservation – is on the contrary he who does not master himself, and who does not wish to do so. To master oneself is in substance to want to transcend oneself, in conformity with the reason for being of that central and total creature which is man; in fact, the man of the “dark age” lives below himself. Thus he must transcend himself – or re-establish the equilibrium between *Maya* and *Atma* – in accordance with a norm which he bears within himself, and which comprises all that makes life worth living. [PM, On Intention]

**Art:** Art in the broadest sense is the crystallization of archetypal values. [THC, To Have a Center]

Art is the quest for – and the revelation of – the center, within us as well as around us. [THC, To Have a Center]

Art is an activity, an exteriorization, and thus depends by definition on a knowledge that transcends it and gives it order; apart from such knowledge, art has no justification: it is

knowledge which determines action, manifestation, form, and not the reverse. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

**Art (authentic and normative):** Authentic and normative art always tends to combine intelligent observation of nature with noble and profound stylizations in order, first, to assimilate the work to the model created by God in nature and, secondly, to separate it from physical contingency by giving it an imprint of pure spirit, of synthesis, of what is essential. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

**Art (essential function of sacred art):** The essential function of sacred art is to transfer Substance, which is both one and inexhaustible, into the world of accident and to bring the accidental consciousness back to Substance. One could say also that sacred art transposes Being to the world of existence, of action or of becoming, or that it transposes in a certain way the Infinite to the world of the finite, or Essence to the world of forms; it thereby suggests a continuity proceeding from the one to the other, a way starting from appearance or accident and opening onto Substance or its celestial reverberations. [LT, The Argument Founded on Substance]

**Art (function):** Art has a function that is both magical and spiritual: magical, it renders present principles, powers and also things that it attracts by virtue of a “sympathetic magic”; spiritual, it exteriorizes truths and beauties in view of our interiorization, of our return to the “kingdom of God that is within you.” The Principle becomes manifestation so that manifestation might rebecome the Principle, or so that the “I” might return to the Self; or simply, so that the human soul might, through given phenomena, make contact with the heavenly archetypes, and thereby with its own archetype. [TM, Art, Its Duties and Its Rights]

**Art (general):** Art is in a general way both a means of expression and a means of assimilation: expression of our qualitative – not arbitrary and chaotic – personality, and assimilation of the archetypes thus projected; it is therefore a movement from ourselves to ourselves, or from the immanent Self to transcendent Being, and conversely; a purely empirical “ourselves” means nothing, all values being rooted in the Absolute. [THC, Message of a Vestimentary Art]

**Art (mission of):** To remove the shells in order to reveal the kernels; to distill the materials until the essences are extracted. Nobility is nothing else but a natural disposition for this alchemy, and this on all planes. [THC, To Have a Center]

**Art (modern conception):** The modern conception of art is false insofar as it puts creative imagination – or even simply the impulse to create – in the place of qualitative form, or insofar as a subjective and conjectural valuation is substituted for an objective and spiritual one; to do this is to replace by talent alone – by talent real or illusory – that skill and craftsmanship which must needs enter into the very definition of art, as if talent could have meaning apart from the normative constants that are its criteria. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

**Art (perfect):** Perfect art can be recognized by three main criteria: nobility of content – this being a spiritual condition apart from which art has no right to exist – then exactness of symbolism or at least, in case of profane works of art, harmony of composition, and finally purity of style or elegance of line and color, we can discern with the help of these criteria the qualities and defects of any work of art whether sacred or not. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

**Art (pictorial – figurative and decorative):** Pictorial art in the widest sense – we mean by this the animation of surfaces by means of colors, be it by paintings properly so called, by drawings, engravings or embroideries – implies essentially two dimensions or modes, the figurative and the decorative, both occurring occasionally in the vestimentary art of the Indians as well as in the decoration of their tents. The first mode is executed by the men, the second by the women, which is full of meaning: in effect, the figurative art refers to what is determined – or central in a certain sense – and the decorative art to what is indetermined and spacious or to all-possibility; and this independently of the particular meanings that either the figurative drawings or the geometrical motifs may have. Or again: the figurative art expresses the content of our consciousness, the decorative art our substance; thus it is that man represents an idea whereas woman embodies a manner of being, an existential *materia* in which the idea may fix itself and expand; it is the complementarity between Truth and Virtue. [THC, Message of a Vestimentary Art]

**Art (purpose):** The purpose of art is not *a priori* to induce aesthetic emotions, but to transmit, together with these, a more or less direct spiritual message, and thus suggestions emanating from, and leading back to, the liberating truth. [LT, The Saint and the Divine Image]

**Art (reason for being):** The reason for being of art – as *a fortiori* of spiritual ways – is the passage from accidentality to the substance or from the world of husks to that of the archetypes. [SME, The Mystery of the Hypostatic Face]

**Art (sacred):** Sacred art is the form of the Supra-formal, it is the image of the Uncreate, the language of Silence. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

Sacred art is Heaven descended to earth, rather than earth reaching towards Heaven. [FDH, To Refuse or to Accept Revelation]

Sacred art . . . transmits not only abstract truths conveyed by symbolism, it equally transmits, precisely by its beauty, the perfumes, at once vivifying and appeasing, of the Divine Love. [FDH, Aspects of the Theophanic Phenomenon of Consciousness]

An art is sacred, not through the personal intention of the artist, but through its content, its symbolism and its style, that is, through objective elements. By its content: the subject represented must be as prescribed either when following a canonical model or in a wider sense; always, however, it must be canonically determined. By its symbolism: the sacred personage, or the anthropomorphic symbol, must be clothed or adorned in a given manner and not differently and may be making certain gestures but not others. By its style: the image must be expressed in a particular hieratic formal language and not some foreign or imagined style. In brief, the image must be sacred in its content, symbolical in its detail and hieratic in its treatment; otherwise it will be lacking in spiritual truth, in



liturgical quality and – for all the more reason – in sacramental character. On pain of losing all right to existence, art has no right to infringe these rules and has the less interest in doing so since these seeming restrictions confer on it, by the intellectual and aesthetic truth, qualities of depth and power such as the individual artist has very small chance of drawing out of himself. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

An art that does not express the changeless and does not want to be itself changeless is not a sacred art. [LAW, The Ancient Worlds in Perspective]

**Art (sacred / profane):** Sacred art is made as a vehicle for spiritual presences, it is made at one and the same time for God, for angels and for man; profane art on the other hand exists only for man and by that very fact betrays him.

Sacred art helps man to find his own center, that kernel the nature of which is to love God. [SPHF, Aesthetics and Symbolism in Art and Nature]

**Art (sole obligation):** It is not the sole obligation of art to come down towards the common people; it should also remain faithful to its intrinsic truth in order to allow men to rise towards that truth. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

**Art (supernatural value):** The supernatural value of sacred art arises from the fact that it conveys and communicates an intelligence which is lacking in the collectivity. Like virgin nature it has a quality and function of intelligence which it manifests through beauty because in essence it belongs to the formal order; sacred art is the form of the Supra-formal, it is the image of the Uncreate, the language of Silence. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

**Art / Beauty:** Certainly art belongs by very definition to the formal order, and who says perfection of form, says beauty; to claim that art has nothing to do with beauty, on the pretext that its immediate end is spiritual, is as false as to affirm the contrary: that beauty is the exclusive end of the work of art. Beauty essentially implies a container and a content: as to the container, it is represented by conformity to the laws of harmony, or regularity of structure, whereas the content is a manifestation of “Being” or of “Knowledge” or again of “Beatitude” – which brings us back to the ternary aspect of *Atma* – or more precisely a varied combination of the three elements; it is, moreover, these contents that determine *a priori* the container. [LT, The Saint and the Divine Image]

**“Art for art’s sake”:** The error in the thesis of “art for art’s sake” really amounts to supposing that these are relativities which bear their adequate justification within themselves, in their own relative nature, and that consequently there are criteria of value inaccessible to pure intelligence and foreign to objective truth. This error involves abolishing the primacy of the spirit and its replacement either by instinct or taste, thus by criteria that are either purely subjective or else arbitrary. We have already seen that the definition, laws and criteria of art cannot be derived from art itself, that is, from the competence of the artist as such; the foundations of art lie in the spirit, in metaphysical, theological and mystical knowledge, not in knowledge of the craft alone nor yet in genius, for this may be just anything; in other words the intrinsic principles of art are

essentially subordinate to extrinsic principles of a higher order. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

**Artist / Mystic:** To creative exteriorization, which proceeds from the center to the periphery, responds an initiatory or mystical interiorization, which proceeds in the inverse direction, and whose psychological prefiguration is virtue. Actually, virtue tends from the accidental towards the substantial or from the contingent form to the archetype, to the “idea,” whose essence is the Sovereign Good, the *Agathon*. The same holds true for art, whose purpose is to transfer the archetype into contingency; and this is true “realism,” since the real lies above us, and not below us as the moderns would have it. But it goes without saying that artistic expression is no more than the prefiguration of spiritual alchemy, whose matter is the soul and which realizes, inwardly and in a fundamental manner, what art demonstrates and promises at the level of immediate perceptions and emotions. The artist brings the Divine into the world; the mystic reintegrates the world – his soul – into the Divine; always with the help of Heaven, for “Without me ye can do nothing.” [SME, Creation as a Divine Quality]

**Ascesis:** There is an ascesis that consists simply in sobriety, and which is sufficient for the naturally spiritual man; and there is another which consists in fighting against passions, the degree of this ascesis depending upon the demands of the individual nature; finally, there is the ascesis of those who mistakenly believe themselves to be charged with all sins, or who identify themselves with sin through mystical subjectivism, without forgetting to mention those who practice an extreme asceticism in order to expiate the faults of others, or even simply in order to give a good example in a world that has need of it. [CI, The Question of Evangelicalism]

**Atma:** The term *Atma* corresponds most nearly to “the Essence”. [LAW, *Maya*]  
*Atma* is beyond the opposition of subject-object; one can, however, call it pure Subject when one starts from the consideration of “objects,” which are so many superimpositions in relation to *Atma*. [LS, The Vedanta]

**Atma / Maya:** *Atma* is pure Light and Beatitude, pure Consciousness, pure Subject. There is nothing unrelated to this Reality; even the “object” which is least in conformity with It is still It, but “objectified” by *Maya*, the power of illusion consequent upon the infinity of the Self. [LS, The Vedanta]  
*Maya* exists only through its contents, which prolong *Atma*; this is to say that *Atma* is conceivable without *Maya*, whereas *Maya* is intelligible only through the notion of *Atma*. [PM, In the Face of Contingency]

**Avatara:** The *Avatara* “incarnates” God, while also personifying – since he is in the world – Creation, Universal Spirit, Man and Intellect; if he incarnates God he cannot be other than perfect, and if he is perfect – and he is so by definition – he cannot but incarnate the total cosmos, the primary manifestation of the Principle, with the subsequent manifestations that it implies. [SW, Manifestations of the Divine Principle]  
In the *Avatara* there is quite obviously a separation between the human and the divine – or between accident and Substance – then there is a mixing, not of human accident and

divine Substance, but of the human and the direct reflection of Substance in the cosmic accident; relatively to the human this reflection may be called divine, on condition that the Cause is not in any way reduced to the effect. For some, the *Avatara* is God “descended”; for others, he is an “opening” which allows God immutably “on high” to be seen. [EPW, The Mystery of the Veil]

The *Avatara* is Divine Man and human God. [FSR, Insights into the Muhammadan Phenomenon]

The *Avatara* does not convince by his words and his marvels alone, he transmits certainty to an equal extent by the visible harmony of his being, which allows us to glimpse the shores of the Infinite and revives the deepest yearnings while also appeasing them. [LT, Concerning the Proofs of God]

**Avidya:** Ignorance that “*Brahman* is real, the world is illusory,” and that “the soul is not other than *Brahman*”; all actions or attitudes contrary to intrinsic and vocational Law (*Dharma*) result from this blindness of heart. [PM, Delineations of Original Sin]

**Barzakh:** The Arabic word *barzakh* means “isthmus”: it is a dividing line between two domains, and this line appears, from the standpoint of each side, to belong to the other side. [IFA, Transcendence and Immanence in the Spiritual Economy of Islam]

**Barzakh (archetype of):** The archetype of the *barzakh* is the half-divine, half-cosmic frontier separating, and in another sense uniting, Manifestation and the Principle; it is the “Divine Spirit” (*Ruh*) which, seen “from above” is manifestation, and seen “from below” is Principle. Consequently, it is *Maya* in both its aspects; the same thing appears, in a certain manner, in the Christian expression “true man and true God.” [IFA, Transcendence and Immanence in the Spiritual Economy of Islam]

**Baseness:** Pascal thought that the worst baseness is to claim glory for oneself, which is inaccurate and unjust; the worst baseness is to discredit the glory of others and to glorify one’s own disgrace. [LS, A View of Yoga]

**Beautiful:** The beautiful is not what we love and because we love it, but that which by its objective value obliges us to love it. [EchPW, 9]

**Beauty:** “Beauty is the splendor of the true.” {Plato} [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

Beauty is like the sun: it acts without detours, without dialectical intermediaries, its ways are free, direct, incalculable; like love, to which it is closely connected, it can heal, unloose, appease, unite or deliver through its simple radiance. [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]

Beauty is a crystallization of some aspect of universal joy; it is something limitless expressed by means of a limit. [SPHF, Aesthetics and Symbolism in Art and Nature]

**Beauty (archetype of):** The archetype of beauty, or its Divine model, is the superabundance and equilibrium of the Divine qualities, and at the same time the overflowing of the existential potentialities in pure Being. In a rather different sense,

beauty stems from the Divine Love, this Love being the will to deploy itself and to give itself, to realize itself in “another”; thus it is that “God created the world by love.” The resultant of Love is a totality that realizes a perfect equilibrium and a perfect beatitude and is for that reason a manifestation of beauty, the first of such manifestations in which all others are contained, namely, the Creation, or the world which in its disequilibriums contains ugliness, but is beauty in its totality. This totality the human soul does not realize, save in holiness. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

**Beauty (function of):** The cosmic or more particularly the earthly function of beauty is to actualize in the intelligent creature the Platonic recollection of the archetypes, right up to the luminous Night of the Infinite. [EPW, Foundations of an Integral Aesthetics]

The cosmic, and more particularly the earthly, function of beauty is to actualize in the intelligent and sensitive creature the recollection of essences, and thus to open the way to the luminous night of the one and infinite Essence. [EchPW, 34]

**Beauty (interior):** To speak of “interior Beauty” is not a contradiction in terms. It means that the accent is placed on the existential and contemplative aspect of the virtues and at the same time on their metaphysical transparency; it underlines their attachment to their Divine Source, which by reverberation invests them with the quality of being an “end in themselves,” or of majesty; and it is because the beautiful has this quality that it relaxes and liberates. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

**Beauty (love of / to understand / aesthetic experience):** A love of beauty does not signify attachment to appearances, but an understanding of appearances with reference to their essence and consequently a communication with their quality of truth and love. Fully to understand beauty, and it is to this that beauty invites us, is to pass beyond the appearance and to follow the internal vibration back to its roots; the aesthetic experience, when it is directed aright, has its source in symbolism and not in idolatry. This experience must contribute to union and not to dispersion, it must bring about a contemplative dilatation and not a passional compression; it must appease and relieve, not excite and burden. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

**Beauty (message of):** Beyond every question of “sensible consolation” the message of beauty is both intellectual and moral: intellectual because it communicates to us, in the world of accidentality, aspects of Substance, without for all that having to address itself to abstract thought; and moral, because it reminds us of what we must love, and consequently be. [EPW, Foundation of an Integral Aesthetics]

**Beauty (perceived):** Perceived beauty is not only the messenger of a celestial and divine archetype, it is also, for that very reason, the outward projection of a universal quality immanent in us, and quite obviously more real than our empirical and imperfect ego gropingly seeking its identity. [RHC, Pillars of Wisdom]

**Beauty (perception of):** The perception of beauty, which is a rigorous adequation and not subjective illusion, implies essentially a satisfaction of the intelligence on the one hand, and on the other a feeling at once of security, infinity and love. Of security:

because beauty is unitive and excludes, with a kind of musical evidence, the fissures of doubt and anxiety; of infinity: because beauty, through its very musicality, melts hardenings and limitations and thus frees the soul of its narrownesses; of love: because beauty calls forth love, that is to say it invites to union and thus to unitive extinction. [EchPW, 9]

**Beauty (terrestrial):** Beauty, being essentially a deployment, is an “exteriorization,” even *in divinis*, where the unfathomable mystery of the Self is “deployed” in Being, which in its turn is deployed in Existence; Being and Existence, *Ishvara* and *Samsara*, are both *Maya*, but Being is still God, whereas Existence is already the world. All terrestrial beauty is thus by reflection a mystery of love. It is, “whether it likes it or not,” coagulated love or music turned to crystal, but it retains on its face the imprint of its internal fluidity, of its beatitude and of its liberality; it is measure in overflowing, in it is neither dissipation nor constriction. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

**Beauty / Goodness:** It has been said that beauty and goodness are the two faces of one and the same reality, the one outward and the other inward; thus goodness is internal beauty, and beauty is external goodness. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

Beauty and goodness, as we have seen, are two faces of one and the same reality, outward the one and inward the other, at least when those words are understood in their most ordinary sense. From another point of view, however, goodness and beauty are situated on the same level, their inward face then being Beatitude; and Beatitude is inseparable from the knowledge of God.

“Extremes meet”: it is therefore understandable that the notion of beauty, which is attached *a priori* to the appearance or the outwardness of things, reveals for that very reason a profound aspect of that which is situated at the antipodes of appearances. In a certain sense, beauty reflects a more profound reality than does goodness, in that it is disinterested and serene like the nature of things, and without objective, like Being or the Infinite. It reflects, that inward release, that detachment, that sort of gentle grandeur that is proper to contemplation, and so to wisdom and to truth. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

Beauty is inferior to goodness as the outward is inferior to the inward, but it is superior to goodness as “being” is superior to “doing,” or as contemplation is superior to action; it is in this sense that the Beauty of God appears as a mystery even more profound than His Mercy. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

**Beauty / Knowledge:** Some people doubtless think that beauty, whatever merits it may possibly possess, is not necessary to knowledge. To this it may be answered first that strictly speaking there is no contingency that is in principle indispensable to knowledge as such, but neither is there any contingency totally separated from it; second that we live among contingencies, forms, and appearances, and consequently cannot escape them, not least because we ourselves belong to the very same order as they; third that in principle pure knowledge surpasses all else, but that in fact beauty, or the comprehension of its metaphysical cause, can reveal many a truth, so that it can be a factor in knowledge for one who possesses the necessary gifts; fourth that we live in a world wherein almost all forms are saturated with errors, so that it would be a great mistake to deprive ourselves of

a “discernment of spirits” on this plane. There can be no question of introducing inferior elements into pure intellectuality; on the contrary, it is a case of introducing intelligence into the appreciation of forms, among which we live and of which we are, and which determine us more than we know. [LT, Truth and Errors Concerning Beauty]

**Beauty / Love:** It is beauty that determines love, not inversely: the beautiful is not what we love and because we love it, but that which by its objective value obliges us to love it; we love the beautiful because it is beautiful, even if in fact it may happen that we lack judgement, which does not invalidate the principle of the normal relationship between object and subject. Likewise, the fact that one may love because of an inward beauty and in spite of an outward ugliness, or that love may be mixed with compassion or other indirect motives, cannot invalidate the nature either of beauty or of love. [SVQ, Tracing the Notion of Philosophy]

Everything that Saint Paul says in his magnificent passage on love (1 Corinthians 13) is equally applicable to beauty, in a transposed sense. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

**Beauty / Virtue:** Virtue is the beauty of the soul as beauty is the virtue of forms. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

**Being:** Being does not coincide with the “pure Absolute”; it pertains to the Divine Order inasmuch as it is a direct reflection of the Absolute in the Relative, and consequently it is what may be termed paradoxically the “relatively absolute.” If the personal God were the Absolute as such, He could not be an interlocutor for man. [PM, *Ex Nihilo, In Deo*]

Being is the relative Absolute, or God as “relatively absolute,” that is to say insofar as He creates. The pure Absolute does not create. [UI, The Path]

**Being / Intellect:** Being is ‘ambiguous’ because it is at the same time absolute and relative, or because it is absolute while being situated in relativity, or again, to express ourselves more boldly though perhaps all the more suggestive, because it is the ‘relative Absolute’. In an analogous way, the Intellect is ‘ambiguous’ because it is at the same time divine and human, uncreated and created, principial and manifested, which can never be said of Being; Intellect is ‘manifested Principle’, while Being is ‘Principle determined’ or ‘made relative’, but always non-manifested. [GDW, Ternary Aspects of the Human Microcosm]

**Beyond-Being / Being:** It should not be forgotten that God as Beyond-Being, or supra-personal Self, is absolute in an intrinsic sense, while Being or the divine Person is absolute extrinsically, that is, in relation to His manifestation or to creatures, but not in Himself, nor with respect to the Intellect which “penetrates the depths of God”. [LAW, In the Wake of the Fall]

The essential distinction between God as Essence or Beyond-Being, and God as Creator or Being is that Beyond-Being is absolute Necessity in itself, whereas Being is absolute Necessity in respect of the world, but not in respect of Beyond-Being. Beyond-Being, or the Self, possesses the possible as an internal dimension and in virtue of its infinitude; at this level, the possible is precisely Being, or Relativity, *Maya*. We would say

consequently that Being is not other than Possibility; possibility necessary in itself, but contingent in its increasingly relative contents; and by definition non-absolute, in the paradoxical sense of a “lesser absoluteness” (*apara Brahma*). [FDH, The Problem of Possibility]

But let us return to supreme Beyond-Being: in order to distinguish it from Being, it could be said that the first is “absolutely infinite” whereas the second is relatively so, which, while being tautological and even contradictory, is nevertheless a useful expression in a necessarily elliptical language; the gap between logic and transcendent truths permits the latter occasionally to override the former, although the converse is clearly excluded. If we set Beyond-Being aside, we are entitled to attribute Infinitude to Being; but if it is Beyond-Being that we are taking into consideration, then we shall say that the Infinite is in truth Beyond-Being, and that Being realizes this infinitude in relative mode, thereby opening the door to the outpouring of possibilities endlessly varied, thus inexhaustible. [FDH, The Problem of Possibility]

**Bhakta:** A *bhakta* is not a man who ‘thinks’, that is a man whose individuality actively participates in supra-individual knowledge and who consequently is able ‘himself’ to apply his transcendent knowledge to cosmic and human contingencies. In other words the *bhakta* attains and possesses knowledge, not in an intellectual, but in an ontological manner. On the individual level the thinking of a *bhakta* reduces itself to a sort of ‘planetary system’ of his personal realization; otherwise it is the whole tradition, that from which the *bhakta* sprang, which ‘thinks’ for him; it is that tradition which settles all problems situated outside the ‘system’ in question. [SPHF, The Vedanta]

**Bhakti / Jnana:** According to a rather common error found in certain circles, people think they are dealing only with *bhakti* wherever they meet an emotional element and with *jnana* where they find intellectual dissertations; in reality, the valid criteria are as follows: where there is “ontologism” and “dualism” in a fundamental sense, it is a question of *bhakti*, but where there is “superontologism” and “non-dualism” *jnana* is to be found. [LS, A View of Yoga]

**Bhakti-Marga:** In the path of love (the Hindu *bhakti-marga*, the *mahabbah* of Sufism), speculative activity – which by definition is of the intellectual order – does not play a preponderant part, as in the case in the way of knowledge (*jnana-marga*, *ma‘rifah*); the “lover” – the *bhakta* – must obtain everything by means of love and by Divine Grace; doctrinal considerations, paradoxical as it may seem given the initiatory character of *bhakti*, do not have in this path the crucial importance that they have in *jnana* . . . in order to love, one must limit or rather, one must direct one’s attention to one sole aspect of Reality, the consideration of integral Truth being more or less incompatible with the subjectivism of an exclusivistic love. The way of love is comparable to a rhythm or a melody, not to an act of reasoning; it is a path of “beauty,” not of “wisdom,” if one may so express it at the risk of seeming to say that beauty is without wisdom and wisdom without beauty; in short, the perspective of the *bhakta* comprises inevitable limitations due to the subjective and emotional character of the “bhaktic” method.

In matters of doctrine, the *bhakta* has nothing to resolve by means of the intelligence alone, it is the entire religion that “thinks” for him, by means of all the symbols – scriptural or other – it possesses. [EH, Modes of Spiritual Realization]

**Bhuta:** The Sanskrit word for ‘matter’, *bhuta*, includes a meaning of ‘substance’ or of ‘subsistence’; matter derives from substance, it is a reflection of it on the plane of ‘gross’ coagulation, and is connected, through substance, with Being. [GDW, Seeing God Everywhere]

**Bodhisattvayana:** The starting point of the path – the *Bodhisattvayana* is in fact the birth of an awareness that all things are “void”; it is not a matter of a merely moral option. The ego of the aspirant starts off by identifying itself with the whole of *samsara*; it is through understanding the nature of the latter that the soul disengages itself from its congenital error and lays itself open to the realization of the Universal Body of the Buddha. [TB, Synthesis of the *Paramitas*]

**Brahmana / Kshatriya / Vaishya / Shudra:** Let us recall that the *brahmana* represents the contemplative and sacerdotal mentality, the *kshatriya*, the active, combative, dynamic, noble, heroic mentality; the *vaishya*, the mercantile or artisanal mentality – or again that of the peasant according to the case, the *vaishya* mentality being “horizontal” in a certain sense. As for the *shudra*, he is a materialist by his nature; his virtue is obedience. [SVQ, Human Premises of a Religious Dilemma]

**Buddha (Pratyeka / Samyaksam):** To this difference between “light” and “radiation” corresponds the distinction between the *Pratyeka-Buddha* and the *Samyaksam-Buddha*, the first being enlightened “for himself” and the second having the function of enlightening others through preaching the Dharma, which makes one think of the respective roles of the *Jivan-Mukta* and the *Avatara* or – in Islamic terms – of the *Wali* and the *Rasul*. [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]

**Buddha (Samyaksam / Bodhisattva):** It is appropriate not to confuse the *Samyaksam-Buddha* with the *Bodhisattva* who has not attained Nirvana and whose cosmic movement is “spiroidal” and not “vertical,” in conformity with his particular vocation. The *Bodhisattva* is, in his human aspect, a *karma-yogi* completely dedicated to charity towards all creatures, and in his celestial aspect, an “angel” or more precisely an “angelic state,” whence his function of rescuer and “guardian angel.” [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]

**Buddha (three “hypostases”):** Let us recall here the doctrine of the three “hypostases” of the Blessed One: the *Dharmakaya* (the “universal body”) is the Essence, Beyond-Being; the *Sambhogakaya* (the “body of felicity”) is the “heavenly Form,” the “divine Personification”; the *Nirmanakaya* (the “body of metamorphosis”) is the human manifestation of the Buddha. [TB, Dharmakara’s Vow]

**Buddha Image:** The image of the Buddha is like the sound of that celestial music which could charm a rose tree into flowering amid the snow; such was Shakyamuni – for it is



said that the Buddhas bring salvation not only through their teaching but also through their superhuman beauty – and such is his sacramental image. The image of the Messenger is also that of the Message; there is no essential difference between the Buddha, Buddhism and universal Buddha-nature. Thus, the image indicates the way, or more exactly its goal, or the human setting for that goal, that is, it displays to us that “holy sleep” which is watchfulness and clarity within; by its profound and wondrous “presence” it suggests “the stilling of mental agitation and the supreme appeasement,” to quote the words of Shankara . . . Like a magnet, the beauty of the Buddha draws all the contradictions of the world and transmutes them into radiant silence; the image deriving therefrom appears as a drop of the nectar of immortality fallen into the chilly world of forms and crystallized into a human form, a form accessible to men . . . He is the gateway to the blessed Essence of things, and he is this Essence itself. [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]

**Calumny:** It consists in spreading around inaccurate and unfavorable facts and in interpreting unfavorably things that are susceptible of a favourable meaning, making no distinction between what is certain, probable, possible, doubtful, improbable and impossible. Calumny is not a matter of accidental mistakes, but of systematic passion. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

**Caste:** In its spiritual sense, caste is the “law” or *dharma* governing a particular category of men in accord with their qualifications. It is in this sense, and only in this sense, that the *Bhagavad-Gita* says: “Better for each one is his own law of action, even if imperfect, than the law of another, even well applied. It is better to perish in one’s own law; it is perilous to follow the law of another” (III, 35). And similarly the *Manava-Dharma Shastra* says: “It is better to carry out one’s own proper functions in a defective manner than to fulfill perfectly those of another; for he who lives accomplishing the duties of another caste forthwith loses his own” (X, 97). [LS, The Meaning of Caste]  
Caste is the center of gravity of the individual soul. [LS, The Meaning of Caste]

**Caste / Race:** Caste takes precedence over race because spirit has priority over form; race is a form while caste is a spirit. [LS, The Meaning of Race]

**Castes (fundamental tendencies of mankind):** There is first of all the intellectual, speculative, contemplative, sacerdotal type, which tends towards wisdom or holiness; holiness referring more particularly to contemplation, and wisdom to discernment. Next there is the warlike and royal type, which tends towards glory and heroism; even in spirituality – since holiness is for everyone – this type will readily be active, combative and heroic, hence the ideal of the “heroicalness of virtue.” The third type is the respectable “average” man: he is essentially industrious, balanced, persevering; his center is love for work that is useful and well done, and carried out with God in mind; he aspires neither to transcendence nor to glory – although he desires to be both pious and respectable – but like the sacerdotal type, he loves peace and is not interested in adventures; a tendency which predisposes him to a contemplativeness conformable with his occupations. Lastly there is the type that has no ideal other than that of pleasure in the more or less coarse sense of the word; this is concupiscent man who, not knowing how to

master himself, has to be mastered by others, so that his great virtue will be submission and fidelity.

(Corresponding respectively in the Hindu hierarchy to the *brahmana*, the *kshatriya*, the *vaishya* and *shudra*. Ed.) [THC, To Have a Center]

**Castes (natural):** What the Hindus term “color” (*varna*), namely caste. What is involved are the four fundamental tendencies of mankind, and their corresponding aptitudes; tendencies and aptitudes of an essentially unequal value, as is shown precisely by the Hindu system of castes, or as is shown by analogous systems in other civilizations, that of ancient Egypt for example, or that of the Far East. Nor should it be overlooked that the social hierarchy in Europe – the nobility, the clergy and the bourgeoisie or third estate – unquestionably constituted castes, the nobility in particular; executioners, acrobats, prostitutes and others were considered pariahs, rightly or wrongly as the case may be. But it is not of institutionalised – hence necessarily approximative – castes that we wish to speak here, but of natural castes, those based on the intrinsic nature of individuals; the institutional castes are merely their legal applications, and in fact they are more often symbolical rather than effective as regards the real potentialities of persons, above all in later times; nonetheless they have a certain practical and psychological justification, otherwise they would not exist traditionally. [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

**Certainty (two degrees):** In certainty we must distinguish two modes or degrees: certainty of truth and certainty of being. The first refers to a truth which is no doubt direct in relation to reason, but which is nevertheless indirect in relation to union; and it is to union that the second certainty refers. It is illogical to seek to contest this certainty, and even the first certainty, which is likewise infallible, by setting against it elements of certainty of a phenomenal or passional order; it is as if the “accidents” wanted to take issue with “substance,” or as if drops of water wanted to teach water itself what their being consists of. The certainty of the Intellect comes from the fact that it knows; no one can add anything whatsoever to its essence, or take away from it the minutest particle. [LT, The Alchemy of the Sentiments]

**Certainty / Doubt:** Certainty, being an aspect of knowledge, is situated beyond the domain of the sentiments but on the individual plane it nonetheless possesses a perfume which allows us to look on it as a sentiment. One can likewise speak of a sentiment of doubt; doubt is nothing else but the void left by absent certainty and this void readily makes way for the false plenitude of error. [LT, The Alchemy of the Sentiments]

**Charity:** It consists in abolishing the egocentric distinction between “me” and the “other”: it is seeing the “I” in the “other” and the “other” in the “I.” [LS, A View of Yoga]

Charity with regard to our neighbor, when it is the act of a direct consciousness and not just of a moral sentiment, implies seeing ourselves in the other and the other in ourselves; the scission between *ego* and *alter* must be overcome, that the cleavage between Heaven and earth may be healed. [GDW, The Christian Tradition, Some Thoughts on its Nature]

Charity means to lose oneself. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

The word “charity” signifies goodness that makes itself known, goodness in action. Theologically, by charity is meant the love of God and neighbor; in ordinary language, the word charity, considered in isolation, means beneficial action in relation to those who need it; but in certain contexts, this word also means: to be considerate of others’ feelings. Thus it is commonly said: “Out of charity, do not tell him that, it could make him sad,” or: “Be good enough to please him in this way”; all of which has nothing to do with caring for the sick or with giving alms. [PM, Remarks on Charity]

Charity is to freely, and really, help those who need and deserve it. [PM, Remarks on Charity]

Charity starts from the truth that my neighbor is not other than myself, since he is endowed with an ego; that in the sight of God he is neither more nor less ‘I’ than I am myself; that what is given to ‘another’ is given to ‘myself’; that my neighbor is also made in the image of God; that he carries within him the potentiality of the Divine presence and that this potentiality must be revered in him; and that the good which is done to our neighbor purifies us from egoistic illusion and virtually frees us from it when it is done for God’s sake. [SPHF, Thought and Civilization]

The supreme Law is the perfect love of God – a love that must engage our whole being, as the Scripture says – and the second Law, that of love of the neighbor, is “like unto” the first. Now “like unto” does not mean “equivalent to”, and still less “superior to”, but “of the same spirit”; Christ means that the love of God manifests itself extrinsically by love of the neighbor, wherever there is a neighbor; that is to say that we cannot love God while hating our fellow-creatures. In conformity with our full human nature, love of the neighbor is nothing without the love of God, the one draws all its content from the other and has no meaning without it; it is true that to love the creature is also a way of loving the Creator, but on the express condition that its foundation be the direct love of God, otherwise the second Law would not be the second but the first. It is not said that the first law is “like unto” or “equal to” the second, but that the second is equal to the first, and this signifies that the love of God is the necessary foundation and *conditio sine qua non* of all other charity. [LAW, The Ancient Worlds in Perspective]

**Charity (essence):** Most of our contemporaries seem to forget that in true charity God is “served first,” as Joan of Arc used to say: in other words they forget that charity is, in essence, to love God more than ourselves, to love our neighbor as ourselves, thus to love ourselves, but less than God; not to love our neighbor more than ourselves, and not to feel ourselves obliged to give him what, in our opinion, we would not deserve if we were in his place. Love of God possesses an element of the absolute deriving from the divine Absoluteness, but love for the neighbor – and love for ourselves – although recalling the relationship between man and God, has a relative character deriving from human relativity; the relationship remains similar thanks to the analogy, but the mode changes with the object. [SW, Complexity of the Concept of Charity]

**Charity (first act of):** The first act of charity is to rid the soul of illusions and passions and thus rid the world of a maleficent being; it is to make a void so that God may fill it and, by this fullness, give Himself. A saint is a void open for the passage of God. [SW, Complexity of the Concept of Charity]

**Charity (greatest):** The greatest charity is the gift of that which, at bottom, we have no longer the power to give, because the prime mover of such charity is God. [SW, Complexity of the Concept of Charity]

**Charity (true):** True charity – we might call it “integral charity” – gives nothing without giving inwardly something better; the art of giving requires that to the material gift should be added a gift of the soul: this is to forget the gift after having given it, and this forgetfulness is like a fresh gift. Intrinsically, that virtue alone is good which is in a certain way unconscious of itself and, as a result, becomes neither “egoistic charity” nor “proud humility.” As an old proverb has it, “Do good and throw it into the sea; if the fish swallow it and men forget it, God will remember it.” [SW, Complexity of the Concept of Charity]

**Charity / Duty:** In charity there can be no “equal partners” since the one who helps or gives does so freely; if he does not do so freely, there is no charity. If someone collapses on the street, it is not an act of charity to help him; it is a human duty. Similarly, when someone suffers from hunger, it is a duty to feed him; but the degree of our help is a question of charity, for in this evaluation we are free. Each time there is a possible choice in the degree of our charitable intervention, there is freedom on our part and there is inequality between him who gives and him who receives; it is this which proves the duty of gratitude on the part of the latter. [PM, Remarks on Charity]

**Choice / Desire:** The esoteric way, by definition, cannot be the object of a choice by those who follow it, for it is not the man who chooses the way, it is the way that chooses the man. In other words, the question of a choice does not arise, since the finite cannot choose the Infinite; rather the question is one of vocation, and those who are “called,” to use the Gospel expression, cannot ignore the call without committing a “sin against the Holy Ghost,” any more than a man can legitimately ignore the obligations of his religion. If it is incorrect to speak of a “choice” with reference to the Infinite, it is equally wrong to speak of a “desire,” since it is less a desire for Divine Reality that characterizes the initiate than a logical and ontological tendency toward his own transcendent Essence. This definition is of extreme importance. [TUR, The Limitations of Exoterism]

**Christ:** Christ is the Intellect of microcosms as well as that of the macrocosm. He is then the Intellect in us as well as the Intellect in the Universe and *a fortiori* in God; in this sense, it can be said that there is no truth nor wisdom that does not come from Christ, and this is evidently independent of all consideration of time and place. Just as ‘the Light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not’, so too the Intellect shines in the darkness of passions and illusions. [GDW, The Christian Tradition, Some Thoughts on its Nature]

**Christ / Intellect:** Christ is the Heart of the macrocosm as the Intellect is the Christ of the microcosm. [FSR, Truth and Presence]

**Christianity:** “God became man that man might become God” {St. Irenaeus} [RHC, Outline of the Christian Message]

**Civilization:** When people talk about “civilization” they generally attribute a qualitative meaning to the term; now civilization only represents a value provided it is supra-human in origin and implies for the “civilized” man a sense of the sacred: only peoples who really have this sense and draw their life from it are truly civilized. If it is objected that this reservation does not take account of the whole meaning of the term and that it is possible to conceive of a world that is civilized though having no religion, the answer is that in this case the civilization is devoid of value, or rather – since there is no legitimate choice between the sacred and other things – that it is the most fallacious of aberrations. A sense of the sacred is fundamental for every civilization because fundamental for man; the sacred – that which is immutable, inviolable and thus infinitely majestic – is in the very substance of our spirit and of our existence. The world is miserable because men live beneath themselves; the error of modern man is that he wants to reform the world without having either the will or the power to reform man, and this flagrant contradiction, this attempt to make a better world on the basis of a worsened humanity, can only end in the very abolition of what is human, and consequently in the abolition of happiness too. Reforming man means binding him again to Heaven, re-establishing the broken link; it means tearing him away from the reign of the passions, from the cult of matter, quantity and cunning, and reintegrating him into the world of the spirit and serenity, we would even say: into the world of sufficient reason. [UI, Islam]

A civilization is integrated and healthy to the extent that it is founded on the “invisible” or “underlying” religion, the *religio perennis*; that is to say, to the extent that its expressions or its forms are transparent to the Formless and are turned towards the Origin, thus providing a vehicle for the recollection of a lost Paradise, but also, and with all the more reason, for the presentiment of a timeless Beatitude. For the Origin is at once within us and before us; time is but a spiroidal movement around a motionless Center. [LAW, *Religio Perennis*]

The monk or the hermit, and every contemplative, though he be a king, lives as if in the antechamber of Heaven; on this very earth and in his carnal body he has attached himself to Heaven and enclosed himself in a prolongation of those crystallisations of Light that are the celestial states. That being so one can understand how monks or nuns can see in the monastic life their “Paradise on earth”; they are at rest in the Divine Will and wait in this world below for nothing but death, and in so doing they have already passed through death; they live here below as if in Eternity. The days as they succeed one another do but repeat always the same day of God; time stops in a single blessed day, and so is joined once more to the Origin which is also the Center. And it is this Elysian simultaneity that the ancient worlds have always had in view, at least in principle and in their nostalgia; a civilization is a “mystical body”, it is, in so far as that is possible, a collective contemplative. [LAW, *The Ancient Worlds in Perspective*]

**“Civilization”:** The modern idea of “civilization” is not without relation, historically speaking, to the traditional idea of “empire”; but the “order” has become purely human and wholly profane, as the notion of “progress” proves, since it is the very negation of any celestial origin; “civilization” is in fact but urban refinement in the framework of a

worldly and mercantile outlook, and this explains its hostility to virgin nature as well as to religion. According to the criteria of “civilization”, the contemplative hermit – who represents human spirituality and at the same time the sanctity of virgin nature – can be no better than a sort of “savage”, whereas in reality he is the earthly witness of Heaven. [LAW, The Ancient Worlds in Perspective]

**“Civilizationism”:** The debasement of religion by means of the ideology of total and indefinite progress. [IFA, Christian Divergences]

**Concentration:** Strictly speaking, pure concentration is less a fixing of the mind upon an idea or an object than the elimination of every distraction; the divine presence, or grace if one so prefers, or the intellect, according to the point of view, must be allowed to act without hindrance, like a leaven; but concentration as such could not draw these out of nothing. [LS, A View of Yoga]

**Concretism:** Concretism coincides with what may be described as “factualism,” or the superstition of the fact, a fact being regarded as the opposite of a principle, the opposite therefore of what current prejudice regards as an abstraction. [LT, Abuse of the Ideas of the Concrete and the Abstract]

Philosophical concretism, actually an inverted realism, has always been a temptation for the human spirit, forgetful of its own true nature and its primordial vocation. The perverse concretism of the philosophers results from the naïve concretism of sensory experience; but whereas the latter remains neutral with regard to the suprasensible and the supernatural, the former sets itself up as a universal and totalitarian doctrine. Sensory concretism does not result so much from the fact of sensation in itself as from our separation (consequent upon man’s original fall) from invisible realities, which then become mythological notions and objects of faith differing widely in degree, since account has to be taken of wisdom as well as of childhood. Fallen man can be reduced to sensory experience, and to the reason which registers and coordinates this experience, and he is able to extract the whole of his fallacious wisdom out of this situation; a natural situation in a certain sense, but abnormal none the less, since even fallen man possesses other resources of knowledge besides sensation and the faculty of reason. [LT, Abuse of the Ideas of the Concrete and the Abstract]

**Consciousness (pure):** To say consciousness is “pure” means that it is situated beyond the polarity “subject-object,” that it is “thusness”. [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]

**Contingency / Relativity:** Contingency is always relative, but relativity is not always contingent; that is relative which is either “more” or “less” in relation to another reality;\* that is contingent which may or may not be, hence which is merely possible. (\*Thus the Creator – Being – is “more” than creation and creatures, but “less” than the pure Absolute – Beyond-Being – which has no interlocutor.) [PM, In the Face of Contingency]

**Cosmos:** A cosmos or a cycle is essentially something that becomes and that ceases to be; for man, there are three cosmos or cycles to consider, namely first the soul, then the

world which is its medium of manifestation and finally the Universe of which this world represents but a minute fragment. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

**Creatio ex nihilo:** One must not tire of affirming it: the origin of a creature is not a material substance, it is a perfect and non-material archetype: perfect and consequently without any need of a transforming evolution; non-material and consequently having its origin in the Spirit, and not in matter. Assuredly, there is a trajectory; this starts not from an inert and unconscious substance, but proceeds from the Spirit – the matrix of all possibilities – to the earthly result, the creature; a result which sprang forth from the invisible at a cyclic moment when the physical world was still far less separate from the psychic world than in later and progressively “hardened” periods. When one speaks traditionally of *creatio ex nihilo*, one means thereby, on the one hand, that creatures do not derive from a pre-existing matter and, on the other hand, that the “incarnation” of possibilities cannot in any way affect the immutable Plenitude of the Principle. [FDH, Aspects of the Theophanic Phenomenon of Consciousness]

In the expression *creatio ex nihilo*, the word *nihil* determines the meaning of the word *ex*: thus *ex* does not presuppose a substance or a container as is normally the case, it simply indicates the possibility in principle – which possibility is denied precisely by the word *nihil* in regard to creation – rather as the word “with” indicates a possible object even in the expression “with nothing,” which in fact means “without object.” Hence there is no point in blaming the theological formula in question for suggesting an extra-divine substance and thereby a fundamental dualism; that would amount to playing with words and taking too seriously the small fatalities of language.

Obviously, creation “comes from” – that is the meaning of the word *ex* – an origin; not from a cosmic, hence “created” substance, but from a reality pertaining to the Creator, and in this sense – and in this sense only – it can be said that creation is situated in God. It is situated in Him in respect of ontological immanence: everything in fact “contains” on pain of being non-existent – on the one hand Being, and on the other a given Archetype or “Idea”; the divine “content” is *ipso facto* also the “container,” and even is so *a priori*, since God is Reality as such. But things are “outside God” – all sacred Scriptures attest to this – in respect of contingency, hence in respect of the concrete phenomena of the world. [PM, *Ex Nihilo, In Deo*]

*Ex nihilo* may mean: “out of nothing which could be external to God”; but this meaning is strictly esoteric because it presupposes the understanding of the doctrine of All-Possibility, hence that of the homogeneity of the possible. [EH, Theological and Metaphysical Ambiguity of the Word *Ex*]

**Creation:** Creation is the great “objectification” of the Divine Subject; it is the divine manifestation *par excellence*. It has a beginning and an end insofar as a particular cycle is envisaged, but it is in itself a permanent divine possibility, a metaphysically necessary objectification of the divine infinity; to deny the necessity of the creation would amount to attributing arbitrariness to the Divinity . . . Creation is perfect by its very oneness and totality, it reabsorbs in its perfections all partial disequilibria. [SW, Manifestations of the Divine Principle]

**“Culture”:** More and more, culture becomes the absence of culture: the mania for cutting oneself off from one’s roots and for forgetting where one comes from. [THC, To Have a Center]

**Darshan:** The contemplation of the Divine in nature or in art. [FDH, The Message of the Human Body]

To have the presentiment of the essences in things: this is the basis of the Hindu *darshan*, of the visual assimilation of celestial qualities; the ideal being the coincidence between an object that manifests beauty or spirituality and a subject gifted with nobleness and depth, hence gratitude. And this is also the quasi-alchemical meaning of sacred art in all its forms. [THC, Intelligence and Character]

Hindu *darshan* – the contemplation of saintly persons. [TB, Christianity Buddhism]

**Darshan / Satsanga:** *Darshan* is above all the contemplation of a saint, or of a man invested with a priestly or princely authority, and recognizable by the vestimentary or other symbols which manifest it; *satsanga* is the frequentation of holy men, or simply men of spiritual tendency. What is true for our living surroundings is likewise true for our inanimate surroundings, whose message or perfume we unconsciously assimilate to some degree or another. “Tell me whom thou frequentest and I shall tell thee who thou art.” [EPW, The Degrees of Art]

**Demiurgic Tendency / Satanic Tendency:** The demiurgic tendency moves away from God – from the macrocosmic point of view – but with a creative and revelatory intention, and this second characteristic allows the microcosm to return to God through the medium of the symbol; the satanic tendency, on the contrary, separates from God, and so is opposed to Him; however, the very least of insects is obedient to Heaven, by its subjection to natural laws as much as by its form. The devil’s greatest vexation is that he is obliged to be a symbol of God, an inverted symbol, doubtless, but always recognisably and ineffaceably a symbol. [GDW, Love of God: Consciousness of the Real]

**Democracy:** Logically, democracy opposes tyranny, but in fact it leads to it. That is to say: since its reaction is sentimental – otherwise it would be centripetal and would tend towards theocracy, the only guarantee of a realistic liberty – it is merely an extreme which, by its unrealistic negation of authority and competence, inevitably calls forth another extreme and a new authoritarian reaction, one which this time is authoritarian and tyrannical in its very principle. The democratic illusion appears above all in the following traits: in democracy, truth amounts to the belief of the majority; it is the latter which practically speaking “creates” the truth; democracy itself is true only insofar as, and as long as, the majority believes in it, and thus it carries in its breast the germs of its suicide. Authority, which one is obliged to tolerate on pain of anarchy, lives at the mercy of the electors, hence the impossibility of real government. The ideal of “liberty” makes a prisoner of the government, a prisoner constantly obliged to follow the interests of various pressure groups; the electoral campaigns themselves prove that the aspirants to authority must dupe the electors, and the means of this dupery are so vulgar and stupid and constitute such a degradation of the people that this alone should suffice to reduce the myth of modern democracy to naught. This does not necessarily mean that no form of



democracy is possible; but then it is primarily a question of communities of limited size – especially nomadic ones – and also of an inwardly aristocratic and theocratic democracy, and not of a secular egalitarianism imposed upon large sedentary populations.

We may also stress the following: it can happen that a man is intelligent and competent, or that a minority is; but it cannot happen that the majority is intelligent and competent, or “more intelligent” or “more competent.” The adage *vox populi vox Dei* has no meaning except in a religious framework which confers a function of “medium” on the crowds; they then express themselves not by thought but by intuition and under the influence of Heaven, unless it is a matter of the competence pertaining to every sane-minded, God-fearing man, so that the feeling of the majority coincides in any case with what may be called “the good.” It is clear that a people as a collective vehicle of religion possesses a positive character – all religions testify to this – and is thus instinctively right in the face of pernicious and impious exceptions. A people is what it is, both in good and evil; it has not the virtues of the “centre,” but it may have those of the “totality,” on condition that the “centre” determine it. Besides, the word “people” itself admits of two meanings: it denotes either the majority, as distinguished from the intellectual and aristocratic elite, or the total or integral collectivity, comprising the majority and the elite at one and the same time; in this last sense, it is self-evident that the government – apart from its celestial origin – derives from the “people” itself and that the chivalric and sacerdotal elite are an expression of the popular genius. [TM, Reflections on Ideological Sentimentalism]

In early ages, the “people” possessed in a large measure the naturally aristocratic character that flows from religion; as for the lower orders – made up of men who seek neither to control themselves nor *a fortiori* to rise above themselves – they could not determine . . . It is only democracy that seeks, on the one hand, to assimilate the plebs to the people and, on the other hand, to reduce the latter to the former; it ennobles what is base and debases what is noble. [CI, On the Margin of Liturgical Improvisations]

Democracy is practically the tyranny of the majority; the white majority, in America, had no interest in the existence of the red minority, and therefore the army, which in certain cases should have defended the rights of the Indians – rights solemnly guaranteed by treaties – defended the interests of the whites contrary to these agreements. He who says democracy, says demagoguery; in such a climate a popular *de facto* criminality becomes a government *de jure* criminality, at least when the victim is situated outside the collectivity included in a given democratic legality. [THC, Message of a Vestimentary Art]

**Detachment:** Detachment is the opposite of concupiscence and avidity; it is the greatness of soul which, inspired by a consciousness of absolute values and thus also of the imperfection and impermanence of relative values, allows the soul to keep its inward freedom and its distance with regard to things. Consciousness of God, on the one hand annuls, in a certain fashion, both forms and qualities, and on the other confers on them a value that transcends them; detachment means that the soul is so to say impregnated with death, but it also means by compensation, that it is aware of the indestructibility of earthly beauties; for beauty cannot be destroyed, it withdraws into its archetypes and into its essence, where it is reborn, immortal, in the blessed nearness of God. [EPW, The Virtues in the Way]

**Detachment / Attachment:** It is to be observed first of all that attachment is in the very nature of man; and yet he is asked to be detached. The criterion of the legitimacy of an attachment is that its object should be worthy of love, that is, that it should communicate to us something of God, and, even more importantly, should not separate us from Him; if a thing or creature is worthy of love and does not alienate us from God, – in which case it indirectly brings us close to its divine model – it may be said that we love it “in God” and “towards God”, and thus in keeping with Platonic “remembrance” and without idolatry and centrifugal passion. To be detached means not loving anything outside of God or *a fortiori* against God: it is thus to love God *ex toto corde*. [EPW, The Virtues in the Way]

**Devil:** The devil being the humanized personification – humanized on contact with man – of the subversive aspect of the centrifugal existential power; not the personification of this power in so far as its mission is positively to manifest Divine Possibility. [EPW, Hypostatic and Cosmic Numbers]

**Dharma:** The law inherent in the nature of each being and each category of beings. [EH, Transgression and Purification]  
The Sanskrit term *dharma*: that innate something which makes water flow and fire burn. [CI, Atomism and Creation]

**Dialectic (spiritual):** When the notion of dialectic is applied to the domain of spirituality, it must be amplified to include more than the art of reasoning correctly, for what is at stake now is the whole problem of spiritual expression itself; before knowing how to reason, it is necessary to know how to express oneself, because spiritual dialectic is first and foremost the capacity to give account in human language of realities that transcend, if not man’s mind, at least his earthly experience and his ordinary psychology. In other words, dialectic is not only a question of logic, it is also a question of verbal adequation; both things require principles and experience. [FSR, Paradoxes of Spiritual Expression]

**Dignity:** Dignity is the ontological awareness an individual has of his supra-individual reality. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]  
Dignity is opposed to vulgarity, or frivolity, or curiosity, as contemplation is opposed to agitation, or as ‘being’ transcends ‘doing’. It is the ‘motionless mover’ which is incarnate in movement, the ‘being’ which shows through ‘acting’, the contemplation which is affirmed in action; it is the integration of the periphery in the centre, and it is also the revelation of the centre in the periphery. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]  
To act in the place of God, as does the officiating priest, is to act with dignity, to act Divinely; it is to be central in the periphery, or immutable in movement.  
Dignity is a way of remembering corporeally the Divine presence. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

**Dignity (affected):** It individualizes the theomorphism of Adam, which is contradictory, for it is not the individual who resembles God, but man as such, the human form which includes all individuals.  
Dignity is a repose, not an activity like affectation. It is not an individual affirmation but, on the contrary, a retreat towards the impersonal centre. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

True dignity could not be affected, it is sincere by definition. [PM, On Intention]

**Dignity / Effacement:** Dignity is consciousness of a universal quality. Effacement is consciousness of our own nothingness. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

**Discernment / Concentration:** To “discern” is to “separate”: to separate the Real and the illusory, the Absolute and the contingent, the Necessary and the possible, *Atma* and *Maya*. To discernment is joined, complementally and operatively, “concentration,” which “unites”: it is – starting from earthly and human *Maya* – the plenary awareness of *Atma* at once absolute, infinite and perfect; without equal, without limit and without blemish. [SME, Introduction: Epistemological Premises]

**Discernment / Contemplation:** Discernment by its adamant rigour, refers as it were to the mystery of the Absolute; analogously, contemplation, by its aspect of musical gentleness, pertains to the mystery of the Infinite. In the human microcosm, the volitive faculty stems as it were from the absoluteness of the Sovereign Good, whereas the affective faculty testifies to its infinitude. [THC, Intelligence and Character]

**Discriminative / Contemplative / Operative:** Discriminative: that is to say, capable of discerning intuitively between the Absolute and the relative, and of prolonging this discernment onto planes that are relative; contemplative: that is to say, capable of attaching itself – in a “naturally supernatural” manner – to the consciousness of pure Being and to the pure Essence; operative: that is to say, predisposed to pass from potentiality to act, hence from the abstract to the concrete and from intelligence to will. [SME, Deficiencies in the World of Faith]

**Dissipation:** Everything that is opposed to spiritual concentration or, in other words, to unity. [TUR, Transcendence and Universality of Esoterism]

**Divine “I”:** The characteristic – and inevitable – mistake of all exoterism is to attribute a human subjectivity to God and consequently to believe that any divine manifestation refers to the same divine “I”, and thus to the same limitation. This is to fail to realize that the Ego that speaks and legislates in Revelation is no more than a manifestation of the Divine Subject and not the Subject Itself; in other words, one must distinguish in God – always from the point of view of Revelation – first of all the one and essential Word, and then the manifestations or actualizations of this Word with regard to particular human receptacles. The divine “I” that speaks to men – and of necessity to a “particular collectivity of men” – could never be the Divine Subject in a direct and absolute sense; it is an adaptation of this “I” to a human vessel and, as a result, takes on something of the nature of this vessel, failing which all contact between God and man would be impossible and failing which it would be absurd to admit that any Revelation, Hebrew, Arabic, or other, could be word-for-word of divine origin.

God cannot contradict Himself, certainly; but this axiomatic truth concerns essential, unlimited, and formless Truth, the only one that counts *in divinis*; relative enunciations may perfectly well contradict themselves from one Revelation to another – exactly as human subjects or material forms mutually exclude and contradict one another – so long

as essential Truth is safeguarded, and made as effective as possible. The particular divine “I” of a Revelation is not situated in the Divine Principle Itself; it is the projection, or emanation, of the Absolute Subject and is identified with the “Spirit of God”, that is, with the cosmic Centre of which it could be said that it is “neither divine nor non-divine”; this revelation-giving “I” “is God” in virtue of the ray attaching it directly to its Source, but it is not God in an absolute way, for it is impossible that the Absolute as such would start speaking in a human language and say human things. [FSR, The Human Margin]

**Divine Intellect:** The Divine Intellect, free from all infirmity, knows things both in their succession and in their simultaneity: it beholds the logical unfolding of things as well as their global possibility; knowing the substances, it knows at the same time the accidents, at the level of reality – or unreality – that is theirs. [TB, The Question of Illusion]

**Divine Name:** Every revealed Divine Name when ritually pronounced, is mysteriously identified with the Divinity. It is in the Divine Name that there takes place the mysterious meeting of the created and the Uncreate, the contingent and the Absolute, the finite and the Infinite. The Divine Name is thus a manifestation of the Supreme Principle, or to speak still more plainly, it is the Supreme Principle manifesting Itself; it is not therefore in the first place a manifestation, but the Principle Itself. [TUR, Universality and Particular Nature of the Christian Religion]

**Divine Nature:** Absolute, Infinite, Perfection: these are the first definitions of the divine Nature. Geometrically speaking, the Absolute is like the point, which excludes all that is not It; the Infinite is like the cross, or the star, or the spiral, which prolongs the point and renders it as it were inclusive; and Perfection is like the circle, or a system of concentric circles, which reflects, as it were, the point in space. The Absolute is ultimate Reality as such; the Infinite is its Possibility, hence also its Omnipotence; Perfection is Possibility inasmuch as the latter realizes a given potentiality of the absolutely Real. [CI, Atomism and Creation]

**Divine Nature (effect of):** Creation, or Manifestation, is an effect of the Divine Nature: God cannot prevent Himself from radiating, therefore from manifesting Himself or from creating, because He cannot prevent Himself from being infinite . . . The Absolute, imperceptible as such, makes itself visible through the existence of things; in an analogous manner, the Infinite reveals itself through their inexhaustible diversity; and similarly, Perfection manifests itself through the qualities of things, and in so doing, it communicates both the rigor of the Absolute and the radiance of the Infinite, for things have their musicality as well as their geometry. [CI, Atomism and Creation]

**Divine Perfection:** The divine Perfection is the sum or quintessence of all perfections possible. [CI, Atomism and Creation]

**Doctrine:** Doctrine offers the whole truth, first by virtue of its form, and then in regard to the capacity of the properly qualified intelligence to receive and actualize it; it lays open its content in a way that is doubtless elliptical, since it is a form, but in a way that is also

total since this form is a symbol and is therefore something of what it has to communicate. [SW, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Doctrine (exoteric / esoteric):** A doctrine or a Path is exoteric to the degree that it is obliged to take account of individualism – which is the fruit not so much of passion itself as of the hold exerted by passion upon thought – and to veil the equation of Intellect and Self under a mythological and moral imagery, irrespective of whether a historical element is combined with that imagery or not; and a doctrine is esoteric to the degree that it communicates the very essence of our universal position, our situation between nothingness and Infinity. Esoterism is concerned with the nature of things and not merely with our human eschatology; it views the Universe not from the human standpoint but from the “standpoint” of God. [LS, Gnosis, Language of the Self]

**Doctrine (limitation):** A doctrinal limitation does not always denote a corresponding intellectual limitation since it can be situated on the level of mental articulation and not on that of pure intellection. [FSR, Paradoxes of Spiritual Expression]

**Doctrine (quintessence):** When one speaks of doctrinal “quintessence,” this may mean one of two things: firstly, the loftiest and subtlest part of a doctrine, and it is in this sense that Sufis distinguish between the “husk” (*qishr*) and the “marrow” (*lubb*); and secondly, an integral doctrine envisaged in respect of its fundamental and necessary nature, and thus leaving aside all outward trappings and all superstructure. [SVQ, Preface]

**Doctrine (truth):** It is sometimes said that no doctrine is entirely wrong and that there is truth in everything; but this is altogether false, because, while fundamental – and thus decisive – truths can neutralize any minor errors in a doctrine, minor truths are valueless within the framework of a major error; this is why one must never glorify an error for having taught us some truth or other, nor look for truth in errors on the pretext that truth is everywhere the same – for there are important nuances here – and above all one must not reject a fundamental and comprehensive truth because of a minor error that may happen to accompany it. [CI, Dilemmas of Moslem Scholasticism]

**Dogmatism:** Dogmatism is characterized by the fact that it attributes an absolute scope and an exclusive sense to a particular point of view or aspect. [UI, Islam]

Dogmatism as such does not consist in the mere enunciation of an idea, that is to say, in the fact of giving form to a spiritual intuition, but rather in an interpretation that, instead of rejoining the formless and total Truth after taking as its starting point one of the forms of that Truth, results in a sort of paralysis of this form by denying its intellectual potentialities and by attributing to it an absoluteness that only the formless and total Truth itself can possess. [TUR, Conceptual Dimensions]

**Dogmatism / Empiricism:** A few words must be said here on the antinomy between dogmatism and empiricism: the empiricist error consists not in the belief that experiment has a certain utility, which is obvious, but in thinking that there is a common measure between principal knowledge and experiment, and in attributing to the latter an absolute value, whereas in fact it can only have a bearing on modes, never on the very principles

of Intellect and of Reality; this amounts to purely and simply denying the possibility of a knowledge other than the experimental and sensory. On the dogmatist side, on the contrary, it is necessary to guard against the danger of underestimating the role of experiment within the limits where it is valid, for even thought based on an awareness of principles can go astray on the level of applications, and that precisely through ignorance of certain possible modes, without such misapprehension however being able to affect knowledge in a global sense. It is self-evident that dogmatism – whether rightly or wrongly so called – has value only insofar as the immutability of its axioms derives from that of principles, hence of truth. [SW, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Doubt:** Doubt is nothing else but the void left by absent certainty and this void readily makes way for the false plenitude of error. [LT, The Alchemy of the Sentiments]

**Ecstasy (Samadhi):** The word “ecstasy” can include several meanings, depending on the mode or degree of rapture; but in every case it indicates a departure from terrestrial consciousness, whether this departure be active or passive in character, or rather, whatever may be the combination of these two characteristics. [LS, A View of Yoga]

**Ecumenism (true and false):** There is a false ecumenism, as sentimental and vague as you please, which to all intents and purposes abolishes doctrine; to reconcile two adversaries, one strangles them both, which is the best way to make peace. True ecumenism can exist only on two levels: either it involves an understanding between the religions which is based upon their common interests in the face of a danger that threatens them all, or it may call into play the wisdom that can discern the one sole truth under the veil of different forms. [LT, The Problem of Qualifications]

**Ego:** The *ego* is at the same time a system of images and a cycle; it is something like a museum. The *ego* is a moving fabric made of images and tendencies; the tendencies come from our own substance, and the images are provided by the environment. We put ourselves into things, and we place things in ourselves, whereas our true being is independent of them. [LAW, Man in the Universe]

The *ego* is, empirically, a dream in which we ourselves dream ourselves; the contents of this dream, drawn from our surroundings, are at bottom only pretexts, for the *ego* desires only its own life: whatever we may dream, our dream is always only a symbol for the *ego* which wishes to affirm itself, a mirror that we hold before the ‘I’ and which reverberates its life in multiple fashions. This dream has become our second nature; it is woven of images and of tendencies, static and dynamic elements in innumerable combinations: the images come from outside and are integrated into our substance; the tendencies are our responses to the world around us; as we exteriorise ourselves, we create a world in the image of our dream, and the dream thus objectivized flows back upon us, and so on and on, until we are enclosed in a tissue, sometimes inextricable, of dreams exteriorized or materialized and of materializations interiorised. The *ego* is like a watermill whose wheel, under the drive of a current – the world and life – turns and repeats itself untringly, in a series of images always different and always similar. [GDW, Seeing God Everywhere]

**Ellipsism (Oriental):** Which consists . . . in isolating an idea from its often necessary context, and then in overemphasizing it to the point of giving it a quasi-absolute character; and to the point of ruining, logically speaking, the idea in question, whose overall intention is nevertheless plausible. [SVQ, Paradoxes of an Esoterism]

**Emanation:** We understand the term “emanation” in the Platonic sense: the starting point remains transcendent, hence unaffected, whereas in deist or naturalist emanationism the cause pertains to the same ontological order as the effect. [RHC, On Intelligence]

“Emanation” is strictly discontinuous because of the transcendence and immutability of the divine Substance, for any continuity would affect the Creator by way of the creation, *quod absit*. [LAW, *Maya*]

**Empirical “I”:** The empirical “I” is nothing but a shifting tissue of images and tendencies; when the ego of an individual eight years old is compared with the ego of the same individual at eighty years of age one may well ask oneself where the real “I” is. And if a man could live for a thousand years, what would remain of that which was his “I” in the first century of his life? [TB, The Question of Illusion]

We live at the same time in the body, the head and the heart, so that we may sometimes ask ourselves where the genuine ‘I’ is situated; in fact, the *ego*, properly speaking, the empirical ‘I’, has its sensory seat in the brain, but it gravitates towards the body and tends to identify itself with it, while the heart is symbolically the seat of the Self, of which we may be conscious or ignorant, but which is our true existential, intellectual, and so universal center. [GDW, The Ternary Aspect of the Human Microcosm]

**Epiclesius:** The word “epiclesius” . . . means an invocation (*epiklesis*) of the Holy Spirit, more specifically in connection with the Eucharistic prayers. [No book reference, The Enigma of the Epiclesius]

**Error:** The fact that errors exist does not in itself amount to a proof that the intelligence suffers from an inevitable fallibility, for error does not derive from intelligence as such. On the contrary, error is a privative phenomenon causing the activity of the intelligence to deviate through the intervention of an element of passion or blindness, without however being able to invalidate the nature of the cognitive faculty itself. [LT, The Contradiction of Relativism]

To give to partial truths an absolute significance is the very definition of error. [GDW, Vicissitudes of Different Spiritual Temperaments]

**Esoterism:** The word “esoterism” suggests in the first place an idea of complementarity, of a “half” as it were: esoterism is the complement of exoterism, it is the “spirit” which completes the “letter”. Where there is a truth of Revelation, hence of formal and theological truth, there must also be a truth of intellection, hence of non-formal and metaphysical truth; not legalistic or obligatory truth, but truth that stems from the nature of things, and which is also vocational since not every man grasps this nature.

But in fact this second truth exists independently of the first; hence it is not, in its intrinsic reality, a complement or a half; it is so only extrinsically and as it were “accidentally”. This means that the word “esoterism” designates not only the total truth

inasmuch as it is “colored” by entering a system of partial truth, but also the total truth as such, which is colorless. This distinction is not a mere theoretical luxury; on the contrary, it implies extremely important consequences.

Thus esoterism as such is metaphysics, to which is necessarily joined an appropriate method of realization. But the esoterism of a particular religion – of a particular exoterism precisely – tends to adapt itself to this religion and thereby enter into theological, psychological and legalistic meanders foreign to its nature, while preserving in its secret center its authentic and plenary nature, but for which it would not be what it is. [SME, Two Esoterisms]

Esoterism it is that lays bare either the relativity of an apparent absoluteness or the absoluteness of an apparent relativity. Seen from high above, the absolutism of a given form reveals its limits, while the existential contingency of a given phenomenon reveals, on the contrary, its essential absoluteness, so that one and the same sacred element, after having lost the formally absolute character attributed to it by the exoteric perspective, assumes so to speak another absoluteness, or rather reveals it, namely that of the archetype which it manifests. The Gospel appears absolute inasmuch as it imposes itself on Christians as the unique word of God; but the esoteric vision of things enables us, on the one hand, to discover the limits of this totalitarianism, and, on the other, to discern in this very Gospel the absoluteness of the Divine Word as such, the Word from which all Revelations derive. [LT, The Problem of Qualifications]

Esoterism is so to speak the “religion of intelligence”: this means that it operates with the intellect – and not with sentiment and will only – and that consequently its content is all that intelligence can attain, and that it alone can attain.\* The “subject” of esoterism is the Intellect and its “object” is ipso facto total Truth, namely – expressed in Vedantic terms – the doctrine of *Atma* and *Maya*; and he who says *Atma* and *Maya* thereby says *Jnana*, direct knowledge, intellectual intuition.

(\*It is far from being the case that all historical esoterism is esoterism pure and simple; an exegesis colored by confessional bias, or overly involved in mystical subjectivism is far from true gnosis. On the other hand, it is far from being the case that all that is put into the category of esoterism pertains to it: it too often happens that in treating this subject authors make no distinction between what is genuine and what is counterfeit, thus between truth and error, in accordance with the two sins of our time which are the replacement of intelligence by psychology and confusion between the psychic and the spiritual.) [THC, Intelligence and Character]

If one may define esoterism as a “shortcut” not within reach of every mental make-up or every degree of intellectual scope, the Adamantine Vehicle, with its perspective of “ubiquity” and its quasi-theurgic method of mantra, provides a particularly conclusive example of what constitutes an esoteric method. [TB, Message and Messenger]

**Esoterism (authentic):** Authentic esoterism stems from the nature of things and not from a dynastic institution; its seeds are everywhere present, sparks can flash from every flint; to make esoterism result from a religious program and a theological argument is a contradiction in terms. [IFA, Diversity of Paths]

Authentic esoterism – let us say it again – is the way which is founded on total or essential truth, and not merely on partial or formal truth, and which makes an operative



use of the intelligence, and not only of the will and the feelings. The totality of truth demands the totality of man. [SVQ, Human Premises of a Religious Dilemma]

**Esoterism / Apostasy:** Esoterism, which brings limitations back to their unlimited archetypes, and apostasy, which rids itself of them in favor of nothingness. [CI, The Idea of “The Best” in Religions]

**Esoterism / Ascesis:** The apparently problematical – but in reality elliptical – equation “esoterism equals ascesis” means in substance: esoterism is the elimination of the individual obstacles which prevent or “veil” the irradiation of the divine Self in the soul . . . the removal of an obstacle in view of the “unveiling” of the one Reality. [SME, Enigma and Message of Islamic Esoterism]

**Esoterism / Gnosis:** Direct and inward knowledge, that of the Heart-Intellect, is what the Greeks called gnosis; the word “esoterism” – according to its etymology – signifies gnosis inasmuch as it *de facto* underlies the religious, and thus dogmatic doctrines. [EPW, Understanding Esoterism]

**Eternity:** One conceives of Eternity according to the proper sense of the word, as being what is beyond duration and therefore having neither beginning nor end. [IFA, Concerning the Notion of Eternity]

**Ether:** The universal “ether,” of which the physical element is only a distant and grosser reflection, is none other than the divine Word which is everywhere “being” and “consciousness” and everywhere creative and liberating or revealing and illuminating. [UI, The Quran]

**Evil:** From the spiritual point of view, which alone takes account of the true cause of our calamities, evil is not by definition what causes us to suffer, it is that which – even when accompanied by a maximum of comfort or of ease, or of “justice” so-called – thwarts a maximum of souls as regards their final end. [TM, The Impossible Convergence]

Manifestation is not the Principle, the effect is not the cause; that which is “other than God” could not possess the perfections of God, hence in the final analysis and within the general imperfection of the created, there results that privative and subversive phenomenon which we call evil. This is to say that the cosmogonic ray, by plunging as it were into “nothingness,” ends by manifesting “the possibility of the impossible”; the “absurd” cannot but be produced somewhere in the economy of the divine Possibility, otherwise the Infinite would not be the Infinite. But strictly speaking, evil or the devil cannot oppose the Divinity, who has no opposite; it opposes man who is the mirror of God and the movement towards the divine. [PM, Man in the Cosmogonic Projection]

With the intention of resolving the problem of evil, some have maintained that evil does not exist for God, and consequently that for Him everything is a good, which is inadmissible and ill-sounding. What ought to be said is that God sees the privative manifestations only in connection with the positive manifestations that compensate for them; thus evil is a provisional factor in view of a greater good, of a “victory of the Truth”; *vincit omnia Veritas*. [PM, *Ex Nihilo, In Deo*]

In order to resolve the thorny problem of evil, some have claimed that nothing is bad since everything which happens is “willed by God,” or that evil exists only “from the standpoint of the Law”; which is by no means plausible, first because the Law exists on account of evil and not conversely. What should be said is that evil is integrated into the universal Good, not as evil but as an ontological necessity, as we have pointed out above; this necessity underlies evil, it is metaphysically inherent in it, without however transforming it into a good. [TM, The Mystery of Possibility]

Infinitude, which is an aspect of the Divine Nature, implies unlimited Possibility and consequently Relativity, Manifestation, the world. To speak of the world is to speak of separation from the Principle, and to speak of separation is to speak of the possibility – and necessity – of evil; seen from this angle, what we term evil is thus indirectly a result of Infinitude, hence of the Divine Nature; in this respect, God cannot wish to suppress it; likewise, in this respect – and only in this respect – evil ceases to be evil, being no more than an indirect and distant manifestation of a mysterious aspect of the Divine Nature, precisely that of Infinitude or of All-Possibility.

One could also say that Infinitude engenders Possibility, and Possibility engenders Relativity; now Relativity contains by definition what we could term the principle of contrast. Insofar as a quality is relative – or is reflected in Relativity – it has ontological need of a contrast, not intrinsically or in virtue of its content, but extrinsically and in virtue of its mode, thus because of its contingency. Indeed, it is the relative or contingent character of a quality that requires or brings about the existence of the corresponding privative manifestation, with all its possible gradations and as a result, its defect, vice, evil. Evil is the possibility of the impossible, since relative good is the Possible approaching impossibility; for it is from this paradoxical combination of Possibility with impossibility – impossibility becoming real only in and through Possibility – that Contingency or Relativity originates, if one may be allowed an ellipsis that is complex and daring, but difficult to avoid at this point.

If God cannot eliminate evil as a possibility, it is because in this respect evil is a function of His Nature and, being so, it ceases as a result to be evil; and what God cannot do, on pain of contradiction or absurdity, He could never will. However, the Divine Will opposes evil inasmuch as it is contrary to the Divine Nature, which is Goodness or Perfection; in this relationship of opposition – and in this alone – evil is intrinsically evil. God fights this evil perfectly since, on all planes, it is the good that is finally victorious; evil is never more than a fragment or a transition, whether we are in a position to see this or not. [FSR, The Question of Theodicies]

The nature of evil, and not its inevitability, constitutes its condemnation; its inevitability must be accepted, for tragedy enters perforce into the divine play, if only because the world is not God; one must not accept error, but one must be resigned to its existence. But beyond earthly destructions there is the Indestructible: “Every form you see,” says Rumi, “has its archetype in the divine world, beyond space; if the form perishes what matter, since its heavenly model is indestructible? Every beautiful form you have seen, every meaningful word you have heard – be not sorrowful because all this must be lost; such is not really the case. The divine Source is immortal and its outflowing gives water without cease; since neither the one nor the other can be stopped, wherefore do you lament? . . . From the first moment when you entered this world of existence, a ladder has been set up before you . . .” [LAW, The Shamanism of the Red Indians]

Now, if we start out from the idea that, metaphysically speaking, there is no “evil” properly so called and that all is simply a question of function or aspect, we shall then have to specify on the following lines: an evil being is a necessary fragment of a good – or an equilibrium – which exceeds that being incommensurably, whereas a good being is a good in itself, so that any evil in the latter is but fragmentary. Evil, then, is the fragment of a good and the good is a totality including some evil and neutralizing it by its very quality of totality. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

**Evil / Good:** The distant and indirect cause of what we rightly call evil – namely privation of the good – is the mystery of All-Possibility: that is to say that the latter, being infinite, necessarily embraces the possibility of its own negation, thus the “possibility of the impossible” or the “being of nothingness.” This paradoxical possibility, this “possibility of the absurd” – since it exists and since nothing can be separated from the Good, which coincides with Being – has of necessity a positive function, which is to manifest the Good – or the multiple “goods” – by means of contrast, as much in “time” or succession as in “space” or co-existence. In “space,” evil is opposed to good and by that fact heightens the latter’s luster and brings out its nature *a contrario*; in “time,” the cessation of evil manifests the victory of the good, in accordance with the principle that *vincit omnia Veritas*; the two modes illustrate the “unreality” of evil and at the same time its illusory character. In other words: since the function of evil is the contrasting manifestation of good and also the latter’s final victory, we may say that evil by its very nature is condemned to its own negation; representing either the “spatial” or “temporal” absence of good, evil thus returns to this absence, which is privation of being and hence nothingness. If one were to object that good is likewise perishable, we would answer that it returns to its celestial or divine prototype in which alone it is wholly “itself”; what is perishable in the good is not the good in itself, it is this or that envelope limiting it. As we have said more than once – and this brings us back to the root of the question – evil is a necessary consequence of remoteness from the Divine Sun, the “overflowing” source of the cosmogonic trajectory; the mystery of mysteries being All-Possibility as such.

A remark is necessary here: one might object that evil likewise, by its very nature, tends to communicate itself; that is true, but it has this tendency precisely because it is opposed to the radiation of the good and thus cannot help imitating the latter in some fashion. For evil is by definition both opposition and imitation: within the framework of opposition it is ontologically forced to imitate; “the more they curse God the more they praise Him,” said Meister Eckhart. Evil, insofar as it exists, participates in the good represented by existence.

Good and evil are not, strictly speaking, existential categories as are the object, the subject, space and time; because the good is the very being of things – manifested by the categories precisely – such that they, the things, are all “modes of the good”; whereas evil indicates paradoxically the absence of this being, while annexing certain things or certain characteristics at the level at which they are accessible and by virtue of predispositions allowing it. But despite this reservation, one may consider good and evil as existential categories for the following reasons. The good includes on the one hand all that manifests the qualities of the Divine Principle, and on the other hand all things inasmuch as they manifest this same Principle by their existence, and also inasmuch as they fulfill a necessary ontological function. Evil for its part includes all that manifests a privation

from the standpoint of the qualities or from that of Being itself; it is harmful in various ways, even though this harmfulness be neutralized and compensated, in given cases, by positive factors. That is to say that there are things which are bad or harmful in principle but not in fact, just as there are others which are good and beneficial in the same way; all of which contributes to the unfolding of the cosmic play with its innumerable combinations. [THC, Universal Categories]

**Evil / Good / Absoluteness:** Evil cannot be absolute, it always depends upon some good which it misuses or perverts; the quality of Absoluteness can belong to good alone. To say “good” is therefore to say “absolute,” and conversely: for good results from Being itself, which it reflects and whose potentialities it unfolds. [IFA, Islam and Consciousness of the Absolute]

**Evolution:** We do not deny that evolution exists within certain limits, as is indeed evident enough, but we do deny that it is a universal principle, and hence a law which affects and determines all things, including the immutable; evolution and degeneration can moreover go hand in hand, each then occurring on a different plane. However that may be, what has to be categorically rejected is the idea that truth evolves, or that revealed doctrines are the product of an evolution. [GDW, Vicissitudes of Different Spiritual Temperaments]

**Evolutionism:** Evolutionism would be justified if a tree could produce something other and better than what is contained in its seed; it would be justified if the fruits of the tree were, not the manifestation of what the seed already contains, but the result of an evolution that is unforeseeable and variable according to circumstances, or if it were a matter of chance whether an apple tree bears apples and not figs. The phenomena of evolution and transmutation exist within the limits of certain contingencies, otherwise the seed would never become a tree and a plant would never modify its shape under given conditions, such as a change of soil or climate; but these two factors – evolution and transmutation – are altogether secondary in relation to the principle of qualitative anticipation of effects within their own cause. These truths assume a particular importance when it is a question of Revelations and traditions, for the slightest error on this plane can be devastating to the soul and to the intelligence. [TB, Originality of Buddhism]

Evolutionism is the very negation of the archetypes and consequently of the divine Intellect; it is therefore the negation of an entire dimension of the real, namely that of form, of the static, of the immutable; concretely speaking, it is as if one wished to make a fabric of the wefts only, omitting the warps. [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

**Evolutionism (transformist):** Transformist evolutionism is the classical example of the bias that invents “horizontal” causes because one does not wish to admit a “vertical” dimension: one seeks to extort from the physical plane a cause that it cannot furnish and that is necessarily situated above matter. [RHC, The Veil of Isis]

Transformist evolution is but a materialist substitute for the ancient concept of the solidifying and segmenting “materialization” of a subtle and suprasensorial primordial substance, in which were prefigured all the diverse possibilities of the *a posteriori*

material world. The answer to evolutionism is to be found in the doctrine of archetypes and “ideas,” the latter pertaining to pure Being – or to the Divine Intellect – and the former pertaining to the primordial substance in which the archetypes become “incarnated,” as it were by reverberation. [LT, The Contradiction of Relativism]

**Exegesis (modern):** Modern exegesis is only a caricature of ancient hermeneutics, if indeed there is still any relationship between them; it consists above all in giving doubts and prejudices the status of dogmas: according to these prejudices, it is ‘impossible’ that a book should be prior to a certain date, or that a scribe should have copied a book, even a sacred one, without altering it; quite improper conclusions are drawn from the smallest facts and the most disproportionate deductions and inductions are allowed, though all the positive data are contrary to these false principles. [GDW, The Sense of the Absolute in Religions]

**Existence:** Existence is a reality in some respects comparable to a living organism; it cannot with impunity be reduced, in man’s consciousness and in his modes of action, to proportions that do violence to its nature; pulsations of the “extra-rational” pass through it from every quarter. Now religion and all forms of supra-rational wisdom belong to this extra-rational order; the presence of which we observe everywhere around us, unless we are blinded by a mathematician’s prejudice; to attempt to treat existence as a purely arithmetical and physical reality is to falsify it in relation to ourselves and within ourselves, and in the end it is to blow it to pieces. [UI, The Path]

The very fact of our existence is a prayer and compels us to prayer, so that it could be said: “I am, therefore I pray; *sum ergo oro*.” Existence is by nature ambiguous and from this it follows that it compels us to prayer in two ways: first by its quality of being a divine expression, a coagulated and segmented mystery, and secondly by its inverse aspect of being a bondage and perdition, so that we must indeed think of God not merely because, being men, we cannot but take account of the divine basis of existence – insofar as we are faithful to our nature – but also because we are by the same token forced to recognize that we are fundamentally more than existence and that we live like exiles in a house afire. On the one hand, existence is a surge of creative joy and every creature praises God: to exist is to praise God whether we be waterfalls, trees, birds or men; but on the other hand, existence means not to be God and so to be in a certain respect ineluctably in opposition to Him; existence is something which grips us like a shirt of Nessus. Someone who does not know that the house is on fire has no reason to call for help, just as the man who does not know he is drowning will not grasp the rope that could save him; but to know we are perishing means, either to despair or else to pray. Truly to know that we are nothing because the whole world is nothing, means to remember “That which Is” and through this remembrance to become free. If a man has a nightmare and, while still dreaming, starts calling on God for aid, he infallibly awakens; this shows two things: first, that the conscious intelligence of the Absolute subsists during sleep as a distinct personality – our spirit thus remaining apart from our states of illusion – and secondly, that when a man calls on God he will end by awakening also from that great dream which is life, the world, the ego. If this call can breach the wall of common dreams, why should it not also breach the wall of that vaster and more tenacious dream that is existence? [UI, The Path]

**Existence / Intelligence:** Existence, the being of things, neutralizes and unites, whereas intelligence discerns and separates. Existence by its very nature is an “exit” (*ex-sistere, ex-stare*) out of Unity and thus is the plane of separation, whereas intelligence, being Unity by its intrinsic nature, is the ray leading back to the Principle. Both existence and intelligence unite and divide, but each does so in a different relationship, so that intelligence divides where existence unites and vice versa. [LS, The Meaning of Caste]

**Existence / Phenomena:** Existence . . . concerns all things – whether qualitative or not and whether conscious or not – by the simple fact they stand out against nothingness, if one may express it thus. Phenomena are “neither God nor other than He”: they possess nothing of themselves, neither existence nor positive attributes; they are divine qualities “corroded” in an illusory manner by nothingness – itself non-existent – by reason of the infinitude of universal Possibility. [UI, The Path]

**Existentialism:** Existentialism has achieved the *tour de force* or the monstrous contortion of representing the commonest stupidity as intelligence and disguising it as philosophy, and of holding intelligence up to ridicule, that of all intelligent men of all times. Since “scandal must needs come” this manifestation of the absurd was to be expected, there was no escaping it at the time when it had become a possibility; and if it be original to elevate error into truth, vice into virtue and evil into good the same may be said of representing stupidity as intelligence and vice versa; all that was wanted was to conceive the idea. All down the ages to philosophize was to think; it has been reserved to the twentieth century not to think and to make a philosophy of it. [LT, Abuse of the Ideas of the Concrete and the Abstract]

**Exoterism:** The term “exoterism” designates three different orders: firstly, a system of symbols and means; secondly, a way; and thirdly, a mentality. The first category embraces dogmas and rites, then legal, moral and other prescriptions, and liturgy in the widest sense; the second embraces the general religious practices, those which are incumbent upon all; and the third category comprises the psychism corresponding to a particular religious climate, thus all the manifestations of sentimentality and imagination determined by a particular religion, a particular piety and particular social conventions. In other words, it is important to distinguish the following aspects in exoterism: the formal system, which offers symbols and means; the exoteric way, which is based exclusively upon this system; the exoteric mentality, which is formalistic, voluntaristic and individualistic, and which adds all kinds of restrictive sentimentalities to the simple forms. These are three altogether different meanings of the term “exoterism”: according to the first, the religious Law is necessary and venerable, and it becomes a constitutive element of esoterism; according to the second meaning, the Law is different from esoterism without necessarily excluding certain elements of the latter; according to the third meaning, there is an antinomy between the “outward” and the “inward,” or between the “letter” and the “spirit.”

It is of the highest importance not to confuse these three levels; in particular, not to lose sight of the fact that the first – Dogma and Law – is available to esoterism as regards both interpretation and practice. [IFA, The Ambiguity of Exoterism]

Exoterism transmits aspects or fragments of metaphysical truth – which is nothing other than the whole truth – whether about God, about the universe or about man. In man it chiefly envisages the passional and social individual; in the universe it discerns only what affects that individual; in God it hardly sees anything more than what has to do with the world, creation, man and his salvation. Consequently – and at the risk of repetition, this must be emphasized – exoterism takes no account either of the pure Intellect, which transcends the human plane and opens out onto the divine, or of pre-human and post-human cycles, or of Beyond-Being which is beyond all relativity and thus also beyond all distinctions. Such a perspective is comparable to a skylight, which gives the sky a certain form, round or square perhaps; through this the view of the sky is fragmentary, though it certainly does not prevent the sky from filling the room with light and life. [UI, The Path] Every exoteric perspective claims, by definition, to be the only true and legitimate one. This is because the exoteric point of view, being concerned only with an individual interest, namely, salvation, has no advantage to gain from knowledge of the truth of other religious forms. Being uninterested as to its own deepest truth, it is even less interested in the truth of other religions, or rather it denies this truth, since the idea of a plurality of religious forms might be prejudicial to the exclusive pursuit of individual salvation. [TUR, The Limitations of Exoterism]

The exoteric point of view is fundamentally the point of view of individual interest considered in its highest sense, that is to say, extended to cover the whole cycle of existence of the individual and not limited solely to terrestrial life. [TUR, The Limitations of Exoterism]

The exoteric claim to the exclusive possession of the truth comes up against the axiomatic objection that there is no such thing in existence as a unique fact, for the simple reason that it is strictly impossible that such a fact should exist, unicity alone being unique and no fact being unicity; it is this that is ignored by the ideology of the “believers,” which is fundamentally nothing but an intentional and interested confusion between the formal and the universal. The ideas that are affirmed in one religious form (as, for example, the idea of the Word or of the Divine Unity) cannot fail to be affirmed, in one way or another, in all other religious forms; similarly the means of grace or of spiritual realization at the disposal of one priestly order cannot but possess their equivalent elsewhere; and indeed, the more important and indispensable any particular means of grace may be, the more certain is it that it will be found in all the orthodox forms in a mode appropriate to the environment in question.

The foregoing can be summed up in the following formula: pure and absolute Truth can only be found beyond all its possible expressions; these expressions, as such, cannot claim the attributes of this Truth; their relative remoteness from it is expressed by their differentiation and multiplicity, by which they are strictly limited. [TUR, The Limitations of Exoterism]

In a certain respect, each religion is in the right versus the others, failing which any exoterism would be nothing but a snare; but precisely, exoterism is by definition unable of being conscious of the relationship which, at one and the same time, justifies it and yet limits it. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

**Exoterism / Esoterism:** To speak of exoterism is to speak also of esoterism, and this means that the statements of the former are the symbols of the latter. [UI, The Path]

The exoteric point of view is fundamentally the point of view of individual interest considered in its highest sense, that is to say, extended to cover the whole cycle of existence of the individual and not limited solely to terrestrial life. Exoteric truth is limited by definition, by reason of the very limitation of the end it sets itself, without this restriction, however, affecting the esoteric interpretation of which that same truth is susceptible thanks to the universality of its symbolism, or rather, first and foremost, thanks to the twofold nature, inward and outward, of Revelation itself; whence it follows that a dogma is both a limited idea and an unlimited symbol at one and the same time. To give an example, we may say that the dogma of the unicity of the Church of God must exclude a truth such as that of the validity of other orthodox religious forms, because the idea of religious universality is of no particular usefulness for the purpose of salvation and may even exert a prejudicial effect on it, since, in the case of persons not possessing the capacity to rise above an individual standpoint, this idea would almost inevitably result in religious indifference and hence in the neglect of those religious duties the accomplishment of which is precisely the principal condition of salvation. On the other hand, this same idea of religious universality – an idea that is more or less indispensable to the way of total and disinterested Truth – is nonetheless included symbolically and metaphysically in the dogmatic or theological definition of the Church or of the Mystical Body of Christ; or again, to use the language of the other two monotheistic religions, Judaism and Islam, we may find in the respective conceptions of the “Chosen People,” *Yisra’el*, and “submission,” *Al-Islam*, a dogmatic symbol of the idea of universal orthodoxy, the *Sanatana Dharma* of the Hindus. [TUR, The Limitations of Exoterism]

The exoteric aspect of a religion is thus a providential disposition that, far from being blameworthy, is necessary in view of the fact that the esoteric way can only concern a minority, especially under the present conditions of terrestrial humanity. What is blameworthy is not the existence of exoterism, but rather its all-invading autocracy – due primarily perhaps, in the Christian world, to the narrow precision of the Latin mind – which causes many of those who would be qualified for the way of pure Knowledge not only to stop short at the outward aspect of the religion, but even to reject entirely an esoterism that they know only through a veil of prejudice and deformation, unless indeed, not finding anything in exoterism to satisfy their intelligence, they be caused to stray into false and artificial doctrines in an attempt to find something that exoterism does not offer them, and even takes it upon itself to prohibit.

The exoteric viewpoint is, in fact, doomed to end by negating itself once it is no longer vivified by the presence within it of the esoterism of which it is both the outward radiation and the veil. So it is that religion, according to the measure in which it denies metaphysical and initiatory realities and becomes crystallized in a literalistic dogmatism, inevitably engenders unbelief; the atrophy that overtakes dogmas when they are deprived of their internal dimension recoils upon them from the outside, in the form of heretical and atheistic negations. [TUR, The Limitations of Exoterism]

Now, if one proceeds from the idea that exoterists do not understand esoterism and that they have in fact a right not to understand it or even to consider it nonexistent, one must also recognize their right to condemn certain manifestations of esoterism that seem to encroach on their own territory and cause “offence,” to use the Gospel expression; but how is one to explain the fact that in most, if not all, cases of this nature, the accusers divest themselves of this right by the iniquitous manner in which they proceed? It is



certainly not their more or less natural incomprehension, nor the defence of their genuine right, but solely the perfidiousness of the means that they employ that constitutes what amounts to a “sin against the Holy Ghost”; this perfidiousness proves, moreover, that the accusations that they find it necessary to formulate, generally serve only as a pretext for gratifying an instinctive hatred of everything that seems to threaten their superficial equilibrium, which is really only a form of individualism, therefore of ignorance. [TUR, The Limitations of Exoterism]

**Faith:** Faith is like an ‘existential’ intuition of its ‘intellectual’ object. [GDW, The Sense of the Absolute in Religions]

Faith is to say “yes” to the truth of God and of immortality – this truth which we carry in the depths of our heart – it is to see concretely what apparently is abstract; it is, to speak in Islamic terms, to “serve God as if thou sawest Him, and if thou seest Him not, He nonetheless seeth thee”; and it is also the sense of the goodness of God and trust in His Mercy. [CI, The Question of Evangelicalism]

Faith is the participation of the will in the intelligence; just as on the physical plane man adapts his action to the physical facts which determine its nature, so also, on the spiritual plane, he should act in accordance with his convictions, by inward activity even more than by outward activity, for “before acting one must first be,” and our being is nothing else but our inward activity. The soul must be to the intelligence what beauty is to truth, and this is what we have called the “moral qualification” that should accompany the “intellectual qualification.” [LT, Understanding and Believing]

Faith is in fact nothing else than the “bhaktic” mode of Knowledge and of intellectual certainty, which means that Faith is a passive act of the intelligence, its immediate object being not the truth as such, but a symbol of the truth. This symbol will yield up its secrets in proportion to the greatness of the Faith, which in its turn will be determined by an attitude of confidence or of emotional certainty, that is to say, by an element of *bhakti*, or Love. Insofar as Faith is a contemplative attitude, its subject is the intelligence; it can therefore be said to constitute a virtual Knowledge; but since its mode is passive, it must compensate this passivity by a complementary active attitude, that is to say, by an attitude of the will the substance of which is precisely confidence and fervor, by virtue of which the intelligence will receive spiritual certainties. Faith is *a priori* a natural disposition of the soul to admit the supernatural; it is therefore essentially an intuition of the supernatural, brought about by Grace, which is actualized by means of the attitude of fervent confidence. [TUR, Universality and Particular Nature of the Christian Religion]

Faith is the conformity of the intelligence and the will to revealed truths. This conformity is either formal alone or else essential, in the sense that the object of faith is a dogmatic form and, behind this, an essence of Truth. Faith is belief when the volitive element predominates over the intellectual; it is knowledge or gnosis when the intellectual element predominates over the volitive. But there are also certitude and fervor, the latter being volitive and the former intellectual: fervor gives belief its spiritual quality; certitude is an intrinsic quality of gnosis. The term “faith” could not mean exclusively belief or fervor, nor exclusively knowledge or certitude; it cannot be said either that belief that it is all that is possible in the way of faith, or that knowledge is not faith at all. [SW, The Nature and Arguments of Faith]

For the Koran, faith (*iman*) consists in “believing in what is hidden” (*yu’minuna bil-ghayb*) {Sura of the Cow, 2} [FDH, To Refuse or to Accept Revelation]  
Faith as such does not result from our thought, it is before it; it is even before us. In faith we are outside time. [EchPW, 13]

**Faith (divine archetype of):** The divine archetype of faith is the “yes” which God says to Himself; it is the Logos which on the one hand mirrors the Divine Infinity, and on the other hand refracts it. [EchPW, 13]

**Faith (higher aspect of):** Faith in its higher aspect is what we might call *religio cordis*: it is the “inward religion” which is supernaturally natural to man and which coincides with *religio caeli*, or *perennis*, that is, with universal truth, which is beyond the contingencies of form and time. This faith can be satisfied with little. [LT, Understanding and Believing]

**Faith (merit of):** The merit of faith is fidelity to the supernaturally natural receptivity of primordial man; it means remaining as God made us and remaining at His disposition with regard to a message from Heaven which might be contrary to earthly experience, while being incontestable in view of subjective as well as objective criteria. [LT, Understanding and Believing]

**Faith (mystery of):** The mystery of faith is in fact the possibility of an anticipatory perception in the absence of its content; that is, faith makes present its content by accepting it already, before the perception properly so-called. And if faith is a mystery, it is because its nature is inexpressible to the degree that it is profound, for it is not possible to convey fully by words this vision that is still blind and this blindness that already sees. [FDH, The Sense of the Sacred]

**Faith (Semitic / Buddhist):** The great Semitic message, as we have said in speaking of David, is that of faith; now the fact that devotional Buddhism is founded upon saving faith could cause one to think that in both cases it is a question of the same attitude and the same mystery, and consequently that the two traditional positions coincide. But, aside from the fact that the element of faith exists necessarily in every religion, there is here this distinction to be made: the Semitic or Abrahamic faith is the fervent acceptance of the omnipotent Invisible and consequently submission to Its Law; whereas the Amidist faith is trust in the saving Will of a particular Buddha, a trust linked to a particular and well defined practice: namely the invocation *Namomitabhaya Buddhaya*: or *Namu Amida Butsu*. [THC, David, Shankara, Honen]

**Faith / Intellection:** Faith, represented above all by the Semites, enjoins us to believe “in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth”; on the contrary, intellection, represented above all by the Aryans, reveals to us that “Brahman alone is real, the world is merely an appearance, and the soul is none other than Brahman.” This difference in perspective does not prevent faith from necessarily comprising an element of intellection, whereas intellection for its part also necessarily comprises an element of faith. [RHC, On Intelligence]

**Faith / Intelligence:** Unlike an intelligence which is all for exactness but never satisfied in its play of formulations, and which passes from concept to concept, from symbol to symbol, without being able to make up its mind for this or for that, the faith of the heart is capable of being satisfied by the first symbol that providentially comes its way, and of living on it until the supreme Meeting. [LT, Understanding and Believing]

Faith as a quasi-ontological and premental certitude ranks higher than the discerning and speculative aspects of intelligence, but intelligence as pure Intellection ranks higher than that faith which is no more than an adherence of the sentiments; it is this ambivalence which is the source of numerous misunderstandings. [LT, Understanding and Believing]

**Faith / Knowledge:** There is no faith without any knowledge, nor knowledge without any faith. But, it is knowledge that has precedence: faith is an indirect and volitive mode of knowledge, but knowledge suffices unto itself and is not a mode of faith; nevertheless, being situated in relativity, knowledge requires an element of faith to the extent that it is *a priori* intellectual and not existential, mental and not cardiac, partial and not total; otherwise all metaphysical understanding would imply sanctity *ipso facto*. However, all transcendent certitude has something divine about it – but as certitude only, and not necessarily as the acquisition of a particular man.

In other words: in a Semitic climate much importance is given to the incompatibility between knowledge and faith, and to the pre-eminence of the latter, to the point of holding the former in contempt and of forgetting that within Relativity the one goes hand in hand with the other. Knowledge is the adequate perception of the real, and faith is the conformity of will and sentiment to a truth imperfectly perceived by the intelligence; if the perception were perfect it would be impossible for the believer to lose his faith.

Yet theoretical knowledge, even if perfect and hence unshakable, always requires a volitive element which contributes to the process of assimilation or integration, for we must “become what we are”; and this operative element, or this element of intensity, stems from faith. Inversely, in religious faith there is always an element of knowledge that determines it, for in order to believe, it is necessary to know what one must believe; moreover, in plenary faith there is an element of certitude which is not volitive, and whose presence we cannot prevent, whatever be our efforts to refuse all knowledge in order to benefit from the “obscure merit of faith.”

It is only in God that knowledge can entirely dispense with that element of intensity necessary for realization or with the will for totalization; as for faith, its prototype *in divinis* is Life or Love; and in God alone are Life and Love independent of any motive justifying or determining them *ab extra*. It is by participation in this mystery that Saint Bernard could say: “I love because I love,” which is like a paraphrase of the saying of the Burning Bush “I am that I am”; “That which is.”

It is knowledge, or the element truth, which gives faith all of its value, otherwise we could believe no matter what, so long as we believe; it is only through truth that the intensity of our faith has meaning. [CI, The Question of Evangelicalism]

**Faith / Science:** Faith is the acceptance of that which we do not see, or rather, of that which transcends the experience of the average man; science is the experience of that

which we do see, or at least of that whereof we can have an empirical knowledge. [IFA, Preface]

**Faith / Unbelief:** Faith is the intuition of the transcendent; unbelief stems from the layer of ice that covers the heart and excludes this intuition. [PM, Being Conscious of the Real]

**Faith / Virtue / Rational Certainty:** Faith is the quality that converts into deeds – positive or negative depending on the case – the facts provided by truth; and virtue is the aptitude of our will and sensibility to conform ourselves to what truth and faith demand. Faith is to be distinguished from rational certitude in that it brings together the acceptance of the true with the love of the true and the will to realize it; thus it is a certitude that is not just mental, but that encompasses and engages every fiber of our being. [FSR, Paradoxes of Spiritual Expression]

**Falsification:** Falsification results from the sin of pride; to falsify a good is to appropriate it for oneself, to subordinate it to an end which is contrary to it, thus to vitiate it by an inferior intention. Pride, like hypocrisy which accompanies it, can produce only falsification. [SME, Outline of Religious Typologies]

**“Father”:** In calling God “Father,” Christ attests to the “Sovereign Good”: he refers on the one hand to the essentiality of the divine Goodness, and on the other hand to the reciprocity between the Creator and the creature “made in His image”; this means that Christ grants priority, not to the divine Power and to the aspect of Lordship, but to the divine Love and to the aspect of Paternity, precisely; as a result, man is presented, not as a simple slave, but as a child who, in relation to his Father, has rights granted to him by that Father, and which stem from his being a “valid interlocutor” and “image of God.” In Christ’s language, there is clearly a distinction to be made between “our Father” and “my Father”: the relation of filiation is principial and potential in the former case, and fully actual and effective in the second. The ordinary man is a “child of God” in the respect we have just indicated, that is, by the simple fact that he is man and hence “interlocutor”; but Christ is “child” or “son of God” in still another respect, which is superimposed onto the preceding; it is, geometrically speaking, what the vertical dimension is to the horizontal, or what the sphere is to the circle: he is “child” or “son” by his personality and not by the simple fact that he belongs to the human species, nor by virtue of an initiation or a spiritual orientation capable of actualizing a potentiality of *theosis*. For the *Avatara* is a cosmic phenomenon implying by definition every spiritual perfection possible – as well as every physical perfection – but which no realization on the part of an ordinary man could produce; the yogi, the *sannyasi*, the *jnani*, can realize *Brahman*, but he will never be Rama or Krishna . . . But let us return, after this digression, to the idea of the divine “Father.” This term, as we have said, has a meaning which differs according to whether it relates to man as such or to Christ alone; but it also has a meaning which differs according to whether it is conceived “vertically” or “horizontally”: that is to say, according to whether it relates, either to “Beyond-Being,” or to Being. In the first case, the “Father” is the pure Absolute and nothing can be associated with Him; the two other “Persons” already pertain to Relativity, of which they represent the summit; far from pertaining to the manifested world, they, together with the Absolute

pure and simple, constitute what we may call the “Divine Order.” In the second case – which alone has been retained by dogmatic theology – the “Father” is situated at the same level of ontological reality as the other two hypostases; whence the Trinity “Power,” “Wisdom,” “Love,” if one may express it thus. True, this ontological and “horizontal” Trinity does not coincide with the “pure Absolute,” but it is absolute from the point of view of creatures; thus man, when he prays, should not concern himself with the “degrees of reality” comprised in the principal Order, on pain of speaking into the void.

It may be objected that religion has no reason for including the idea of “Beyond-Being,” since its aim is the salvation of souls and not metaphysical knowledge, and indeed, as far as its saving function is concerned, religion can do without the idea in question; but in another respect, that of its claim to absoluteness, it must include it, on pain of misleading – or excluding – certain souls or certain intelligences. One is therefore right in thinking that the word “Father” expresses all that it is capable of expressing, at all levels of doctrine and degrees of understanding. [THC, “Our Father Who Art in Heaven”]

The question of knowing to which “divine level” man must address himself when praying never ought to arise, for to pray is to speak to God, independently of any metaphysical specification; the man who prays, even if he addresses a celestial personification, should not concern himself with the ontology of the celestial Interlocutor. On the one hand, “the kingdom of God is within you”; and on the other hand, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” But also, and above all: “Our Father who art in Heaven.” [RHC, Man in the Face of the Sovereign Good]

**Fideistic / Dialectical:** Fideistic: to believe what one considers one has to believe under the cover of dogmatic data, without asking whether this will convince or “hold water”; dialectical: to deal with a particular point by isolating it and intensifying it, without asking whether this is suitable in itself, and compatible with what one previously said, or with other points that are just as valid. [SVQ, Paradoxes of an Esoterism]

**Fire (of hell):** Many people today think in such terms as these: “either God exists, or He does not; if He exists and is what people say He is, then He will recognize that we are good and do not deserve punishment.” This means that they are prepared to believe in His existence provided He conforms to their own imaginings and recognizes the value they attribute to themselves. This is to forget on the one hand that we cannot know the standards by which the Absolute judges us, and on the other that the “fire” beyond the tomb is after all nothing but our own intellect which actualizes itself in opposition to our falseness; in other words, it is the immanent truth breaking forth into the full light of day. At death man is confronted by the unimaginable expanse of a reality no longer fragmentary but total and then by the norm of what he has pretended to be, since that norm is part of Reality. Man therefore condemns himself; according to the Quran, it is his members themselves which accuse him; once beyond the realm of lies, his violations are transformed into flames; nature, out of balance and falsified, with all its vain assurance proves to be a shirt of Nessus. Man burns not only for his sins; he burns for his majesty as an image of God. It is the preconceived idea of setting up the fallen state as a norm and ignorance as a pledge of impunity which the Quran stigmatizes with vehemence – one might almost say by anticipation – by confronting the self-assurance of its contradictors with the terrors of the end of the world . . . The human state, or any other analogous

central state, is as it were surrounded by a ring of fire: in it there is only one choice, either to escape from the current of forms upwards, towards God, or else to leave the human state downwards through the fire, the fire which is like the sanction of the betrayal on the part of those who have not realized the divine meaning of the human condition. If “the human state is difficult to obtain,” as is held by Asiatic believers in transmigration, it is – by reason of its centrality and theomorphic majesty – equally hard to leave. Men go to the fire because they are gods and they come out of the fire because they are but creatures: God alone could go to hell eternally – if He could sin. Or again: the human state is very near to the divine Sun, if we can at all speak of proximity in such a connection; the fire is the possible ransom – in reverse – of that privileged situation, how privileged can be gauged by the intensity and inextinguishability of the fire. From the gravity of hell we must infer the grandeur of man, and not conversely infer from the seeming innocence of man the supposed injustice of hell. [UI, The Quran]

**Five Divine Presences:** In Sufi terminology they are: the “human realm” (*nasut*), that is, the domain of the corporeal, since man is created out of “earth”; then the “realm of royalty” (*malakut*), so called because it immediately dominates the corporeal world; next comes the “realm of power” (*jabarut*), which, macrocosmically, is Heaven and, microcosmically, the created or human intellect, that “supernaturally natural” Paradise which we carry within us. The fourth degree is the “Realm of the Divine” (*Lahut*), which is Being and which coincides with the uncreated Intellect, the *Logos*; the final degree – if provisional use can be made of such a term – is none other than “Quiddity” or “Aseity” or “Iipseity” (*Hahut*, from *Huwa*, “He”), in other words, the Infinite Self. [FSR, The Five Divine Presences]

**Form:** Form is the manifestation of an “idea,” hence of a particular possibility or of an archetype, and in the final analysis of an aspect of the divine nature, and this to the extent that the form is positive and essential, not privative and accidental. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

Form is by definition the manifestation of an archetype, the intention of which excludes an indefinite gradation. In other words, form coincides with an “idea” which cannot be something other than what it is. [FDH, The Message of the Human Body]

Form reflects the first hypostatic autodetermination, the divine *Logos*. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

Every expressed truth necessarily assumes a form, that of its expression, and it is metaphysically impossible that any form should possess a unique value to the exclusion of other forms; for a form, by definition, cannot be unique and exclusive, that is to say, it cannot be the only possible expression of what it expresses. Form implies specification or distinction, and the specific is only conceivable as a modality of a “species,” that is to say, of a category that includes a combination of analogous modalities. Again, that which is limited excludes by definition whatever is not comprised within its own limits and must compensate for this exclusion by a reaffirmation or repetition of itself outside its own boundaries, which amounts to saying that the existence of other limited things is rigorously implied in the very definition of the limited. To claim that a limitation, for example, a form considered as such, is unique and incomparable of its kind, and that it excludes the existence of other analogous modalities, is to attribute to it the unicity of

Existence itself; now, no one can contest the fact that a form is always a limitation or that a religion is of necessity always a form – not, that goes without saying, by virtue of its internal Truth, which is of a universal and supraformal order, but because of its mode of expression, which, as such, cannot but be formal and therefore specific and limited. It can never be said too often that a form is always a modality of a category of formal, and therefore distinctive or multiple, manifestation, and is consequently but one modality among others that are equally possible, their supraformal cause alone being unique. We will also repeat – for this is metaphysically of great importance – that a form, by the very fact that it is limited, necessarily leaves something outside itself, namely, that which its limits exclude; and this something, if it belongs to the same order, is necessarily analogous to the form under consideration, since the distinction between forms must needs be compensated by an indistinction or relative identity that prevents them from being absolutely distinct from each other, for that would entail the absurd idea of a plurality of unicities or Existences, each form representing a sort of divinity without any relationship to other forms.

As we have just seen, the exoteric claim to the exclusive possession of the truth comes up against the axiomatic objection that there is no such thing in existence as a unique fact, for the simple reason that it is strictly impossible that such a fact should exist, unicity alone being unique and no fact being unicity; it is this that is ignored by the ideology of the “believers,” which is fundamentally nothing but an intentional and interested confusion between the formal and the universal. The ideas that are affirmed in one religious form (as, for example, the idea of the Word or of the Divine Unity) cannot fail to be affirmed, in one way or another, in all other religious forms; similarly the means of grace or of spiritual realization at the disposal of one priestly order cannot but possess their equivalent elsewhere; and indeed, the more important and indispensable any particular means of grace may be, the more certain is it that it will be found in all the orthodox forms in a mode appropriate to the environment in question.

The foregoing can be summed up in the following formula: pure and absolute Truth can only be found beyond all its possible expressions; these expressions, as such, cannot claim the attributes of this Truth; their relative remoteness from it is expressed by their differentiation and multiplicity, by which they are strictly limited. [TUR, The Limitations of Exoterism]

To say form is to say exclusion of possibilities, whence the necessity for those excluded to become realized in other forms, since what it “excludes” by definition, is condemned to repeat itself. [CI, The Idea of “The Best” in Religions]

**Form / Beauty:** Forms can be snares just as they can be symbols and keys; beauty can chain us to forms, just as it can also be a door opening towards the formless. [LAW, In the Wake of the Fall]

**Form / Essence:** A form is a coagulated essence, which is to say that the relationship resembles that between ice and water; the formal world – the material and animic states – thus possesses the property of “congealing” spiritual substances, of individualizing them, and hence of separating them more or less fundamentally from each other . . . What form is with regard to essence, manifestation – whether essential or not – is with regard to the Principle. [FSR, The Five Divine Presences]

**Formalistic:** A practice may be termed “formalistic” not because it is based upon a form – otherwise every spiritual practice would pertain to formalism – but because its immediate object belongs to the outward – hence *a priori* formal – order. [THC, “Our Father Who Art in Heaven”]

**Freedom (purpose of):** The purpose of freedom is to enable us to choose what we are in the depths of our heart. We are intrinsically free to the extent that we have a center which frees us: a center which, far from confining us, dilates us by offering us an inward space without limits and without shadows; and this Center is in the last analysis the only one there is. [THC, To Have a Center]

**Generosity:** How can the sanctified man not be generous, since he trusts in the Divine Mercy, and since he does not do so blindly? For it is not enough to await from Mercy the benefits that it promises, it is necessary in addition, and even above all, to open oneself to it and to love it for itself; to love Mercy is to understand its nature and its beauty and to wish to be united to it by participating in its function. To love is to some degree to wish to be what one loves, or to become what one loves; it is thus to imitate what one loves.

Generosity is the opposite of egoism, avarice and meanness; nevertheless let us be clear that it is evil that is opposed to good and not inversely. Generosity is the greatness of soul which loves to give and also to forgive, because it allows man to put himself spontaneously in the place of others; which allows to one’s adversary all the chances that he humanly deserves, even though these be minimal, and without prejudicing justice or the cause of right. Nobility comprises *a priori* a benevolent attitude and a certain gift of self, without affectation and without failing to do justice to things as they are; the noble man tries to help, to meet one halfway, before condemning or acting severely, while being implacable and capable of speedy action when reality demands it. Goodness due to weakness or dreaming is not a virtue; generosity is beautiful to the extent that man is strong and lucid. There is always, in the noble soul, a certain instinct of the gift of self, for God Himself is the first to overflow with charity, and above all with beauty; the noble man is only happy in giving, and he gives himself above all to God, as God gave Himself to him, and desires to give Himself to him. [EPW, The Virtues in the Way]

We do not say that one has to grant favors to others which are contrary to their nature and which therefore they would abuse; we say that one has to grant them favors from which they may benefit without being tempted to abuse them. In other words: one must not heap favors upon others which they do not deserve, but one must grant others all possible extenuating circumstances, materially and morally.

Generosity – or “charity” – is not weakness, any more than self-knowledge – or “humility” – is stupidity. This amounts to saying that virtue ought to conform to the nature of things; that it draws its nobleness and efficacy from truth. “There is no right superior to the right of truth”; and “beauty is the splendor of the true.” [EchPW, 61]

**Generosity (towards God):** Generosity towards God – if one may say so – is to give ourselves to God, the quintessence of this gift being sincere and persevering orison. [EchPW, 60]



**Generosity (towards man):** Generosity towards man is to give ourselves to others, through charity in all its forms. [EchPW, 60]

**Gnosis:** The word “gnosis,” which appears in this book and in our previous works, refers to supra-rational, and thus purely intellectual, knowledge of metacosmic realities. Now this knowledge cannot be reduced to the Gnosticism of history; it would then be necessary to say that Ibn ‘Arabi or Shankara were Alexandrine Gnostics; in short, gnosis cannot be held responsible for every association of ideas or every abuse of terminology. It is humanly admissible not to believe in gnosis; what is quite inadmissible in anyone claiming to understand the subject is to include under this heading things having no relation – whether of kind or of level – with the reality in question, whatever the value attributed to that reality. In place of “gnosis,” the Arabic term *ma’rifah* or the Sanskrit term *jnana* could just as well be used, but a Western term seems more normal in a book written in a Western language; there is also the term “theosophy,” but this has even more unfortunate associations, while the term “knowledge” is too general, unless its meaning is made specific by an epithet or by the context. What must be emphasized and made clear is that the term “gnosis” is used by us exclusively in its etymological and universal sense and therefore cannot be reduced to meaning merely the Graeco-Oriental syncretism of later classical times; still less can it be applied to some pseudo-religious or pseudo-yogic or even merely literary fantasy. If for example, Catholics can call Islam, in which they do not believe, a religion and not a pseudo-religion, there seems no reason why a distinction should not also be made between a genuine gnosis having certain precise or approximate characteristics and a pseudo-gnosis devoid of them. [UI, The Path]

In gnosis, there is first of all the intellectual knowledge of the Absolute – not merely of the “personal God” – and then self-knowledge; for one cannot know the Divine Order without knowing oneself. “Know thyself,” says the inscription over the portal of the initiatory temple at Delphi; and “the kingdom of God is within you.”

Just as the ether is present in each of the sensible elements, such as fire and water, and just as intelligence is present in each of the mental faculties, such as imagination and memory, so gnosis is necessarily present in each of the great religions, whether we grasp its traces or not.

We have said that the driving force of the path of gnosis is intelligence; now it is far from being the case that this principle is applicable in a spiritual society – unless it is not very numerous – for in general, intelligence is largely inoperative once it is called upon to hold a collectivity in balance; in all justice, one cannot deny in sentimental and humilitarian moralism a certain realism and hence a corresponding efficacy. It follows from all this, not that gnosis has to repudiate socially its principle of the primacy of intelligence, but that it must put each thing in its place and take men as they are; that is precisely why the perspective of gnosis will be the first to insist, not upon a simplifying moralism, but upon intrinsic virtue, which – like beauty – is “the splendor of the true.” Intelligence must be not only objective and conceptual, but also subjective and existential; the unicity of the object demands the totality of the subject. [THC, Gnosis Is Not Just Anything]

Gnosis, by the very fact that it is a knowing and not a willing, is centered in “that which is” and not in “that which ought to be”. [LS, Gnosis, Language of the Self]

**Gnosis / Gnosticism:** It is a fact that too many authors – we would almost say: general opinion – attribute to gnosis what is proper to Gnosticism and to other counterfeits of the *sophia perennis*, and moreover make no distinction between the latter and the most freakish movements, such as spiritualism, theosophism and the pseudo-esoterisms that saw the light of day in the twentieth century. It is particularly regrettable that these confusions are taken seriously by most theologians, who obviously have an interest in entertaining the worst opinion possible concerning gnosis; now the fact that an imposture necessarily imitates a good, since otherwise it could not even exist, does not authorize charging this good with all the sins of the imitation.

In reality, gnosis is essentially the path of the intellect and hence of intellection; the driving force of this path is above all intelligence, and not will and sentiment as is the case in the Semitic monotheistic mysticisms, including average Sufism. Gnosis is characterized by its recourse to pure metaphysics: the distinction between *Atma* and *Maya* and the consciousness of the potential identity between the human subject, *jivatma*, and the Divine Subject, *Paramatma*. The path comprises on the one hand “comprehension,” and on the other “concentration”: hence doctrine and method. The modalities of the latter are quite diverse: in particular, there is on the one hand the *mantra*, the evocative and transforming formula, and on the other hand, the *yantra*, the visual symbol. The path is the passage from potentiality to virtuality, and from virtuality to actuality, its summit being the state of the one “delivered in this life,” the *jivan-mukta*.

As for Gnosticism, whether it arises in a Christian, Moslem or other climate, it is a fabric of more or less disordered speculations, often of Manichean origin; and it is a mythomania characterized by a dangerous mixture of exoteric and esoteric concepts. Doubtless it contains symbolisms that are not without interest – the contrary would be astonishing – but it is said that “the road to hell is paved with good intentions”; it could just as well be said that it is paved with symbolisms. [THC, Gnosis Is Not Just Anything] Gnosis is the way of the intellect. We say “gnosis” and not “Gnosticism,” for the latter is most often a heterodox mythological dogmatism, whereas intrinsic gnosis is not other than what the Hindus mean by *jnana* and *Advaita-Vedanta*. To claim that all gnosis is false because of Gnosticism, amounts to saying, by analogy, that all prophets are false because there are false prophets . . . In common opinion gnosis equals “intellectual pride,” as if this were not a contradiction in terms, pure intelligence coinciding precisely with objectivity, which by definition excludes all subjectivism, hence especially pride which is its least intelligent and coarsest form. [RHC, On Intelligence]

**Gnosis / Love:** There are various ways of expressing or defining the difference between gnosis and love – or between *jnana* and *bhakti* – but here we wish to consider one criterion only, and it is this: for the volitional or affective man (the *bhakta*) God is “He” and the ego is “I,” whereas for the gnostic or intellective man (the *jnani*) God is “I” – or “Self” – and the ego is “he” or “other.” It will also be immediately apparent why it is the former and not the latter perspective that determines all religious dogmatism: it is because the majority of men start out from certainty about the ego rather than about the Absolute. Most men are individualists and consequently but little suited to concretely making an abstraction of their empirical “I,” a process which is an intellectual problem and not a moral one: in other words, few have the gift of impersonal contemplation – for

it is of this we are speaking – such as allows God to think in us, if such an expression be permissible . . .

God is “Light” “before” He is “Heat,” if it may be so expressed; gnosis “precedes” love, or rather, love “follows” gnosis, since the latter includes love after its own fashion, whereas love is not other than the beatitude that has “come forth” from gnosis. One can love something false, without love ceasing to be what it is; but one cannot “know” the false in a similar way, that is to say knowledge cannot be under illusion as to its object without ceasing to be what it is; error always implies a privation of knowledge, whereas sin does not imply a privation of will. Therein lies a most important application of the symbolism of the Adamic androgyne and of the creation of Eve: it is only after the “coming forth” of love outside knowledge – whence the polarization of “intelligence” and “will” – that the temptation and fall could – or can – take place; in one sense, the rational faculty became detached from Intellect through the intrusion of will, seduced by “the serpent” and become “free” from below, that is to say rendered capable of making choice between true and false; choice of the false having once become possible, it was bound to present itself as a seduction of torrential force; reason, mother of the “wisdom according to the flesh” is the “natural child” issued from Adam’s sin. Here the serpent represents what Hindus understand by *tamas*, that tendency which is “downward,” “towards obscurity,” “compressive” and at the same time “dispersive” and “dissolving” and which on contact with the human person becomes personified as Satan. The question: “why does evil exist?” amounts, in short, to asking why there is an existence; the serpent is to be found in Paradise because Paradise exists. Paradise without the serpent would be God.

. . . Gnosis by the very fact that it is a knowing and not a willing, is centered in “that which is” and not in “that which ought to be”; there results from this a way of regarding the world and life that is greatly different from the way, more “meritorious” perhaps but less “true,” in which predominantly volitive minds regard the vicissitudes of existence. The background of the drama of life is, for the *bhakta*, the “Will of God” and, for the *jnana*, the nature of things; the accepting of his fate results, for the former, from unconditional love, from “that which must be”; for the latter, acceptance results from discernment of metaphysical necessity, therefore, from “that which is.” The *bhakta* accepts all fate as coming from the Beloved; he also accepts it because he makes no distinction between “me” and “others” and because, by this very fact, he cannot rebel against an event merely because it has happened to himself and not to some other person; if he accepts everything out of love of God, he also does so, on this same basis, out of love of his neighbor. The attitude of the *jnani*, on the other hand, is an impassability founded upon discernment between the Real and the unreal: “The world is false, *Brahma* is true”; “That art thou” (*Tat Tvam Asi*); “All is *Atma*”; “I am *Brahma*.” Events of life arise, as do all phenomena, out of the indefinitely varying combinations of the three “cosmic qualities” (the *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*); these events therefore cannot but be, to the extent that the world is relatively real; but as soon as that relativity is transcended, they cease to exist and then there is no longer a “good” or an “evil,” nor any karmic causation; the plane of the *gunas* (“simultaneous” qualities) and of *karma* (made up of “successive” qualities) is as if annihilated in the undifferentiated serenity of Being or of the Self. And similarly, there is no “juridical” relationship between the astonishments, anxieties and indignations of the soul and the unconditional serenity of the

Intellect, or to be more precise, between the logic of anxiety and the transcendence of serenity; the gap is incommensurable and yet the second term is already hidden within the first; it is, so to speak, already within reach.

In spiritual life, he who says “to will” says “to will a Good”; “to will a Good” is “to will well,” that is to say to “will through the Good,” or “through God”; instead of “to will” one could say “the Beautiful.” On the other hand, he who says “to know” says “to know that which is”; he who says “to know that which is,” says, in a final analysis, “to be that which knows”: the Self.

Gnosis, it must be repeated, is the participation – however precarious and conditional, yet possible since we could not be in every respect absolutely “distinct” from God, since otherwise we would be devoid of reality – gnosis, then, is our participation in the “perspective” of the divine Subject which, in turn, dwells beyond the separative polarity “subject-object,” which however in no way signifies that it does not bear within itself, in a manner conforming with its Essence, the cause of all cosmic polarizations; this means that we can indeed discern something like a polarity in it, but on condition of not seeing there any separation or opposition . . . In one of his hymns to Hari, Shri Shankaracharya says: “Lord, although I and thou make but One, I belong to Thee, but not Thou to me, just as the waves belong to the sea, but not the sea to the waves.” And in another hymn, Shankara expresses himself thus: “That which is the cessation of mental agitation and the supreme peace; that which is the lake *Manikarnika* and the pilgrimage of pilgrimages; that which is the primordial, most pure Ganges, the river of Knowledge; that is Benares, inborn Wisdom, and that is what I am.” [LS, Gnosis, Language of the Self]

**Gnostic:** That the gnostic – in the orthodox sense of the term – bases himself extrinsically on a given sacred Scripture or on some other gnostic cannot prevent him from thinking in an intrinsically free manner by virtue of the freedom proper to the immanent Truth, or proper to the Essence which by definition escapes formal constraints. Or again: whether the gnostic “thinks” what he has “seen” with the “eye of the heart,” or whether on the contrary he obtains his “vision” thanks to the intervention – preliminary and provisional and in no wise efficient – of a thought which then takes on the role of occasional cause, is a matter of indifference with regard to the truth, or with regard to its almost supernatural springing forth in the spirit. [SVQ, Tracing the Notion of Philosophy]

**Gnosticism:** Gnosticism – which despite its errors contains many a truth – distinguishes three fundamental types: the pneumatic, whose nature is ascending; the hylic or somatic, whose nature is descending; and the psychic, whose nature is ambiguous. [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

**God:** What must be understood by the term “*God*”? From the strictly human point of view, which alone is what religions as such have in view, “God” could not be the Absolute as such, for the Absolute has no interlocutor; we may, however, say that God is the hypostatic Face turned towards the human world, or towards a particular human world; in other words, God is Divinity which personalizes itself in view of man and insofar as it more or less takes on the countenance of a particular humanity. Another question: what does this personalized Divinity, this God become partner or interlocutor,

or this Divine Face turned towards man “want” or “desire”? The most concise answer seems to us to be the following: if the Divine Essence, being infinite, tends to manifest itself by projecting its innumerable potentialities into the finite, the Divine Face, for its part, operates this projection and then – at a more relative level – projects within this first projection a principle of coordination, among other things a Law intended to regulate the human world and above all to regulate this miniature world that is the individual. This Face is thus like a sheaf of rays with diverse functions; a Face which, although it issues from the same Divine Order, does not amount to a single subjectivity with a moral intention; thus it is vain to seek behind the infinitely diverse combinations of the veil of *Maya* an anthropomorphic and humanly graspable personality. [IFA, The Decisive Intuition]

God is the Absolute, and being the Absolute, He is equally the Infinite; being both the Absolute and the Infinite, intrinsically and without duality, He is also the Perfect. Absoluteness is reflected in space by the point or the center; in time, by the movement or the present; in matter, by ether, which vehicles energy; in form, by the sphere; in number, by unity.

Infinitude, for its part, determines space by extension; time, by duration; matter, by substantial indefiniteness; form, by the limitless diversity of formal possibilities; number, by quantitative limitlessness.

As for the divine Perfection – from which all manifested perfections derive – it is reflected in space by the contents of matter inasmuch as they express either simple existence, or the divine Qualities which space vehicles. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

Indeed, God is ineffable, nothing can describe Him or enclose Him in words; but on the other hand, truth exists, that is to say that there are conceptual points of reference which sufficiently convey the nature of God; otherwise our intelligence would not be human, which amounts to saying that it would not exist, or simply that it would be inoperative with respect to what constitutes the reason for man’s intelligence.

God is both unknowable and knowable, a paradox which implies – on pain of absurdity – that the relationships are different, first of all on the plane of mere thought and then in virtue of everything that separates mental knowledge from that of the heart; the first is a “perceiving,” and the second a “being.” “The soul is all that it knows,” said Aristotle; it is necessary to add that the soul is able to know all that it is; and that in its essence it is none other than That which is, and That which alone is. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

It is important never to lose sight of the fact that the term “God” designates the Divinity, either in all its possible aspects – hence also beyond every aspect – or in some particular aspect, notably that of the Creator. It is necessarily thus because this term cannot contain in itself a privative nuance. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

It should be noted here that the word “God” does not and cannot admit of any restriction for the simple reason that God is “all that is purely principial” and that He is thus also – and *a fortiori* – Beyond-Being; this one may not know or may deny, but one cannot deny that God is “That which is supreme” and therefore also That which nothing can surpass. [LS, The Vedanta]

In reality God is indeed not “existent” in the sense that He cannot be brought down to the level of the existence of things. In order to make it clear that this reservation implies no kind of privation it would be better to say that God is “non-inexistent”. [LAW, In the Wake of the Fall]

When it is said that the personal God is situated in *Maya*, which runs the risk of sounding offensive, one must be careful to make it clear that this God is the Supreme Principle “entering” into universal Relativity, hence still “Supreme” despite the “entering,” which enables one to affirm that God the Creator and Legislator is at one and the same time *Atma* and *Maya*, or *Atma* in *Maya*, but never simply *Maya*. [IFA, The Ambiguity of Exoterism]

On the one hand, God is the “Other” who is infinitely “above” the world, and on the other hand, the world is His manifestation in which He is present; this implies that without this immanence the world would be reduced to nothing, and that the world – and all that it contains – is necessarily symbolical. In a certain sense, nothing resembles God; but in another sense, everything resembles Him, at least with respect to positive, not negative, manifestation. Likewise, the human subject – the ego – is as though suspended between “elevation” and “depth”: between the Divine Being which resides “in the Heavens,” and the Divine Self which resides “in the depths of the heart.” The first is the separative dimension, that of adoration, worship, law, obedience, in short, of religion; the second is the unitive perspective, that of wisdom and union; or that of pure sanctity, which by definition is “being” and not merely “thought.” [THC, Universal Categories]

In the three Semitic monotheistic religions, the name “God” necessarily embraces all that is proper to the Principle, with no restriction whatever, although their exoteric formulations evidently envisage the ontological aspect alone. [LAW, *Maya*]

God is the Eye that sees the world and which, being active where the creature is passive, creates the world by His vision, this vision being act and not passivity; thus the eye becomes the metaphysical center of the world of which it is at the same time the sun and the heart. God sees not only the outward, but also – or rather with all the more reason – the inward, and it is this latter vision that is the more real one, or strictly speaking, the only real one, since it is the absolute or infinite Vision of which God is at once the Subject and the Object, the Knower and the Known. [EH, The Eye of the Heart]

**God (love of):** By “love of God” is meant first the choice of Truth and then the direction of the will: the Truth that makes us conscious of an absolute and transcendent Reality – at once personal and suprapersonal – and the will that attaches itself to it and recognizes in it its own supernatural essence and its ultimate end. [LAW, The Ancient Worlds in Perspective]

In his commentary on the Lord’s Prayer, St. Francis of Assisi defines the love of God in the following manner: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven: so that we may love Thee with all our heart, thinking unceasingly of Thee (this ‘thought’ not being a discursive ratiocination, but a direct, intuitive and synthetic ‘recollection’ of the heart); with all our mind, directing towards Thee all our intentions and seeking Thine honor in all things (volitive attitude), with all our strength, putting all the powers of the soul, and the sentiments (sensible faculties) of the body in the service of Thy love and of nothing else (synthesis of all possible human attitudes); and so that we may likewise love our neighbors as ourselves, drawing them all, as far as we are able, towards Thy love,

rejoicing in the good which they enjoy, and having compassion in their misfortunes, as if they were our own, and causing no offense whatsoever to anyone.” [CI, The Spiritual Virtues According to St. Francis of Assisi.]

**God (Personal):** The “Personal God” is in fact none other than the personification of the Essence. [LT, The Servant and Union]

The Absolute by definition comprises the “energy” or “*shakti*” that is Infinitude, and, as All-Possibility, it projects Relativity, *Maya*. Now, the Personal God is the center or the very summit of this extrinsic dimension; far from being able to determine the Absolute-Infinite, His function is to bring about and govern existential projection; it is with regard to this projection that God as Creator, Legislator and Retributor is omnipotent and appears to be the Absolute itself. [SME, Dimensions of Omnipotence]

**Good / Evil:** In normal conditions, that may be considered to be good which, first, is in conformity with the Divine Attraction, second, is in conformity with universal Equilibrium, and third, provides a positive result in regard to the ultimate destiny of man; and that may be considered to be evil which is contrary to the Divine Attraction and universal Equilibrium, and produces a negative result.

Moreover, the sense of what is good or evil may be derived quite simply from the fact that Heaven has ordered or permitted one thing and has forbidden another. [LT, The Problem of Qualifications]

**Goodness:** Goodness is in the very substance of the Universe, and for that reason it penetrates right into the matter we know, “accursed” though that matter be. The fruits of the earth and the rain from the sky, which make life possible, are nothing if not manifestations of the Goodness that penetrates everywhere and warms the world; and we carry that Goodness within ourselves, at the bottom of our chilled hearts. [LAW, Man in the Universe]

**Gottheit / Gott:** Let us recall here that Meister Eckhart very rightly brought out this distinction in terming Beyond-Being *die Gottheit*, “the Godhood,” and in reserving the word *Gott*, “God,” for Being, who is the Divine Self-personification. [CI, Dilemmas of Moslem Scholasticism]

**Gratitude:** The grateful man is one who maintains himself in holy poverty, or, in other words, in a sort of holy monotony in the midst of inevitable distractions and complex occupations; he also maintains himself in a state of holy childhood, keeping blessedly apart from every unhealthy curiosity, from every temptation that both imprisons and pursues. The pious man knows that he lives in exile – but without bitterness and without ingratitude – and he lives both on certainty and hope; and that man alone will go to Paradise who is already in it here-below through his resignation to the will of God, and through the graces that flow from this.

Gratitude is a virtue that allows us, not only to be content with little things – this is holy childhood – but also to appreciate or respect little things or big things because they come from God, beginning with the beauty and the gifts of nature; one must be sensitive to the innocence and mystery of the divine works. Worship of the Divine Substance involves

respect for the accidents that manifest it; to worship God “in spirit and in truth” is also to respect Him through the veil that is man, which practically amounts to saying that one must respect the potential sanctity that is in every man, in so far as it is reasonably possible for us to do so; in a word, to accept, if not to understand, the transcendence of the Creator is to recognize His immanence in creatures. We owe it to others to show them, as far as is possible, that we do not stop short at their earthly accident, but that on the contrary we wish to take cognizance of their heavenly substance, and this excludes all triviality in social behaviour. Politeness is a distant manner of helping our neighbour to sanctify himself, or to remember that, being made of sanctity as the image of God, he is thereby made for sanctity. To say respect for one’s neighbour is to say respect for oneself, for what is true for others is also true for us; man is always a virtual saint. Dignity is imposed on us by our deiformity, by our sense of the sacred, by our knowledge and our worship of God; integral nobility is part of faith.

The noble man always maintains himself at the center; he never loses sight of the symbol, the spiritual gift of things, the sign of God, a gratitude that is both ascending and radiating. [EPW, The Virtues in the Way]

**Gratitude (towards God):** Gratitude towards God is to appreciate the value of what God gives us and of what He has given us from our birth. [EchPW, 60]

**Gratitude (towards man):** Gratitude towards man is to appreciate the value of what others give us, including surrounding nature; these gifts coincide ultimately with the gifts of God. [EchPW, 60]

**Gunas:** The three cosmic tendencies resulting from the universal Substance, *Prakriti*: they are, firstly *sattva*, the luminous and ascendant tendency; secondly *rajas*, the fiery, horizontal and expansive tendency; thirdly *tamas*, which is obscure and descendant. [RHC, *Mahashakti*]

**Hatred:** If God alone has the right to punish, it is because He is beyond the *ego*; hatred means to arrogate to oneself the place of God, to forget one’s human sharing of a common misery, to attribute to one’s own ‘I’ a kind of absoluteness, detaching it from that substance of which individuals are only so many contractions or knots. It is true that God sometimes delegates his right of punishment to man in so far as he rises above the ‘I’, or must and can so rise; but to be the instrument of God is to be without hatred against man. In hatred, man forgets ‘original sin’ and thereby loads himself, in a certain sense, with the sin of the other; it is because we make God of ourselves whenever we hate, that we must love our enemies. To hate another is to forget that God alone is perfect and that God alone is Judge. In good logic one can hate only ‘in God’ and ‘for God’; we must hate the *ego*, not the ‘immortal soul’, and hate him who hates God, and not otherwise, which amounts to saying that we should hate his hatred of God and not his soul. Likewise, when Christ says that it is necessary to ‘hate’ one’s ‘father and mother’, that means that it is necessary to reject whatever in them is ‘against God’, that is to say the attachment which serves as an obstacle in respect of ‘the one thing needful’. Such ‘hatred’ implies for those whom it concerns a virtual liberation; it is then, on the plane of eschatological realities, an act of love. [GDW, Of the Cross]



If love takes precedence over hatred to the point that there is no common measure between them, this is because absolute Reality is absolutely lovable; love is substance, hatred is accident, except in the case of creatures that are perverse. There are two kinds of hatred, one legitimate and one illegitimate: the first derives from a love that is the victim of an injustice, such as the love of God crying for vengeance, and this is the very foundation of all holy anger; the second kind is unjust hatred, or hatred that is not limited inwardly by the underlying love which is its *raison d'être* and which justifies it; this second hatred appears as an end in itself, it is subjective and not objective, it seeks to destroy rather than to redress.

Both the Koran and the Bible accept that there is a Divine Anger; and thus also a human “holy anger” and a “holy war”; man can “hate in God”, according to an Islamic expression. Indeed, objective privation permits or demands a privative reaction on the part of the subject, and the main thing is to know whether in a particular case our pity for a given human substance should prevail over our horror for the accident that makes the individual hateful. For it is true that from a certain point of view, one must hate the sin and not the sinner; but this point of view is relative, and does not prevent one from being sometimes forced, as a matter of proportion, to despise the sinner to the extent that he identifies himself with his sin. We once heard it said that whoever is incapable of contempt is likewise incapable of veneration; this is perfectly true, on condition that the evaluation is correct and that the contempt does not exceed the limits of its sufficient reason, subjectively as well as objectively. Just contempt is both a weapon and a means of protection; there is also such a thing as indifference, certainly, but this is an eremitical attitude that is not necessarily practicable or good in human society, for it runs the risk of being wrongly interpreted. Moreover, and this is important, a just contempt is necessarily combined with a measure of indifference, otherwise one would lack detachment and also that fund of generosity without which anger cannot be holy. Seeing an evil must not cause us to forget its contingency; a fragment may or must trouble us, but we must not lose sight of the fact that it is a fragment and not totality; awareness of totality, which is innocent and divine, in principle takes priority over everything else. We say “in principle”, for contingencies retain all their rights; this amounts to saying that serene anger is a possibility, and even a necessity, because in hating an evil, we do not cease to love God. [EPW, The Nature and Role of Sentiment]

**Heresy (extrinsic/ intrinsic):** It is once again appropriate . . . to define the difference between a heresy which is extrinsic, hence relative to a given orthodoxy, and another that is intrinsic, hence false in itself as also with respect to all orthodoxy or to Truth as such. To simplify the matter, we may limit ourselves to noting that the first type of heresy manifests a spiritual archetype – in a limited manner, no doubt, but nonetheless efficacious – whereas the second is merely human work and in consequence based solely on its own productions;\* and this decides the entire question. To claim that a “pious” spiritist is assured of salvation is meaningless, for in total heresies there is no element that can guarantee posthumous beatitude, even though – apart from all question of belief – a man can always be saved for reasons which escape us; but he is certainly not saved by his heresy.

(\* Such as Mormonism, Bahaim, the Ahmadism of Kadyan, and all the “new religions” and other pseudo-spiritualities which proliferate in today’s world.) [CI, The Question of Evangelicalism]

Rigorously speaking, all religious exoterism is an extrinsic heresy, evidently so with respect to other religions, but also, and above all, with respect to the *sophia perennis*; this perennial wisdom, precisely, constitutes esoterism when it is combined with a religious symbolism. An extrinsic heresy is a partial or relative truth – in its formal articulation – which presents itself as total or absolute, be it a question of religions or, within these, of denominations; but the starting point is always a truth, hence also a spiritual archetype. Altogether different is the case of an intrinsic heresy: its starting point is, either an objective error, or a subjective illusion; in the first case, the heresy lies more in the doctrine, and in the second, it is *a priori* in the pretension of the false prophet; but, needless to say, both kinds can combine, and even do so necessarily in the second case. Although there is no error possible without a particle of truth, intrinsic heresy cannot have any doctrinal or methodic value, and one cannot bring to bear on its behalf any extenuating circumstance, precisely because it projects no celestial model. [CI, The Question of Evangelicalism]

**Heresy / Wisdom:** Heresy is a form severed from its substance, hence its illegitimacy, whereas wisdom on the contrary is substance considered independently of forms, hence its universality and its imprescriptible nature. [FSR, Form and Substance in the Religions]

**Heterodoxy (intrinsic):** Intrinsic heterodoxy is, we repeat, contrary not only to a particular perspective or a particular formulation, but to the very nature of things, for it results, not from a perspective legitimate by nature and therefore “providential,” but from the arbitrary judgment of a mind left to its own resources and obliged to “create” what the intellect when paralyzed – fundamentally or accidentally – cannot transmit to it. When a man seeks to escape from dogmatic narrowness it is essential that it be “upwards” and not “downwards”: dogmatic form is transcended by fathoming its depths and contemplating its universal content, and not by denying it in the name of a pretentious and iconoclastic ideal of “pure truth.” [LS, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Heyoka (Sioux):** The *heyoka* were men who, having been honored in a dream by the vision of the Thunderbirds, had thereby contracted the obligation, on the one hand, to humble themselves, and, on the other, to dissimulate their consecration. Their case was similar, in certain respects, to that of the dervishes known by the name of the “people of blame” (*malamatiyah*), who sought to attract the reprobation of the profane and the hypocritical, while realizing inwardly the most perfect spiritual sincerity. For the sake of humility the *heyoka* condemns himself henceforth to perform virtually all actions the wrong way round, or to be a man “upside down” – for example, by pretending to shiver when it is hot, or to be stifled with heat when it is cold – and so to arouse the mockery of simple or mediocre people; nevertheless, he is considered to have received mysterious powers and may end by being deeply respected as a being apart and out of the common run, and no longer completely belonging to this world of rampant logic. [FS, The Demiurge in North American Mythology]

**Holiness:** Holiness is the sleep of the ego and the wake of the immortal soul. The moving surface of our being must sleep and must therefore withdraw from images and instincts, whereas the depths of our being must be awake in the consciousness of the Divine, thus lighting up, like a motionless flame, the silence of the holy sleep. [TM, On Holiness]

**Homo Sapiens:** To say *homo sapiens*, is to say *homo religiosus*; there is no man without God.

. . . Our definition of *homo sapiens* being deformity – which makes of him a total being, hence a theophany – it is only logical and legitimate that, for us, the final word on anthropology is conformity to celestial norms and movement towards God; or in other words, our perfection in the likeness of concentric circles and centripetal radii; both of which are disposed in view of the divine Center. [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

**Horizontality / Outwardness:** To be “horizontal” is to love only terrestrial life, to the detriment of the ascending and celestial path; to be “exteriorized,” is to love only outer things, to the detriment of moral and spiritual values. Or again: horizontality is to sin against transcendence, thus it is to forget God and consequently the meaning of life; and outwardness is to sin against immanence, thus to forget our immortal soul and consequently its vocation. [PM, Delineations of Original Sin]

**Human:** What is human is what is natural to man, and what is most essentially or most specifically natural to man is what relates to the Absolute and which consequently requires the transcending of what is earthly in man. [FDH, Consequences Flowing from the Mystery of Subjectivity]

There is a great deal of talk these days about “humanism,” talk which forgets that once man abandons his prerogatives to matter, to machines, to quantitative knowledge, he ceases to be truly “human.” What is most totally human is what gives man the best chances for the hereafter, and this is what also most deeply corresponds to his nature. [UI, Islam]

What is most profoundly and authentically human rejoins the Divine by definition. [THC, Concerning a Question of Astronomy]

There is nothing human which is not an evil from some point of view: even tradition itself is in certain respects an “evil,” since it must handle evil things in man and these human ills invade it in their turn, but it is then a lesser evil, or a “necessary evil,” and, humanly speaking, it would obviously be far truer to call it a “good.” The pure truth is that “God alone is good” and that every earthly thing has some ambiguous side to it. [LS, The Meaning of Caste]

**Human Animality:** It should be noted that human animality is situated beneath animality as such, for animals innocently follow their immanent law and thereby enjoy a certain natural and indirect contemplation of the Divine Prototype; whereas there is decadence, corruption and subversion when man voluntarily reduces himself to his animality. [SVQ, Paradoxes of an Esoterism]

**Human Nature:** When we speak of man, what we have in mind first of all is human nature as such, that is, inasmuch as it is distinguished from animal nature. Specifically human nature is made of centrality and totality, and hence of objectivity; objectivity being the capacity to step outside oneself, while centrality and totality are the capacity to conceive the Absolute. First, objectivity of intelligence: the capacity to see things as they are in themselves; next, objectivity of will, hence free will; and finally, objectivity of sentiment, or of soul if one prefers: the capacity for charity, disinterested love, compassion. “Noblesse oblige”: the “human miracle” must have a reason for being that is proportionate to its nature, and it is this that predestines – or “condemns” – man to surpass himself; man is totally himself only by transcending himself. Quite paradoxically, it is only in transcending himself that man reaches his proper level; and no less paradoxically, by refusing to transcend himself he sinks below the animals which – by their form and mode of passive contemplativity – participate adequately and innocently in a celestial archetype; in a certain respect, a noble animal is superior to a vile man. [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

**Humanism:** The word “humanism” constitutes a curious abuse of language in view of the fact that it expresses a notion that is contrary to the integrally human, hence to the human properly so called: indeed, nothing is more fundamentally inhuman than the “purely human,” the illusion of constructing a perfect man starting from the individual and terrestrial; whereas the human in the ideal sense draws its reason for existence and its entire content from that which transcends the individual and the earthly.

[FDH, Consequences Flowing from the Mystery of Subjectivity]

Whoever says humanism, says individualism, and whoever says individualism, says narcissism, and consequently: breaching of that protective wall which is the human norm; thus rupture of equilibrium between the subjective and the objective, or between vagabond sensibility and pure intelligence . . .

What we wish to suggest in most of our considerations on modern genius is that humanistic culture, insofar as it functions as an ideology and therefore as a religion, consists essentially in being unaware of three things: firstly, of what God is, because it does not grant primacy to Him; secondly, of what man is, because it puts him in the place of God; thirdly, of what the meaning of life is, because this culture limits itself to playing with evanescent things and to plunging into them with criminal unconscious. In a word, there is nothing more inhuman than humanism, by the fact that it, so to speak, decapitates man: wishing to make of him an animal which is perfect, it succeeds in turning him into a perfect animal; not all at once – because it has the fragmentary merit of abolishing certain barbaric traits – but in the long run, since it inevitably ends by “re-barbarizing” society, while “dehumanizing” it *ipso facto* in depth. A fragmentary merit, we say, because softening of manners is good only on condition that it not corrupt man: that it not unleash criminality, and not open the door to all possible perversions. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was still possible to believe in an indefinite moral progress; in the 20<sup>th</sup> century came the brutal awakening; it was necessary to recognize that one cannot improve man by being content with the surface while destroying the foundations. [THC, To Have a Center]

Humanism is the reign of horizontality, either naïve or perfidious; and since it is also – and by that very fact – the negation of the Absolute, it is a door open to a multitude of

sham absolutes, which in addition are often negative, subversive, and destructive. [THC, To Have a Center]

**Humanism (contradiction of):** The initial contradiction of humanism is that, if one man can prescribe for himself an ideal that pleases him, so too can someone else, for the same reason, prescribe for himself another ideal, or indeed nothing at all; and in fact amoral humanism is almost as ancient as moralistic humanism . . . The moral ideal of humanism is inefficacious because it is subject to the tastes of the moment, or to fashion, if one wishes; for positive qualities are fully human only in connection with the will to surpass oneself, hence only in relation to what transcends us. Just as man's reason for being does not lie within man as such, so too, man's qualities do not represent an end in themselves; it is not for nothing that deifying gnosis requires the virtues. A quality is fully legitimate only on condition that in the last analysis it be linked to necessary Being, not to mere contingency, that is, to what is merely possible. [THC, To Have a Center]

**Humanitarianism:** 'Humanitarianism' in fact puts itself forward as a philosophy founded on the idea that man is good; but to believe that man is good is almost always to believe that God is bad, or that He would be bad 'if He existed'; and as modern men believe less and less in God – apart from a totally inoperative scientific 'deism' – they pour out over God's representatives the resentment that they would like to show against God Himself: man is good, they think, but religions are bad; priests, who have invented religions in order to bolster up their own interests and perpetuate their privileges, are bad, and so on. It is the satanic inversion of the traditional axiom that God is good and man is bad: God can be called 'good' because all possible goodness derives from Him and every quality expresses – in an 'indirectly direct' manner – His Essence, and not only such and such a function; and man is bad because his will no longer conforms to the profound nature of things, hence to the divine 'Being', and his false 'instinct of self-preservation' makes itself the advocate of every passion and every terrestrial illusion. [GDW, Vicissitudes of Different Spiritual Temperaments]

No doubt some will say that humanitarianism, far from being materialistic by definition, aims at reforming human nature by education and legislation; now it is contradictory to want to reform the human outside the divine since the latter is the essence of the former; to make the attempt is in the end to bring about miseries far worse than those from which one was trying to escape. Philosophical humanitarianism underestimates the immortal soul by the very fact that it overestimates the human animal; it is somewhat obliged to denigrate saints in order to better whitewash criminals; the one seems unable to go without the other. From this results oppression of the contemplatives from their most tender years: in the name of humanitarian egalitarianism, vocations are crushed and geniuses wasted, by schools in particular and by official worldliness in general; every spiritual element is banished from professional and public life\* and this amounts to removing from life a great part of its content and condemning religion to a slow death. The modern leveling – which may call itself "democratic" – is the very antipodes of the theocratic equality of the monotheistic religions, for it is founded, not on the theomorphism of man, but on his animality and his rebellion.

(\* On the other hand, by a kind of compensation, professional life more and more assumes a "religious" air in the sense that it claims the whole of man, his soul as well as

his time, as though the sufficient reason for the human condition were some economic enterprise and not immortality.) [LS, The Meaning of Caste]

**Humility:** With *jnana*, “humility” is awareness of the nothingness of the ego considered from the standpoint of its relativity; with *bhakti*, humility is self-abasement before the beauty of the Beloved everywhere present, self-annihilation before the Divine glory; with *karma*, the same virtue becomes the disinterested service of one’s neighbor, the humiliation of self for the sake of God. [LS, A View of Yoga]

A humble person is not interested in having his virtue recognized, he is interested in surpassing himself; hence in pleasing God more than men. [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

Humility is spiritual death, the ‘losing of life’ for God, the extinction of the ego. [GDW, The Christian Tradition, Some Thoughts on its Nature]

Humility is the *vacare Deo* in all its aspects, and for this reason it is perfect simplicity and primordial purity of the soul in the face of the Divine influx. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

St. Bernard defined humility as ‘a virtue through which a man who has a true knowledge of himself becomes contemptible in his own eyes . . .’

Meister Eckhart said that humility consists in ‘being below’, for otherwise it is impossible for God to give; thus lack of humility, egotism for example, does violence to the nature of God, which consists in giving.

Christ said to St. Catherine of Siena in a vision: ‘I am He who is, thou art she who is not.’ This is the metaphysical foundation of all humility expressed in direct terms.

For Thomists humility is the measure of our nothingness in the face of God.

‘Humility’, says St. Teresa of Avila, ‘is to walk according to the Truth.’ For St. Ignatius Loyola also, humility is first of all the simplicity of soul which makes man submit himself quite naturally to the Divine Law, then indifference with regard to worldly things, and finally the ascetic will to live in privations, material and moral, for the sake of God.

Al-Qushairi: ‘It is to submit oneself to the direction of God.’ The same writer gives also this definition: ‘It is fusion and contracting of the heart when subjugated by the Truth.’

According to At-Tirmidhi, ‘man is humble when the blazing of the fire of desires has ceased’ (*fana*, ‘extinction’). [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

**Humility (of God):** There is no virtue that does not derive from God, and there is none that He does not possess; this allows raising the question of knowing whether He possesses the virtue of humility, which by definition pertains to the creature; a question that is paradoxical and ill-sounding, to say the least, but logically inevitable. The answer is that the personal God, quite clearly, is in no way opposed to the suprapersonal Divinity of which He existentiates certain potentialities; Being could not contradict Beyond-Being. The God-Person is so to speak “subject” to his own Essence, the “pure Absolute”; the divine Unity – or the homogeneity of the Divine Order – is not impaired by the degrees of reality. To say that God is “one” does not mean that principial Reality does not comprise degrees, but that Being is unique and indivisible; it nonetheless possesses qualities and faculties, lacking which creatures would not possess them. But let us return to the question of humility: just as the personal God is “subject,” hence in a certain sense

“humble,” in relation to the suprapersonal Divinity, so too man ought to show himself humble in relation to his own heart-intellect, the immanent divine spark; the proud man sins against his own immortal essence as well as against God and men. [PM, Man in the Cosmogonic Projection]

God is not “humble” like man, because He could not abase Himself before someone external and superior to Himself, for such a one does not exist. The “humility” of God, as we have said, is the simplicity of His essence, for He is without parts. There is, however, another aspect of the “divine humility,” one that is both intrinsic and anthropomorphic: “When the servant takes one step towards his Lord the Lord gets up from his throne and takes one hundred steps to meet his servant”(Hadith of the Prophet). As for man, he is not a pure essence, but a mixture of spirit and earth; therefore he cannot in himself be “good.” [LS, A View of Yoga]

**Humility (true):** True humility is to know that we can add nothing to God and that, even if we possessed all possible perfections and had accomplished the most extraordinary works, our disappearance would take nothing away from the Eternal. [LAW, In the Wake of the Fall]

**Humility / Charity (perfect):** To know that ‘I am nothing’ is perfect humility; to know that the ‘neighbor is myself’ is perfect charity. That is perfect which is rooted in existence, not that which depends on action. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

**Humility / Charity (quintessence):** The quintessence of humility, we insist, is the awareness of our nothingness in the face of the Absolute; in the same order of ideas, the quintessence of charity is our love of the Sovereign Good, which gives to our social compassion its most profound meaning. [RHC, Virtue and Way]

**Humility / Modesty:** Humility, for its part, is in no wise contrary to authority, and could not be so since authority is a positive quality; humility is not modesty, by which we mean that authority excludes modesty while nonetheless including humility. Setting aside all humilitarianism – automatic and extravagant as it may be, though inevitable and efficacious in the psychological order corresponding to it – humility is the awareness of our real, and not imaginary, littleness in its various aspects, together with the absence of all desire for individual affirmation. Modesty, on the contrary, is the awareness, not of our ontological limitation or of our human insufficiency, but simply of our incompetence or our incapacity, as the case may be. Thus on the one hand modesty resembles humility, yet on the other hand differs from it, and this may be illustrated by saying that a modest man must of necessity be humble, but a humble man need not be modest. [SME, Passion and Pride]

**Humility / Pride:** Humility is a state of emptiness in which our thoughts and actions appear to be extraneous to ourselves, so that we judge them as we judge the thoughts and actions of others.

Pride is a blind plenitude which monopolizes everything. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

**Hypocrisy:** For the Sufis, the “hypocrite” (*munafiq*) is not only the one who gives himself airs of piety in order to impress people, but in a general way, one who is profane, who does not draw all the consequences that are implied in the Dogma and the Law, hence the man who is not sincere, since he is neither consequential nor whole; now Sufism (*tasawwuf*) is nothing other than sincerity (*sidq*) and the “sincere” (*siddiqun*) are none other than the Sufis. [SVQ, The Quintessential Esoterism of Islam]

**Idealism / Realism:** Nothing is more false than the conventional opposition between “idealism” and “realism”, which insinuates in general that the “ideal” is not “real”, and inversely; as if an ideal situated outside reality had the smallest value, and as if reality were always situated on a lower level than what may be called an “ideal”. Anyone who holds this view is thinking in a quantitative and not in a qualitative mode. The current meaning of the terms is here in view, and not their specifically philosophical signification. [LAW, The Ancient Worlds in Perspective]

**Ihsan:** The Islamic religion is divided into three constituent parts: *Iman*, Faith, which contains everything that one must believe; *Islam*, the Law, which contains everything that one must do; *Ihsan*,\* operative virtue, which confers upon believing and doing the qualities that make them perfect, or in other words, which intensify or deepen both faith and works. *Ihsan*, in short, is the sincerity of the intelligence and the will: it is our total adhesion to the Truth and our total conformity to the Law, which means that we must, on the one hand, know the Truth entirely, not in part only, and on the other hand conform to it with our deepest being and not only with a partial and superficial will. Thus *Ihsan* converges upon esoterism – which is the science of the essential and the total – and is even identified with it; for to be sincere is to draw from the Truth the maximal consequences both from the point of view of the intelligence and from that of the will; in other words, it is to think and to will with the heart, and thus with our whole being, with all that we are.

*Ihsan* is right-believing and right-acting, and at the same time it is their quintessence: the quintessence of right-believing is metaphysical truth, the *Haqiqah*, and that of right-acting is the practice of invocation, the *Dhikr*. *Ihsan* comprises so to speak two modes, depending on its application: the speculative and the operative, namely intellectual discernment and unitive concentration; in Sufi language this is expressed exactly by the terms *Haqiqah*<sup>^</sup> and *Dhikr*, or by *Tawhid*, “Unification,” and *Ittihad*, “Union.”

(\* Literally *Ihsan* means: “embellishment,” “beautiful activity,” “right-acting,” “charitable activity”; and let us recall the relationship that exists in Arabic between the notions of beauty and virtue.

<sup>^</sup> It is to be noted that in the word *haqiqah*, as in its quasi-synonym *haqq*, the meanings “truth” and “reality” coincide.) [SVQ, The Quintessential Esoterism of Islam]

*Ihsan* comprises many ramifications, but it is quintessential esoterism that obviously constitutes it most directly. [SVQ, The Quintessential Esoterism of Islam]

**Ihsan (exoterically / esoterically):** *Ihsan*, given that it is necessarily also an exoteric notion, may be interpreted at different levels and in different ways. Exoterically it is the faith of the fidiests and the zeal of the ritualists; in which case it is intensity and not profundity and is thus something relatively quantitative or horizontal compared with



wisdom. Esoterically, one can distinguish in *Ihsan* two accentuations, that of gnosis, which implies doctrinal intellectuality and that of love, which demands the totality of the volitive and emotive soul; the first mode operating with intellectual means – without for all that neglecting the supports that may be necessitated by human weakness – and the second, with moral and sentimental means. It is in the nature of things that this love may exclude every element of intellection, and that it may readily if not always do so – precisely to the extent that it constitutes a way – whereas gnosis on the contrary always comprises an element of love, doubtless not violent love, but one akin to Beauty and Peace. [SVQ, The Quintessential Esoterism of Islam]

**Ihsan (hadith):** “Spiritual virtue (*ihsan* = right doing) is that thou shouldst worship God as if thou sawest Him, for, if thou seest Him not, He nevertheless seeth thee.” [SVQ, The Quintessential Esoterism of Islam]

**Ihsan (subjective / objective):** *Ihsan* comprises the subjective meaning of “sincerity” – to act as if we were seeing God, He who sees us – and the objective meaning of “action productive of good”. [FDH, To Refuse or To Accept Revelation]

**Illumination:** It is true that the word “illumination” can have a superior meaning, in which case it no longer designates a passive phenomenon; unitive and liberating illumination is beyond the distinction between passivity and activity. Or more exactly, illumination is the Divine Activity in us, but for that very reason it also possesses an aspect of supreme Passivity in the sense that it coincides with the “extinction” of the passional and dark elements separating man from his immanent Divine Essence; this extinction constitutes receptivity to the Influx of Heaven – without losing sight of the fact that the Divine Order comprises a “Passive Perfection” as well as an “Active Perfection,” and that the human spirit must in the final analysis participate in both mysteries. [THC, Gnosis Is Not Just Anything]

**Image (simple / complex):** An image is simple insofar as it represents a particular heavenly reality, and complex insofar as it includes, as may be the case, a particular group of symbols, indicating for example diverse attributes or functions. [LT, The Saint and the Divine Image]

**Immanence / Transcendence:** Immanence is not only the presence of the divine in our soul, it is also this presence around us, in the world, just as inversely, transcendence is the inaccessibility of God, not only above us, in the Heavens, but also within us, in the depths of the heart.\*

(\*At least *a priori*, leaving out of consideration mystical union or metaphysical realization.) [THC, Degrees and Scope of Theism]

**Immanent:** We interpret the words “immanent,” “immanence” and “immanentism” according to the etymological meaning: *immanens* means “dwelling within.” The modern philosophical interpretation, starting with Spinoza, is abusive; immanence is neither identity, nor negation of transcendence; nor epistemological subjectivism, of course. [SME, Two Esoterisms]

**Impiety:** By impiety we mean, not the mere fact of not believing in God, but the fundamental tendency not to believe in Him; herein lies the whole difference between the “accident” and the “substance.” [PM, Prerogatives of the Human State]

**Infinite:** Life of the Absolute. [RH, Cosmos]

To say Absolute, is to say Infinite; Infinitude is an intrinsic aspect of the Absolute. It is from this “dimension” of Infinitude that the world necessarily springs forth; the world exists because the Absolute, being such, implies Infinitude. [FDH, The Interplay of the Hypostases]

The Infinite is that which, in the world, appears as modes of expanse or of extension, such as space, time, form or diversity, number or multiplicity, matter or substance. In other words, and to be more precise: there is a conserving mode, and this is space; a transforming mode, and this is time; a qualitative mode, and this is form, not inasmuch as it limits, but inasmuch as it implies indefinite diversity; a quantitative mode, and this is number, not inasmuch as it fixes a given quantity, but inasmuch as it too is indefinite; a substantial mode, and this is matter, it too being without limit as is shown by the star-filled sky. Each of these modes has its prolongation – or more exactly its basis – in the animic state and beyond, for these modes are the very pillars of universal existence. [FDH, The Interplay of the Hypostases]

Infinitude, as we have said, is the radiation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, of the Absolute: *a priori* it is internal Bliss, if one may say so; in becoming relative *a posteriori*, it becomes hypostatic and creative as well as saving Maya; . . . the Absolute as such and its radiating Shakti – Infinitude. [IFA, Islam and Consciousness of the Absolute]

Infinity implies by definition the at least symbolical possibility of its own negation; hence the “existentialization” of nothingness. “And the more man blasphemes,” Meister Eckhart says, “the more he praises God”; in puffing itself up with pride in order to deny That which is, the existentialized nothingness pays homage to Being, the source of all existence. [THC, Concerning an Onto-Cosmological Ambiguity]

**Inspiration:** Inspiration by the Holy Spirit does not mean that It is to replace human intelligence and free it from all its natural limitations, for that would be Revelation; inspiration simply means that the Spirit guides man in accordance with the divine intention and on the basis of the capacities of the human receptacle. Were this not so, there would be no theological elaboration, nor any divergences within orthodoxy, and the first Church Father would have written a theological treatise that would have been unique, exhaustive, and definitive; there would never have been either a Thomas Aquinas or a Gregory Palamas. As to the rest, there are men who are inspired by the Holy Spirit because they are saints and inasmuch as they are, whereas there are others who are saints because they are inspired by the Holy Spirit and inasmuch as they are. [FSR, The Human Margin]

**Inspiration / Reflection / Reasoning / Intellection:** Inspiration, like revelation, is a divine dictate, with the difference that in the second case the Spirit dictates a law-giving and obligatory Message of overriding force, whereas in the first case the Message,

whatever be its value, has no dogmatic import, and has an illustrative role within the framework of the fundamental Message.

Reflection, like intellection, is an activity of the intelligence, with the difference that in the second case this activity springs from that immanent divine spark that is the Intellect, whereas in the first case the activity starts from the reason, which is capable only of logic and not of intellectual intuition. The *conditio sine qua non* of reflection is that man reason on the basis of data that are both necessary and sufficient and with a view to a conclusion, the latter being the reason for the existence of the mental operation.

From the point of view of knowledge properly so-called, reasoning is like the groping of a blind man, with the difference that – by removing obstacles – it may bring about a clearing of vision; it is blind and groping due to its indirect and discursive nature, but not necessarily in its function, for it may be no more than the description – or verbalization – of a vision which one possesses *a priori*, and in this case, it is not the mind that is groping, but the language. If we compare reasoning to a groping, it is in the sense that it is not a vision, and not in order to deny its capacity of adequation and exploration; it is a means of knowledge, but this means is mediate and fragmentary like the sense of touch, which enables a blind man to find his way and even to feel the heat of the sun, but not to see.

As for intellection, on the one hand it necessarily expresses itself by means of reason and on the other hand it can make use of the latter as a support for actualization. These two factors enable theologians to reduce intellection to reasoning; that is to say, they deny it – while at the same time seeing in rationality an element that is more or less problematic if not contrary to faith – without seeking or being able to account for the fact that faith is itself an indirect, and in a way, anticipated mode of intellection. [SVQ, The Exo-Esoteric Symbiosis]

**Intellect:** At once mirror of the supra-sensible and itself a supernatural ray of light. [LAW, Man in the Universe]

The Intellect – which is precisely what makes evident to us the absoluteness of the Self and the relativity of “objectifications” – is only “human” to the extent that it is accessible to us, but it is not so in itself; it is essentially *increated et increabile* (Eckhart), although “accidentally” created by virtue of its reverberations in the macrocosm and in microcosms; geometrically speaking, the Intellect is a ray rather than a circle, it “emanates” from God rather than “reflecting” Him. “*Allah* is known to Himself alone” say the Sufis; this saying, while it apparently excludes man from a direct and total knowledge, in reality enunciates the essential and mysterious divinity of pure Intellect; formulae of this kind are only fully understandable in the light of the often quoted *hadith*: “He who knows his soul knows his Lord”. [LAW, *Maya*]

Remove the passional element from the soul and the intelligence – remove “the rust from the mirror” or “from the heart” – and the Intellect will be released; it will reveal from within what religion reveals from without.\*

(\* This release is strictly impossible – we must insist upon it – without the co-operation of a religion, an orthodoxy, a traditional esoterism with all that this implies.) [EPW, Understanding Esoterism]

The Intellect ‘is divine’, first because it is a knower – or because it is not a non-knower – and secondly because it reduces all phenomena to their Principle; because it sees the

Cause in every effect, and thus surmounts, at a certain level, the vertiginous and devouring multiplicity of the phenomenal world. [GDW, Is there a Natural Mysticism?]

**Intellect (created / uncreated):** The Intellect, in a certain sense, is ‘divine’ for the mind and ‘created’ or ‘manifested’ for God: it is none the less necessary to distinguish between a ‘created Intellect’ and an ‘uncreated Intellect’, the latter being the divine Light and the former the reflection of this Light at the center of Existence; ‘essentially’, they are One, but ‘existentially’, they are distinct, so that we could say, in Hindu style, that the Intellect is ‘neither divine nor non-divine’, an elliptical expression which doubtless is repugnant to the Latin and Western mentality, but which transmits an essential shade of meaning. However that may be, when we speak of the Heart-Intellect, we mean the universal faculty which has the human heart for its symbolical seat, but which, while being ‘crystallised’ according to different planes of reflection, is none the less ‘divine’ in its single essence. [GDW, Ternary Aspect of the Human Microcosm]

**Intellect (“supernaturally natural” function):** The contemplation of the Immutable, of the Self which is Reality, Consciousness and Bliss. [LT, The Alchemy of the Sentiments]

**Intellect / Reason:** Intellectual intuition comprises essentially a contemplativity which in no way enters into the rational capacity, the latter being logical rather than contemplative; it is contemplative power, receptivity in respect of the Uncreated Light, the opening of the Eye of the Heart, which distinguishes transcendent intelligence from reason. The latter perceives the general and proceeds by logical operations, whilst Intellect perceives the principal – the metaphysical – and proceeds by intuition. Intellection is concrete in relation to rational abstractions, and abstract in relation to the divine Concreteness. [GDW, Vicissitudes of Different Spiritual Temperaments]

The intellect is a receptive faculty and not a productive power: it does not “create,” it receives and transmits; it is a mirror reflecting reality in a manner that is adequate and therefore effective. In most men of the “iron age” the intellect is atrophied to the point of being reduced to a mere virtuality, although doubtless there is no watertight partition between it and the reason, for a sound process of reasoning indirectly transmits something of the intellect; be that as it may, the respective operations of the reason – or the mind – and of the intellect are fundamentally different from the point of view that interests us here, despite certain appearances due to the fact that every man is a thinking being, whether he be wise or ignorant. There is at the same time analogy and opposition: the mind is analogous to the intellect insofar as it is a kind of intelligence, but is opposed to it by its limited, indirect and discursive character; as for the apparent limitations of the intellect, they are merely accidental and extrinsic, while the limits of the mental faculty are inherent in it. Even if the intellect cannot exteriorize the “total truth” – or rather reality – because that is in itself impossible, it can perfectly well establish points of reference which are adequate and sufficient, rather as it is possible to represent space by a circle, a cross, a square, a spiral or a point and so on . . . There is no difficulty in the fact that pure intelligence – the intellect – immensely surpasses thought, and that there is no continuity – despite the identity of essence – between a concept as such and reality, the aseity of the real; to lament over the shortcomings of thought is to ask it to be something that it is not; this is the classical error of philosophers who seek to enclose everything in

the *cogito* alone. From the point of view of concrete – not abstract – knowledge of the transcendent, the problem of thought is resolved in the very nature of the intellect.

There are objects which exceed the possibilities of reason; there are none that exceed those of intelligence as such. [LS, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Intellect / Revelation:** The intellect knows through its very substance all that is capable of being known and, like the blood flowing through even the tiniest arteries of the body, it traverses all the egos of which the universe is woven and opens out “vertically” on the Infinite. In other words: the intellectual center of man, which is in practice subconscious, has knowledge, not only of God, but also of man’s nature and his destiny; and this enables us to present Revelation as a “supernaturally natural” manifestation of that which the human species knows, in its virtual and submerged omniscience, both about itself and about God. [UI, The Path]

Pure Intellection is a subjective and immanent Revelation just as Revelation properly so called is an objective and transcendent Intellection. [LT, Abuse of the Ideas of the Concrete and the Abstract]

**Intellect / Spirit:** Intellect and Spirit coincide in their essence in that the former is like a ray of the latter. The Intellect is the Spirit in man; the Divine Spirit is nothing other than the universal Intellect. [UI, The Prophet]

**Intellectual:** The word ‘intellectual’ is used here as elsewhere by us as referring to the Intellect, it does not apply to the purely ‘mental’ speculations of logicians. [GDW, Vicissitudes of Different Spiritual Temperaments]

**Intellectual Qualification / Faith:** If intellectual qualification is the discernment that is capable of passing from appearances to reality, from forms to essence, and from effects to cause, then faith is the propensity to pass from the concept to the thing itself, or from knowing to being; we say the propensity and not the passage itself, as this is dependent upon the spiritual means and upon grace. Faith is the moral qualification insofar as the latter allows itself to be determined by the saving truth and through this content realizes its whole vocation. [LT, The Problem of Qualifications]

**Intellectualism:** Intellectualism cannot fail to engender errors. It confers self-complacency and abolishes fear of God. It introduces a sort of worldliness into the intellectual domain. Its good side is that it may speak of truth; its bad side is the manner in which it speaks of it. It replaces the virtues it lacks by sophistries. It lays claim to everything but is in fact inoperative.

In intellectualism a capacity to understand the most difficult things readily goes hand in hand with an inability to understand the simplest things. [SPHF, Love and Knowledge]

**Intelligence:** One of the keys to the understanding of our true nature and of our ultimate destiny is the fact that the things of this world never measure up to the real range of our intelligence. Our intelligence is made for the Absolute, or it is nothing. Among all the intelligences of this world the human spirit alone is capable of objectivity, and this

implies – or proves – that what confers on our intelligence the power to accomplish to the full what it can accomplish, and what makes it wholly what it is, is the Absolute alone.\*

(\* “Neither in the earth nor in the heavens is there room for Me (Allah) but in the heart of My believing servant there is room for Me” (*hadith qudsi*). Similarly Dante: “I perceive that our intellect is never satisfied, if the True does not enlighten it, outside which no truth is possible” (*Paradiso* III, 124-126).) [LAW, *Religio Perennis*]

Intelligence is the perception of a reality, and *a fortiori* the perception of the Real as such. It is *ipso facto* discernment between the Real and the unreal – or the less real . . . Intelligence gives rise not only to discernment, but also – *ipso facto* – to the awareness of our superiority in relation to those who do not know how to discern; contrary to what many moralists think, this awareness is not in itself a fault, for we cannot help being aware of something that exists and is perceptible to us thanks to our intelligence, precisely. It is not for nothing that objectivity is one of man’s privileges.

But the same intelligence that makes us aware of a superiority, also makes us aware of the relativity of this superiority and, more than this, it makes us aware of all our limitations. This means that an essential function of intelligence is self-knowledge: hence the knowledge – positive or negative according to the aspects in view – of our own nature.

To know God, the Real in itself, the supremely Intelligible, and then to know things in the light of this knowledge, and in consequence also to know ourselves: these are the dimensions of intrinsic and integral intelligence, the only one worthy of the name, strictly speaking, since it alone is properly human.

We have said that intelligence produces, by its very essence, self-knowledge, with the virtues of humility and charity; but it may also produce, outside its essence or nature and as a consequence of a luciferian perversion, that vice of vices which is pride. Hence the ambiguity of the notion of “intelligence” in religious moralities, along with the accentuation of a humility which is expressly extra-intellectual, and for that very reason ambiguous and dangerous in its turn, since “there is no right superior to that of the Truth.” [RHC, *On Intelligence*]

Intelligence is the perception of the real and not the “intellectualization” of the unreal. [THC, *Universal Categories*]

Man is intelligence, and intelligence is the transcending of forms and the realization of the invisible Essence; to say human intelligence is to say absoluteness and transcendence. [TM, *Reflections on Ideological Sentimentalism*]

Intelligence, by definition, must be disposed of in view of the knowable, which means at the same time that it must reflect the divine Intelligence, and it is for that reason that man is said to be “made in the image of God.” [FDH, *Transcendence is Not Contrary to Sense*]

**Intelligence (four functions):** Objectivity, subjectivity, activity, passivity; in the mind, these are reason, intuition, imagination and memory. By “objectivity” we mean that knowledge is inspired by data which are exterior to it, and this is so in the case of reason; by “subjectivity” on the contrary, it must be understood that the knowledge in question operates through existential analogy, this is to say that it is inspired by data which the subject bears within himself: thus, we have no need of reasoning in order to observe the natural mechanism of another subjectivity, and this is the faculty of intuition. In

“activity,” the intelligence relives, recreates or combines the possibilities which are known to it, and this is the imagination; in “passivity,” the intelligence registers and preserves the data which present themselves to it. [FDH, Outline of a Spiritual Anthropology]

**Intelligence (Shariite view):** Intelligence can be the essence of a Path provided there is a contemplative mentality and a thinking that is fundamentally non-passional; an exoterism could not, as such, constitute this Path but can, as in the case of Islam, predispose to it by its fundamental perspective, its structure and its “climate.” From this strictly shariite point of view, intelligence is reduced – for Islam – to responsibility; viewed thus, every responsible person is intelligent; in other words a responsible person is defined in relation to intelligence and not in relation to freedom of the will alone. [UI, The Path]

**Intelligence / Concretism:** If intelligence is the capacity to discern “substances” through “accidents” or independently of them, “concretism” can only be described as a kind of philosophical codifying of unintelligence. [LT, Abuse of the Ideas of the Concrete and the Abstract]

**Intelligence / Good Character:** To the question of knowing whether it is better to have intelligence or a good character, we reply: a good character. Why? Because, when this question is asked, one is never thinking of integral intelligence, which essentially implies self-knowledge; conversely, a good character always implies an element of intelligence, obviously on condition that the virtue be real and not compromised by an underlying pride, as is the case in the “zeal of bitterness.” Good character is open to the truth exactly as intelligence faithful to its substance opens onto virtue; we could also say that moral perfection coincides with faith, and thus could not be a social perfectionism devoid of spiritual content. [RHC, On Intelligence]

**Intelligence / Inwardness:** Intelligence is to discern transcendent Reality; inwardness is to unite oneself with immanent Reality; the one does not go without the other. Discernment, by its nature, calls forth union; both elements imply virtue by way of consequence and even *a priori*.

Discernment and union, we have said; analogously, we may distinguish between “comprehension” and “concentration,” the latter referring to the “heart” or to “life,” and the former to the “mind” or to “thought”; although there is also on the one hand a mental concentration, and on the other, and even before thought, a cardiac comprehension, namely intellection. [RHC, Pillars of Wisdom]

**Intelligence / Virtue:** In itself, intelligence is “pious” because its very substance is pure discernment, and pure contemplation, of the Sovereign Good; a true intelligence is inconceivable outside that already celestial quality that is the sense of the sacred; the love of God being the very essence of virtue. In a word, intelligence, to the very extent that it is faithful to its nature and its vocation, produces or favors the moral qualities; conversely, virtue, with the same conditions, necessarily opens onto wholeness of mind, hence onto knowledge of the Real. [THC, Intelligence and Character]

**Intelligent Error:** It is only too evident that mental effort does not automatically give rise to the perception of the real; the most capable mind may be the vehicle of the grossest error. The paradoxical phenomenon of even a “brilliant” intelligence being the vehicle of error is explained first of all by the possibility of a mental operation that is exclusively “horizontal,” hence lacking all awareness of “vertical” relationships; however, the definition “intelligence” still applies, because there is still a discernment between something essential and something secondary, or between a cause and an effect. A decisive factor in the phenomenon of “intelligent error” is plainly the intervention of an extra-intellectual element, such as sentimentality or passion; the exclusivism of “horizontality” creates a void that the irrational necessarily comes to fill. It should be noted that “horizontality” is not always the negation of the supernatural; it may also be the case of a believer whose intellectual intuition remains latent, this being precisely what constitutes the “obscure merit of faith”; in such a case one may, without absurdity, speak of devotional and moral “verticality.” [RHC, On Intelligence]

**Intention:** The primacy of intention stems from the fact that one and the same action – we are not saying every action – may be good or bad according to the intention, whereas the inverse is not true: an intention is not good or bad according to the action. It is not actions that matter primarily, but rather intentions, as common sense as well as traditional wisdom tell us; however, it goes without saying that this could not mean, as some people imagine, that every imperfect or even bad action can be excused by supposing that the intention was good or even by arguing that every intention is basically good merely because it is subjective and that, according to some people, subjectivity is always right . . . and also that subjectivity has priority over objective reality; whereas “there is no right superior to that of the truth.” [PM, On Intention]

The fixed idea that the argument of intention is a panacea has become so habitual that too many people abuse it without reflecting, by protesting their good intention in cases where the question of intention could not even arise. Quite generally, it is all too clear that good intentions in no way constitute a guarantee of a man’s worth, nor even, consequently, of his salvation; in this sense, intention is worthy only through its actualization.\*

(\*As the German – or the analogous English – proverb has it: “The road to hell is paved with good intentions” (*Der Weg zur Holle ist mit guten Vorsätzen gepflastert*); doubtless they derive from this saying of Ecclesiasticus (21:10): “The way of sinners is smoothly paved with stones, but at its end is the pit of Hades.” And according to the Epistle of Saint James (4:17), “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”) [PM, On Intention]

Intention determines not only actions, but obviously also moral attitudes. There is a humility, a charity and a sincerity – but these are then merely appearances – stemming from hypocrisy, hence properly from satanism, namely: egalitarian and demagogic humility, humanistic and basically bitter charity, and cynical sincerity. There are false virtues whose motives are basically to demonstrate to oneself that one has no need of God; the sin of pride consists here in believing that our virtues are our property and not a gift of Heaven; which is all the more wrong in that, in this case, the virtues are imaginary, since pride perverts them. [PM, On Intention]



**Intentionism / Sincerism:** Intentionism and sincerism go hand-in-hand; what the first has in common with the second is that it flies to defend all things blameworthy, whether extravagant and pernicious or simply mediocre and vulgar; in short, to be “sincere,” is to show oneself “as one is,” unconditionally and cynically, hence counter to any effort to be what one ought to be. It is forgotten that the worth of sincerity lies in its contents only, and that it is charity to avoid giving a bad example; the individual owes society a correct comportment, to say the least, which has nothing to do with the vice of dissimulation. Let us specify that correct comportment, such as is required by good sense and traditional morality, has as a necessary corollary a certain effacement, whereas hypocrisy by definition is a kind of exhibitionism, crude or subtle as the case may be. [PM, On Intention]

**Inwardness:** The fact that the subject amounts to a dimension of the object, rather as time is in a sense a dimension of space – this fact shows how important the perspective of “inwardness” is in the face of God; that is, the accentuation of inward, intrinsic, profound qualities, and by way of consequence the concern to avoid the pitfall of superficial formalism. Christ intended that one adore God “in spirit and in truth,” and not by “the prescriptions of men”; he opposed inward, and by definition sincere, values to outward and extrinsic attitudes; and this, if it is not esoterism pure and simple, is at least one of its fundamental dimensions. “The kingdom of God is within you”; this refers metaphysically to the divine “Self,” to the immanent *Atma*; hence to the “uncreated and uncreatable” Intellect of the Eckhartian doctrine.

“The world is false, *Brahman* is true; the soul is not other than *Brahman*.” This Vedantic formula furnishes the key of the principle of inwardness: which means that we can attain the divine Self only within ourselves, given that it is our essence. Moreover, it is this mystery of potential or virtual identity that explains the secretiveness of esoterism.

In a more elementary mode, inwardness is faith, which by its very nature frees from formalistic and legalistic servitude, and which essentially saves us; however, more profoundly, inwardness is union with the immanent divine Presence and, in the final analysis, with the divine Self. This dimension of depth does not, of course, abolish faith, but on the contrary includes and “essentializes” it; if faith can save us, that is because it is, at the level it pertains to, a mode of our paradisiacal essence. [RHC, Pillars of Wisdom]

**Inwardness / Outwardness:** The quality of inwardness demands of us not a renunciation of the outward world – which, besides, would be impossible – but an equilibrium determined by the spiritual meaning of the world and of life. The vice of outwardness is the lack of harmony between the two dimensions: between our tendency towards the things that surround us and our tendency towards the “kingdom of God which is within you.” What is necessary is to realize a spiritual rootedness that removes from outwardness its tyranny at once dispersing and compressing, and that on the contrary allows us to “see God everywhere”; which means to perceive symbols, archetypes and essences in sensible things, for the beauties perceived by an interiorized soul become factors of interiorization. Similarly regarding matter: what is necessary is not to deny it – if that were possible – but to withdraw from its seductive and enslaving grasp; to

distinguish in it what is archetypal and quasi-celestial from what is accidental and indeed too earthly; hence to treat it with nobleness and sobriety.

In other words, outwardness is a right, and inwardness a duty; we have the right to outwardness because we belong to this spatial, temporal and material world, and we must realize inwardness because our spiritual nature is not of this world, nor, consequently, is our destiny. God is generous: when we withdraw towards the inward, it will, in compensation, manifest itself for us in the outward; nobleness of soul is to have the sense of the divine intentions, hence of the archetypes and essences, which readily reveal themselves to the noble and contemplative soul. Conversely, when we withdraw towards the heart, we will find therein all the beauties perceived outwardly; not as forms, but in their quintessential possibilities. In turning towards God, man can never lose anything.

Thus, when man interiorizes himself, God so to speak exteriorizes Himself while enriching man from within; there lies all the mystery of the metaphysical transparency of phenomena and of their immanence in us. [RHC, Pillars of Wisdom]

**Islam:** Islam is the Message of Unity, and thereby of the Absolute and the Essence, and this implies in principle that along with the simplifications and impasses of theology – whose authority in Islam is after all somewhat fluctuating – it offers all the mysteries that Unity comprises by its nature; that in consequence it postulates not only transcendence, which is separative by definition, but also immanence, which is unitive and which links man existentially and intellectually to his divine Origin. [CI, The Idea of “The Best” in Religions]

Islam . . . proceeds through sincerity in unitary faith; and we know this faith must imply all the consequences logically following from its content, which is Unity, or the Absolute. First there is *al-iman*, the accepting of Unity by man’s intelligence; then, since we exist both individually and collectively, there is *al-islam*, the submission of man’s will to Unity, or to the idea of Unity; this second element relates to Unity insofar as it is a synthesis on the plane of multiplicity; finally there is *al-ihsan*, which expands or deepens the two previous elements to the point of their ultimate consequences. Under the influence of *al-ihsan*, *al-iman* becomes “realization” or a certitude that is lived – knowing becomes being – while *al-islam*, instead of being limited to a certain number of prescribed attitudes, comes to include every level in man’s nature; *a priori* faith and submission are hardly more than symbolical attitudes, although nonetheless efficacious at their own level. By virtue of *al-ihsan*, *al-iman* becomes gnosis, or participation in the divine Intelligence, and *al-islam* becomes extinction in the divine Being. [UI, The Path]

**Jalwah:** *Jalwah* is the concrete awareness of the Divine Omnipresence, an awareness which makes it possible to understand the “language of the birds”, metaphorically speaking, and to hear the universal praise. [EPW, The Mystery of the Veil]

**Jesus:** The Word which determines Substance, reveals itself to the latter. Macrocosmically, it is the Word which manifests itself in the Universe as the divine Spirit; microcosmically, it is the Real Presence affirming itself at the center of the soul, radiating outwards and finally transmuting and absorbing it. [GDW, Mysteries of Christ and of the Virgin]

**Jivan-mukta:** According to Shankara, the one “liberated-in-this-life” (*jivan- mukta*) is not he who stands apart from all that is human, it is he who, when he “laughs with those who laugh and weeps with those who weep,” remains the supernaturally unaffected witness of the “cosmic play” (*lila*). [PM, Delineations of Original Sin]

**Jivatma:** *Jivatma*, the “living soul,” is the mask-individual that is illusorily and innumerably superimposed on *Atma*, or on the one “Self.” [PM, The Play of Masks]

**Jnana / Bhakti:** The doctrines of *jnana* and *bhakti* contradict one another outwardly because of the difference of levels and modes, but neither is absurd in itself: to say that the world is unreal, or that it is real, or that it is both at once, or again that it is neither one nor the other, is true according to the perspective adopted, and these perspectives result from objective reality and not from human arbitrariness. [LS, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

No doubt, the loftiest ideas, above all metaphysical truths, do not necessarily entail emotions properly so called; but they necessarily confer upon the soul of the knowing subject the sentiment of certitude, and also serenity, peace and joy.\* Fundamentally, we would say that where there is Truth, there also is Love. Each *Deva* possesses its *Shakti*; in the human microcosm, the feeling soul is joined to the discerning intellect,<sup>^</sup> as in the Divine Order Mercy is joined to Omniscience; and as, in the final analysis, Infinitude is consubstantial with the Absolute.

(\*In Islamic language, knowledge in fact brings about a “dilation” (*inshirah*).

<sup>^</sup> “It is not good that the man should be alone,” says Genesis. And let us recall that there is no *jnana* without an element of *bhakti*.) [SME, Ambiguity of the Emotional Element]

**Jnana-Marga:** The third and last mode of spirituality, in ascending order, is the path of knowledge (the Hindu *jnana-marga*, the *ma‘rifah* of Sufism); its dependence with regard to doctrine is the closest possible, in the sense that doctrine is an integral part of this path in an immediate manner, whereas in *bhakti* doctrine can be reduced to very simple syntheses and is practically situated as it were outside the path; on the other hand, *jnana* is completely independent of any doctrinal formulation, and this precisely insofar as it realizes the “spirit” which, while necessarily expressing itself by means of the “letter,” always remains transcendent and incommensurable in relation to its symbols. There is a sentence from Meister Eckhart which expresses admirably the general attitude of the *jnani*: “Truth is so noble that, if God wished to turn away from it, I would remain with Truth and leave God; but God Himself is Truth.”

The speculative faculty, which constitutes an essential qualification and a *sine qua non* for *jnana-marga*, is the natural ability to contemplate transcendent Realities; we call this ability “natural” because the one who possesses it makes use of it more or less like any other faculty, that is to say, without the intervention of a “supernatural” state: thus, the *jnani* has in his state of ordinary consciousness the knowledge which the *bhakta* gains in a “state of grace.” [EH, Modes of Spiritual Realization]

**Jnanic Perspective:** The jnanic perspective, which confines itself to maintaining the soul in the virginity of our fundamental being, is impersonal from the fact that it sees virtue, not in human initiatives, but in an existential quality, namely the primordial and innocent

nature of creation; but this fundamental being, or this theomorphic nature, represents an ontological layer deeper than the level of the fall. [GDW, Vicissitudes of Different Spiritual Temperaments]

**Karma-Marga:** The path of action (the Hindu *karma-marga*) refers to the Divinity's aspect of Rigor, whence the connection between this path and "fear" (the *makhafah* of Sufism): this aspect is manifested for us by the indefiniteness and ineluctability of cosmic vicissitudes; the goal of the path of action is liberation from these vicissitudes, and not from Existence itself, as in the case for the path of knowledge. But this liberation through action is nonetheless a deliverance, namely, from the cosmos of suffering; and if it is action which here plays the part of support, this is because it is by action that we situate ourselves in time which, as the destroyer of beings and things, is precisely a manifestation of the divine Rigor . . . What confers on action its liberating quality, is its sacrificial character: action must be envisaged as the accomplishment of the *dharma*, or "duty of state," which results from the nature of the individual, and it must consequently be accomplished, not only to perfection, but also without attachment to its fruits (*nishkama-karma*). [EH, Modes of Spiritual Realization]

**Khaos:** Just as principal *Maya* is bipolarized into *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, so manifested *Maya* comprises two poles, namely the active and imaginative demiurge and the passive but efficient Substance; it is this *materia prima* which is the *tohu wa bohu* of Genesis or the *khaos* – the "void" – of Hesiod's theogony. Let it be noted that the Greek word *khaos* has the double meaning of "primordial abyss" and "indeterminate matter"; it is neither nothingness pure and simple nor a substance preceding the creative act, but, together with the demiurge, the first content of creation; the active demiurge being the center, and its passive complement, the periphery. This two-fold demiurge constitutes the creative power in the midst of creation itself. [SME, Creation as a Divine Quality]

**Knowledge:** All knowledge is by definition knowledge of absolute Reality; which is to say that Reality is the necessary, unique and essential object of all possible knowledge. While it is true that there are kinds of knowledge which seem to have other objects, this is not insofar as they are Knowledge but insofar as they are modalities or limitations of it; and if these objects seem not to be Reality, this is so not insofar as they are objects of Knowledge, but insofar as they are modalities or limitations of the One Object, which is God seen by God. [EH, On Knowledge]

Knowledge is total or integral to the extent that its object is the most essential and thus the most real. [RHC, Preface]

**Knowledge (liberating):** If we are able to conceive of the pure Absolute, that is because our Intellect, which is "uncreated and uncreatable," penetrates "to the very depths of God"; once again the Transcendent and the Immanent are One and the same. Liberating Knowledge consists in being aware of the nature of things, because it is in the nature of things that we should be aware of it. [THC, Universal Categories]

**Knowledge (mental / heart / faith):** In rational or mental knowledge, the transcendent realities grasped by thought are separated from the thinking subject; in properly

intellectual or heart knowledge, the principial realities grasped by the heart are themselves prolonged in intellection; heart knowledge is one with what it knows, it is like an uninterrupted ray of light . . . Apart from these two modes there is a third, and this is the knowledge of faith. Faith amounts to an objectivized heart knowledge; what the microcosmic heart does not tell us, the macrocosmic heart – the Logos – tells us in a symbolic and partial language, and this for two reasons: to inform us concerning that of which our soul is urgently in need, and to awaken in us as far as possible the remembrance of innate truths.

If there is an intrinsically direct knowledge, which nevertheless is extrinsically objectivized as to its communication, there must correlatively be a knowledge which in itself is indirect, but which nevertheless is subjective as to its operation, and this is the discernment of objective things from the starting point of their subjective equivalents, given that reality is one; for there is nothing in the macrocosm that does not derive from the metacosm and which is not to be found again in the microcosm.

Direct and inward knowledge, that of the Heart-Intellect, is what the Greeks called gnosis; the word “esoterism” – according to its etymology – signifies gnosis inasmuch as it *de facto* underlies the religious, and thus dogmatic doctrines. [EPW, Understanding Esoterism]

**Knowledge (of the relative / absolute):** In reality, knowledge of the contingent and the relative is necessarily contingent and relative; not in the sense that it would not be adequate – because adequacy is the very nature of knowledge – but in the sense that we can only perceive one aspect of the object at a time, and this depends on our standpoint, that of the subject, precisely. Only knowledge of the Absolute is absolute, and it is so because, in gnosis, the Absolute knows itself in the depths of the human subject; this is the whole mystery of divine immanence in the microcosm. [THC, Universal Categories]

**Knowledge (principial) / Rationalism:** It is worth recalling here that in metaphysics there is no empiricism: principial knowledge cannot stem from any experience, even though experiences – scientific or other – can be the occasional causes of the intellect’s intuitions. The sources of our transcendent intuitions are innate data, consubstantial with pure intelligence, but *de facto* “forgotten” since the “loss of Paradise”; thus principial knowledge, according to Plato, is nothing other than a “recollection,” and this is a gift, most often actualized by intellectual and spiritual disciplines, *Deo juvante*.

Rationalism, taken in its broadest sense, is the very negation of Platonic anamnesis; it consists in seeking the elements of certitudes in phenomena rather than in our very being. [RHC, Preface]

**Liberty:** Liberty . . . is limited to the extent that it is relative, but it is really liberty in so far as it is liberty and not something else. [LT, Rationalism, Real and Apparent]

What then is liberty considered independently of free creatures, or of the particular case of a free creature? It is the consciousness of an unlimited diversity of possibilities, and this consciousness is an aspect of Being itself. To those who maintain that only a given experience of liberty such as that of a bird is concrete, and not liberty in itself (which in their view is no more than a purely mental abstraction), the reply must be made, without it being necessary to deny the existence of abstraction in the reason, that liberty in itself is

an immutable essence in which creatures may either participate or not participate, and that a given experience of liberty is only an “accident.” Defined in positive terms liberty is the possibility of manifesting oneself fully, or being perfectly oneself, and this possibility (or this experience) runs through the universe as a real, and hence concrete, beatitude in which animate beings participate according to their natures and their destinies; the animate Universe is a being that breathes, and that lives both in itself and in its innumerable individualized constituents; and behind all this there subsists the ineffable liberty of the Infinite . . . When a bird escapes from its cage we say that it is free; we might just as truly say that liberty has erupted at a particular point on the cosmic shell, or that it has taken possession of the bird, or that it has manifested itself through this creature or that form; liberation is something that occurs, but liberty is that which is, which always has been and always will be. The prototype of all liberty, and the reality expressed in every particular or “accidental” phenomenon of liberty, is the limitlessness of principal or Divine activity, or the consciousness God has of his All-Possibility. [LT, Abuse of the Ideas of the Concrete and the Abstract]

**Logic:** It is not for nothing that “logic” (*logikos*) comes from “Logos,” which derivation indicates, in a symbolical fashion at least, that logic – the mental reflection of ontology – cannot, in its substance, be bound up with human arbitrariness; that, on the contrary, it is a quasi-pneumatological phenomenon in the sense that it results from the Divine Nature itself, in a manner analogous – if not to the same degree – to that of intellectual intuition . . . Let us admit that human logic is at times inoperative; however, it is not inoperative because it is logical, but because it is human; because, being human, it is subject to psychological and material contingencies which prevent it from being what it is by itself, and what it is by its origin and in its source, wherein it coincides with the being of things. As is proved by the practice of meditation, intuition can arise through the workings of a rational operation – provisional and not decisive – which then acts as a key or as an occasional cause; on condition, of course, that the intelligence has at its disposal correct and sufficient data, and that it benefits from the concurrence of a moral health founded upon the sense of the sacred, and consequently capable of a sense of proportions as well as of aesthetic intuition. For all things are linked together: if the intelligence directly has need of rigor, it also indirectly has need of beauty. [FDH, Transcendence Is Not Contrary to Sense]

It is not possible to emphasize too strongly that philosophy, in its humanistic and rationalizing and therefore current sense, consists primarily of logic; this definition of Guénon’s correctly situates philosophical thought in making clear its distinction from “intellectual intuition,” which is direct perception of truth. But another distinction must also be established on the rational plane itself: logic can either operate in accordance with an intellection or on the contrary put itself at the disposal of an error, so that philosophy can become the vehicle of just about anything; it may be an Aristotelianism conveying ontological knowledge, just as it may degenerate into an existentialism in which logic is no more than a blind, unreal activity, and which can rightly be described as an “esoterism of stupidity.” When unintelligence – and what we mean by this is in no way incompatible with “worldly” intelligence – joins with passion to prostitute logic, it is impossible to escape a mental Satanism which destroys the very basis of intelligence and truth.

The validity of a logical demonstration depends then on the prior knowledge which this demonstration aims at communicating, and it is clearly false to take as the point of departure, not a direct cognition, but logic pure and simple; when man has no “visionary” – as opposed to discursive – knowledge of Being, and when he thinks only with his brain instead of “seeing” with the “heart,” all his logic will be useless to him, since he starts from an initial blindness . . . The fact that the philosophic mode of thought is centered on logic and not directly on intuition implies that intuition is left at the mercy of logic’s needs . . . Some will certainly raise the objection that traditional metaphysics, whether of the East or the West, makes use of rational argumentations like any philosophy; but an argumentation a man uses to describe to his fellow men what he knows is one thing, and an argumentation a man uses on himself because he knows nothing is quite another. This is a capital distinction for it marks the whole difference between the intellectual “visionary” and the mere “thinker” who “gropes alone through the darkness” (Descartes) and whose pride it is to deny that there could be any knowledge which does not proceed in the same fashion. [LS, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Logic (pure and simple):** Pure and simple logic is only a very indirect manner of knowing things; it is, before all else, the art of coordinating true or false data according to a given need for causality and this within the limits of a given imagination, so much so that an apparently faultless argument can yet be quite erroneous in function of the falseness of its premises; the latter normally depend not on reason or experience, but on pure intelligence and this to the very extent that the thing to be known is of an elevated order. What we are criticizing here is not the exactitude of science, far from it, but the exclusive level of this exactitude, which renders this quality inadequate and inoperative: man can measure a distance by his strides, but this does not enable him to see with his feet, if one may so express it. Metaphysics and symbolism, which alone provide the decisive keys to the knowledge of supra-sensible realities, are highly exact sciences – with an exactitude greatly exceeding that of physical facts – but these sciences lie beyond the scope of mere *ratio* and the methods it inspires in a quasi-exclusive manner. [TB, The Meaning of Ancestors]

**Logic (supralogical / illogical / acephalous / infra-logic):** Logic is nothing other than the science of mental coordination, of rational conclusion; hence it cannot attain to the universal and the transcendent by its own resources; a supralogical – but not “illogical” – dialectic based on symbolism and on analogy, and therefore descriptive rather than ratiocinative, may be harder for some people to assimilate, but it conforms more closely to transcendent realities. Avant-garde philosophy is properly an acephalous logic: it labels what is intellectually evident as “prejudice”; seeking to free itself from the servitudes of the mind, it falls into infra-logic; closing itself, above, to the light of the intellect, it opens itself, below, to the darkness of the subconscious. [LS, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Logos:** The Logos . . . is the prototype of the cosmos in the Principle, or of the world in God; and in this case the epithet does not refer to any man. [CI, The Idea of “The Best” in Religions]

Let us specify that the idea of the Logos is polyvalent: If God is “Beyond-Being” – which He never is in ordinary theology – the Logos will be creating or conceiving Being; if God is Being, the Logos will be His creating or efficient Word; if this Word is God, the Logos will be the reflection of God in the cosmos, namely the universal Intellect. [CI, The Idea of “The Best” in Religions]

The Logos – the *Avatara* – presents himself either objectively as “Divine Image,” in which case he is transcendent in relation to ordinary men, or subjectively as the Intellect, in which case he is immanent; he is then like the door towards the Divine Self, the immanent Divine Subject in our immortal substance. [RHC, Man in the Face of the Sovereign Good]

The Logos is one, but its modes of human manifestation may differ without in any way detracting from its quality as Logos. [CI, Alternations in Semitic Monotheism]

**Love:** Love is on the one hand our tendency towards God – the tendency of the accident towards the Substance – and on the other hand our consciousness of “myself” in the “other,” and of the “other” in ourselves; it is also the sense of beauty, above us and around us and in our own soul. [CI, The Question of Evangelicalism]

Love, to the extent that it transcends itself in the direction of its supernatural source, is the love of man for God and of God for man, and finally it is Beatitude without origin and without end. [TM, Reflections on Ideological Sentimentalism]

Love is the tendency towards Union: this tendency can be a movement, either towards the Immutable, the Absolute, or towards the Limitless, the Infinite. [EH, Diverse Aspects of Initiatory Alchemy]

If by the word ‘love’ the Torah and the Gospel express above all the idea of ‘union’, or of ‘will for union’, they make it clear, by the epithets that follow, that this comprises differing modes, in conformity with the diversity of man’s nature; it would be necessary then to say, not, love alone draws towards God, but rather, what draws towards God is alone love. [GDW, Love of God: Consciousness of the Real]

**Love (pure):** Pure love is not of this world of oppositions; it is by origin celestial and its end is God; it lives, as it were in itself, by its own light and in the ray of God-Love. [GDW, The Christian Tradition, Some Thoughts on its Nature]

**Lucifer:** Not to admit that which exceeds us, and not to wish to exceed oneself: that is in fact the whole program of psychologism, and it is the very definition of Lucifer. The opposite or primordial and normative attitude is: not to think except in reference to that which exceeds us, and to live but for the sake of exceeding oneself; to seek greatness where this is to be found, and not on the plane of the individual and his rebellious pettiness. In order to rejoin true greatness, man must first of all agree to pay the debt of his own pettiness by remaining small on the plane where he cannot help being small; the sense of objective reality, on the one hand, and of the absolute, on the other, does not go without a certain abnegation, and it is this abnegation in fact which allows us to be fully faithful to our human vocation. [LT, The Contradiction of Relativism]

**Macrocosm:** The macrocosm – the ensemble of worlds and cosmic cycles – is an inexhaustible realm, in accordance with the indeterminate nature of the Universal



Substance; therefore it cannot become the object of any scientific investigation claiming to lead to a polyvalent and definitive result. Otherwise said, the macrocosm is neither our visible world nor is it God: we can know creation and the Creator, or the “I” and the “Self” – with all the reservations and conditions that impose themselves as the case may demand – but it is not possible for us to know the totality of the phenomena of the Universe: the latter escapes the mind, which is especially made for knowing our world, and the Intellect, which is especially made for knowing the Absolute. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

**Magic (white / black):** In “white magic,” which is normally that of the shamans, the forces called into play, as well as the purpose of the operation, are either beneficent or else simply neutral. In cases, however, where the spirits are maleficent and where the purpose is equally so, “black magic” or sorcery is involved; in such a case, nothing is done “in God’s name,” and the link with the higher powers is broken. [FS, The Shamanism of the Red Indians]

Magic in itself is neither good nor bad, it is amoral. Magic performed in the name of the Great Spirit and with the help of good Spirits, and for good purposes, may be called “white magic”; the same art performed without appeal to the Great Spirit and with the help of bad spirits and for evil purposes, may be called “black magic” or sorcery. Sorcery has always been strongly forbidden everywhere, and it very often harms the sorcerer himself even in this life. [FS, A Message on Indian Religion]

**Mahapralaya:** The total cyclic dissolution that the Hindus call *maha-pralaya*, a dissolution that implies the annihilation of the entire Creation (*samsara*). [TUR, Universality and Particular Nature of the Christian Religion]

**Mahapralaya / Pralaya:** The difference between the “particular judgment” and the Last Judgment, or between death and the end of the world, consists in the fact that at the time of death only the soul – and not the body, which belongs to our own world – is reabsorbed in the direction of the Principle in order to be judged, whereas at the time of this world’s ending it is the world itself that is thus reabsorbed. But there is yet a third and ultimate reabsorption to be reckoned with, the one marking the end of all manifestation: for the elect, this is not an ending but an exaltation in the “Uncreated Light.”\*

(\* In Hindu terms, this is the *mahapralaya*, the great return into undifferentiation – *pralaya* being this return when applied to our world alone – and doubtless such is also the meaning of the apocatastasis of Western Antiquity and of certain gnostics.) [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

**Man:** Man is spirit incarnate; if he were only matter, he would be identified with the feet; if he were only spirit, he would be the head, that is, the Sky; he would be the Great Spirit. But the object of his existence is to be in the middle: it is to transcend matter while being situated there, and to realize the light, the Sky, starting from this intermediary level. It is true that the other creatures also participate in life, but man synthesizes them: he carries all life within himself and thus becomes the spokesman for all life, the vertical axis where life opens onto the spirit and where it becomes spirit. In all terrestrial creatures the cold

inertia of matter becomes heat, but in man alone does heat become light. [FS, A Metaphysic of Virgin Nature]

The very word “man” implies “God”, the very word “relative” implies “Absolute”. [LAW, *Religio Perennis*]

Man – insofar as he is distinct from other creatures on earth – is intelligence; and intelligence – in its principle and its plenitude – is knowledge of the Absolute; the Absolute is the fundamental content of the intelligence and determines its nature and functions. What distinguishes man from animals is not knowledge of a tree, but the concept – whether explicit or implicit – of the Absolute; it is from this that the whole hierarchy of values is derived, and hence all notion of a homogeneous world. God is the “motionless mover” of every operation of the mind, even when man – reason – makes himself out to be the measure of God.

To say that man is the measure of all things is meaningless unless one starts from the idea that God is the measure of man, or that the absolute is the measure of the relative, or again, that the universal Intellect is the measure of individual existence; nothing is fully human that is not determined by the Divine, and therefore centered on it. Once man makes of himself a measure, while refusing to be measured in turn, or once he makes definitions while refusing to be defined by what transcends him and gives him all his meaning, all human reference points disappear; cut off from the Divine, the human collapses. [LS, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

Man is first of all characterized by a central or total intelligence, and not one that is merely peripheral or partial; secondly he is characterized by a free and not merely instinctive will; and thirdly by a character capable of compassion and generosity, and not merely of egoistic reflexes.

As for animals, they cannot know what is beyond the senses, even though they may be sensitive to the sacred; they cannot choose against their instincts, even though they may instinctively make a sacrifice; they cannot transcend themselves, even though an animal species may manifest nobility.

Of man it may also be said that he is essentially capable of knowing the True, whether it be absolute or relative; he is capable of willing the Good, whether it be essential or secondary, and of loving the Beautiful, whether it be interior or exterior. In other words: the human being is substantially capable of knowing, willing and loving the Sovereign Good.

The Sovereign Good, we have said, and this is to say the Supreme Principle . . .

Starting from the idea that man is total intelligence, free will and generous soul, we arrive at this ternary: Truth, Way and Virtue; in other words: metaphysical and cosmological doctrine, spiritual method and moral quality. “Wisdom, Strength, Beauty.” [RHC, Man in the Face of the Sovereign Good]

To say that man is made of intelligence, will and sentiment, means that he is made for the Truth, the Way, and Virtue. In other words: intelligence is made for comprehension of the True; will, for concentration on the Sovereign Good; and sentiment, for conformity to the True and the Good. Instead of “sentiment,” we could also say “soul” or “faculty of loving,” for this is a fundamental dimension of man; not a weakness as it is all too often thought, but a participation in the Divine Nature, in conformity with the mystery that “God is Love.” [THC, Intelligence and Character]

It is in man's nature to be able to approach God, firstly in a direct and objective manner, secondly in an indirect but also objective manner, and thirdly in a manner that is direct and subjective: thus firstly by addressing himself to the personal God, who is outside and above us, then by addressing himself to a given human manifestation of God, and finally by finding God in the depths of his heart. This is first the transcendent God enthroned in Heaven, then the Man-God or, more generally, the Symbol and the Sacrament; and finally the immanent Self. [RHC, Man in the Face of the Sovereign Good]

Man's only possible relationship with Beyond-Being is in pure Intellection and, in principle – *Deo volente* – in contemplative concentration. The relationship with Being – and it is this alone that religions have in view – is realized through prayer, the virtues, comportment; the same relationship will be realized indirectly through an *Avatara*, or quite generally, through a Symbol. [RHC, Man in the Face of the Sovereign Good]

To say man is to say form; man is the bridge between form and essence, or between “flesh” and “spirit”. [EPW, Understanding Esoterism]

Man, like the Universe, is a fabric of determination and indetermination; the latter stemming from the Infinite, and the former from the Absolute. [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

Man is himself “made in the image of God”: only man is such a direct image, in the sense that his form is an “axial” and “ascendant” perfection and his content a totality. Man by his theomorphism is at the same time a work of art and also an artist; a work of art because he is an “image,” and an artist because this image is that of the Divine Artist. Man alone among earthly beings can think, speak and produce works; only he can contemplate and realize the Infinite. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

What defines man is that of which he alone is capable: namely total intelligence – endowed with objectivity and transcendence – free will, and generous character; or quite simply objectivity, hence adequation of the will and of sentiment as well as of intelligence . . . The animal cannot leave his state, whereas man can; strictly speaking, only he who is fully man can leave the closed system of the individuality, through participation in the one and universal Selfhood. There lies the mystery of the human vocation: what man “can,” he “must”; on this plane, to be able to is to have to, given that the capacity pertains to a positive substance. Or again, which fundamentally amounts to the same thing: to know is to be; to know That which is, and That which alone is. [RHC, Pillars of Wisdom]

We have stated above that man's prerogative is the capacity for objectivity, and that this is the fundamental criterion of human value. Strictly speaking, a man is he who “knows how to think”; whoever does not know how to think, whatever his gifts may be, is not authentically a man; that is, he is not a man in the ideal sense of the term. Too many men display intelligence as long as their thought runs in the grooves of their desires, interests and prejudices; but the moment the truth is contrary to what pleases them, their faculty of thought becomes blurred or vanishes; which is at once inhuman and “all too human.” [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

And man is so made that his intelligence has no effective value unless it be combined with a virtuous character. Besides, no virtuous man is altogether deprived of intelligence; while the intellectual capacity of an intelligent man has no value except through truth. Intelligence and virtue are in conformity with their reason for being only through their supernatural contents or archetypes; in a word, man is not fully human unless he

transcends himself, hence, in the first place, unless he masters himself. [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

Man is like a reduced image of the cosmogonic unfolding; we are made of matter, but in the center of our being is the supra-sensible and transcendent reality, the “Kingdom of Heaven”, the “eye of the heart”, the way to the Infinite. [LAW, *Maya*]

**Man (contemporary / ancient):** Contemporary man, in spite of his being marked by certain experiences due to the senescence of humanity, is spiritually soft and ineffective and intellectually ready to commit every possible betrayal, which will seem to him as summits of intelligence, whereas in reality these betrayals are far more absurd than the excesses of simplicity and emotivity of ancient man. In a general way, the man of the “last days” is a blunted creature, and the best proof of this is that the only “dynamism” of which he is still capable is that which tends downwards, and which is no more than a passivity taking advantage of cosmic gravity; it is the agitation of a man who lets himself be carried away by a torrent and who imagines that he is creating this torrent himself by his agitation. [SVQ, Ellipsis and Hyperbolism in Arab Rhetoric]

**Man (noble / base):** The noble man is one who masters himself and loves to master himself; the base man is one who does not master himself and shrinks in horror from mastering himself.\*

(\* It may be added that the noble man looks at what is essential in phenomena, not at what is accidental; he sees the overall worth in a creature and the intention of the Creator – not some more or less humiliating accident – and he thereby anticipates the perception of the Divine Qualities through forms. This is what is expressed by the words of the Apostle “for the pure all things are pure”.) [EPW, Sincerity: What it Is and What it Is Not]

**Man (noble / holy):** The noble man is one who dominates himself; the holy man is one who transcends himself. [EPW, Dimensions of the Human Vocation]

**Man (noble / vile):** The noble man respects, admires and loves in virtue of an essence that he perceives, whereas the vile man underestimates or scorns in virtue of an accident; the sense of the sacred is opposed to the instinct to belittle. [THC, Intelligence and Character]

The noble man feels the need to admire, to venerate, to worship; the vile man on the contrary tends to belittle, even to mock, which is the way the devil sees things; but it is also diabolical to admire what is evil, whereas it is normal and praiseworthy to despise evil as such, for the truth has precedence over everything. The primacy of the true also clearly implies that essential truths have precedence over secondary truths, as the absolute has precedence over the relative. The definition of man according to immortality has precedence over the definition of man according to earthly life. [TM, Two Visions of Things]

**Man (original):** Original man was not a simian being barely capable of speaking and standing upright; he was a quasi-immaterial being enclosed in an aura still celestial, but deposited on earth; an aura similar to the “chariot of fire” of Elijah or the “cloud” that

enveloped Christ's ascension. That is to say, our conception of the origin of mankind is based on the doctrine of the projection of the archetypes *ab intra*; thus our position is that of classical emanationism – in the Neoplatonic or gnostic sense of the term – which avoids the pitfall of anthropomorphism while agreeing with the theological conception of *creatio ex nihilo*. [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

**Man (primordial / fallen):** Primordial man knew by himself that God is; fallen man does not know it; he must learn it. Primordial man was always aware of God; fallen man, while having learned that God is, must force himself to be aware of it always. Primordial man loved God more than the world; fallen man loves the world more than God, he must therefore practice renunciation. Primordial man saw God everywhere, he had the sense of archetypes and of essences and was not enclosed in the alternative “flesh or spirit”; fallen man sees God nowhere, he sees only the world as such, not as the manifestation of God. [RHC, On Intelligence]

**Man (spiritual / worldly):** The spiritual man is one who transcends himself and loves to transcend himself; the worldly man remains horizontal and detests the vertical dimension. [EPW, Sincerity: What it Is and What it Is Not]

**Man (supreme function):** Something must be said about the priority of contemplation. As one knows, Islam defines this supreme function of man in the *hadith* about *ihsan* which orders man to “adore *Allah* as though thou didst see Him,” since “if thou dost not see Him, He nonetheless seeth thee.” Christianity, from its angle, calls first for total love of God and only after this for love of the neighbor; now it must be insisted, in the interest of the first love, that this second love could not be total because love of ourselves is not so; whether *ego* or *alter*, man is not God. In any case it follows from all traditional definitions of man's supreme function that a man capable of contemplation has no right to neglect it but is on the contrary called to dedicate himself to it; in other words, he sins neither against God nor against his neighbor – to say the least – in following the example of Mary in the gospels and not that of Martha, for contemplation contains action and not the reverse. If in point of fact action can be opposed to contemplation, it is nevertheless not opposed to it in principle, nor is action called for beyond what is necessary or required by the duties of a man's station in life. In abasing ourselves from humility, we must not also abase things which transcend us, for then our virtue loses all its value and meaning; to reduce spirituality to a “humble” utilitarianism – thus to a disguised materialism – is to give offense to God, on the one hand because it is like saying it is not worthwhile to be overly preoccupied with God, and on the other hand because it means relegating the divine gift of intelligence to the rank of the superfluous. [UI, The Path]

**“Man of Faith” / “Man of Gnosis”:** It is the difference between the believer, who in all things has in view moral and mystical efficacy to the point of sometimes needlessly violating the laws of thought, and the gnostic, who lives above all from principial certitudes and who is so made that these certitudes determine his behavior and contribute powerfully to his alchemical transformation. [SME, Confessional Speculation: Intentions and Impasses]

**Manifestation:** Manifestation is not the Principle, yet it is the Principle by participation, in virtue of its “non-inexistence”; and Manifestation – the word indicates this – is the Principle manifested, but without being able to be the Principle in itself. [SVQ, The Quintessential Esoterism of Islam]

**Mantra:** In connection with the mystery of inwardness . . . we should perhaps mention here the power of the *mantra*, of the word in its “uncreated” essence – thus *a priori* inward or cardiac – and interiorizing from the standpoint of the outward ego. The *mantra* is a revealed substitute of the primordial sound; purifying and saving, it is a manifestation of the *Shakti* as power of union. [RHC, *Mahashakti*]

**Mask:** In ordinary language, the word “mask” is synonymous with “false appearance,” hence with insincerity; this is plausible from the standpoint of ordinary psychology, but it is to lose sight of the fact that there are sacred masks and priestly vestments which express either what transcends the wearer, or on the contrary express his transcendent substance itself. It is thus, moreover, that in historical religions an *upaya* serves as the vestment of the “naked truth,” the primordial, perennial and universal religion: symbolism transmits the heavenly Message and at the same time dissimulates the provisionally unassimilable mystery. [PM, The Play of Masks]

**Mask / Veil:** By the veil one wishes to appear “less than one is” since one desires to “vanish”; by the mask on the contrary, one wishes to appear to be “more than one is,” since one’s intention is to express something that one is not, unless the mask serves to manifest the very “heart” of the wearer and to specify thereby a personal value – which actually is transpersonal – and which otherwise would remain invisible. [PM, The Play of Masks]

**Materialism:** Nothing is more contradictory than to deny the spirit, or even simply the psychic element, in favor of matter alone, for it is the spirit that denies, whereas matter remains inert and unconscious. The fact that matter can be thought about proves precisely that materialism contradicts itself at its starting point, rather as with Pyrrhonism, for which it is true that there is no truth, or with relativism, for which all is relative except this affirmation. [PM, In the Face of Contingency]

The flagrant contradiction of materialism is the negation of the spirit by means of the spirit; that of existentialism, is making use of this negation as a basis from which to dismantle the normal functions of intelligence under the pretext of defending the rights of “existence” or the “concrete” against “abstraction.” “The more he blasphemes, the more he praises God,” says Eckhart; materialist and concretist ideologies, by the very excess of their inanity, bear witness indirectly to the reality of the spirit and consequently also to its primacy. [FDH, Aspects of the Theophanic Phenomenon of Consciousness]

**Matter:** Matter is the sensible manifestation of existence itself . . . Matter extends – starting from its base, ether – from extreme subtlety to extreme solidity; one could say: from substantiality to accidentality. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

Matter, in fact, refers in the final analysis to the divine Substance. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

Matter is the final point of the descent of the objective pole. [FDH, Consequences Flowing from the Mystery of Subjectivity]

Matter, though divine inasmuch as it forms bodily creatures, nonetheless includes an aspect of hostility to the Spirit. [TB, The Mythology of Shinto]

Matter . . . is nothing else but the extreme limit or precipitation-point in the process of manifestation, at least for our world; consequently, it is the “lowest” thing to be found within that reality that concerns us. It might nevertheless be asked whether this lowest thing is not on the contrary a consciousness of sorts, namely the principle of evil, that very Mara who tempted the Buddha, or Satan who tempted Christ? This difficulty is resolved if one distinguishes in the cosmos two poles, one existential, blind and passive and the other intellectual, therefore conscious and active: matter is the point of precipitation in relation to the existential pole alone, whereas the intellectual pole gives rise, at the extreme limit of the process of flight from God, to the personifiable force, or that perverted consciousness, which is Satan or Mara. In other words, matter is the existence most remote from pure Being, and the devil is the consciousness most remote from the divine Intellect; and just as on the intellectual plane this remoteness can only spell subversion or opposition, that intelligence which is most remote from the Absolute will be the one that denies the Absolute as “intelligently,” or rather as “consciously,” as possible. Existence – the *materia secunda* or *natura naturata* – by drawing away from pure Being becomes hardened and at the same time segmented; matter is the “heaviest” and the most discontinuous, the most “broken” existence there is – seen always from the point of view of the human state, for there are other worlds and other limits of manifestation – and Satan is the most subversive, the most perverse intelligence; compared with Satan, matter – though hardened and corrupted – remains innocent. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

As for matter, it is, still more directly than the subtle or animic substance, universal substance ‘congealed’ or ‘crystallised’ by the cold proximity of ‘nothingness’; this ‘nothingness’ the process of manifestation could never reach, for the simple reason that absolute ‘nothingness’ does not exist, or rather that it exists only by the way of ‘indication’, ‘direction’ or ‘tendency’ in the work of creation itself; an image of this is seen in the fact that cold is only a privation and thus has no positive reality, though it transforms water into snow and ice, as if it had the power to produce bodies. [GDW, Seeing God Everywhere]

**Matter (physical substance):** Physical substance – in its “present” and “post-Edenic” state – is in reality but a kind of “accidental” crystallization of the subtle substance (the *sukshma sharira* of the Hindus); whatever its consistency or its quality, it is none other than the extreme limit or “point of precipitation” – for our sensible world – of the demiurgic process of manifestation. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

**Maya:** *Maya* is an exclusively Vedantic term, often rendered as “universal illusion”, or “cosmic illusion”, but she is also “divine play”. She is the great theophany, the “unveiling” of God “in Himself and by Himself” as the Sufis would say. *Maya* may be likened to a magic fabric woven from a warp that veils and a weft that unveils; she is a

quasi-incomprehensible intermediary between the finite and the Infinite – at least from our point of view as creatures – and as such she has all the multi-coloured ambiguity appropriate to her part-cosmic, part-divine nature. [LAW, *Maya*]

It has been stated that from the standpoint of the Self there is no confrontation between a Principle and a manifestation, there is nothing but the Self alone, the pure and absolute Subject which is its own Object. But, it will be asked, what then becomes of the world that we still cannot help perceiving? . . . The world is *Atma*, the Self, in the guise of *Maya*; more especially it is *Maya* insofar as the latter is distinct from *Atma*, that goes without saying, for otherwise the verbal distinction would not exist; but while being *Maya*, it is implicitly, and necessarily, *Atma*, in rather the same way that ice is water or is “not other” than water. In the Self, in the direct or absolute sense, there is no trace of *Maya*, save the dimension of infinitude . . . from which *Maya* indirectly proceeds, but at the degree of *Maya* the latter is “not other” than the Self; . . . since the polarities are surpassed. *Maya* is the reverberation of the Self in the direction of nothingness, or the totality of the reverberations of the Self; the innumerable relative subjects “are” the Self under the aspect of “Consciousness” (*Chit*), and the innumerable relative objects are once again the Self, but this time under the aspect of “Being” (*Sat*). Their reciprocal relationships, or their “common life,” constitute “Beatitude” (*Ananda*), in manifested mode, of course; this is made up of everything in the world which is expansion, enjoyment, or movement. [LT, The Servant and Union]

From a certain point of view, *Maya* is the *Shakti* of *Atma* just as Infinitude is the complement of the Absolute, or as All-Possibility prolongs Necessary Being. From another point of view, *Maya* is relativity or illusion, and is not “on the left” but “below.” As the universal archetype of femininity, *Maya* is both Eve and Mary: “psychic” and seductive woman, and “pneumatic” and liberating woman; descendent or ascendant, alienating or reintegrating genius. *Maya* projects souls in order to be able to free them, and projects evil in order to be able to overcome it; or again: on the one hand, She projects her veil in order to be able to manifest the potentialities of the Supreme Good; and, on the other, She veils good in order to be able to unveil it, and thus to manifest a further good: that of the prodigal son’s return, or of Deliverance. [SME, Dimensions of Omnipotence]

Opposing and inverting differentiation is due to the dark pole of Relativity, of *Maya*; this is the metaphysical basis of the “fall of the angels.” *Maya* brings forth the world by “radiation of love” and by virtue of Divine Infinitude but also – through its other dimension – by centrifugal passion both dispersive and compressive; thus there is at the root of the world the luminous Logos on the one hand, and the tenebrous demiurge on the other hand; and the ultimate Cause of this second pole is, we repeat, that the Infinite cannot exclude what appears to be opposed to it, but which, in reality, contributes to its radiation. [FDH, The Problem of Possibility]

The sun, not being God, must prostrate itself every evening before the throne of *Allah*; so it is said in Islam. Similarly *Maya*, not being *Atma*, can only affirm herself intermittently; the worlds spring from the divine Word and return into it. Instability is the penalty of contingency; to ask how we can know why there will be an end of the world and a resurrection amounts to asking why a respiratory phase stops at a precise moment to be followed by the opposite phase, or why a wave withdraws from the shore after submerging it, or again, why the drops from a fountain fall back to the ground. We are



divine possibilities projected into the night of existence, and diversified by reason of that very projection, as water scatters into drops when it is launched into space, and also as it is crystallized when it is captured by cold.

The very notion of cosmic “manifestation” – or of “creation” – implies by way of consequence that of “reintegration”. [LAW, *Maya*]

A Red Indian, speaking of the “Great Spirit”, very rightly called attention to the fact that “all that the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The Heavens are round . . . even the seasons form a great circle in their succession, and they always come back to their point of departure”. Thus it is that all that exists proceeds by way of gyratory movements, everything springs from the Absolute and returns to the Absolute; it is because the relative cannot be conceived otherwise than as a “circular emergence” – therefore transitory because returning to its source – from the Absolute . . . relativity is a circle, and the first of all circles; *Maya* can be described symbolically as a great circular movement and also as a spherical state . . . According to the degree of its conformity to its Origin, the creature will be retained or rejected by the Creator; and Existence in its totality will finally return, with Being itself, into the infinity of the Self. *Maya* returns to *Atma*, although strictly speaking nothing can be taken away from *Atma* nor consequently return thereto . . . *Atma* became *Maya* so that *Maya* might become *Atma*. [LAW, *Maya*]

*Maya* includes not only the whole of manifestation, she is also affirmed already *a fortiori* “within” the Principle; the divine Principle “desiring to be known” – or “desiring to know” – stoops to the unfolding of its inward infinity, an unfolding at first potential and afterwards outward or cosmic. The relationship “God-world”, “Creator-creature”, “Principle-manifestation”, would be inconceivable if it were not prefigured in God, independently of any question of creation. [LAW, *Maya*]

And let us recall that *Maya* does not coincide purely and simply with the manifested Universe, since – beyond the Universe – it encompasses Being itself, that is to say that the discernment between “God” and the “world” is metaphysically less rigorous and less fundamental than that between *Atma* and *Maya*, “Reality” and “illusion.” [RHC, Pillars of Wisdom]

The protagonists of Vishnuism, whose sanctity is obviously no more in dispute than that of the great spokesman of *kalam*, see fit to assert against the *Maya* of Shankara that souls, like the physical world, are real – something that Shankara never denied, for the notion of *Maya* does not contradict relative reality, but simply annuls it at the level of Absolute Reality; now it is precisely this spirit of alternatives, this inability to reconcile apparent antinomies on a higher plane, as well as the failure to understand relativity and absoluteness, which are common to Semitic exoterism and Hindu bhaktism. [CI, Dilemmas of Moslem Scholasticism]

For the Vedantists, *Maya* is in a sense more mysterious, or less obvious than *Atma*. [LT, The Servant and Union]

If there were no *Maya*, *Atma* would not be *Atma*. [SME, Creation as a Divine Quality]

As for *Maya*, it proceeds necessarily from the very nature of *Atma* – on pain of being a pure impossibility – and proves the Infinitude, All-Possibility and Radiation of *Atma*; *Maya* exteriorizes and unfolds the innumerable potentialities of *Atma*. *Maya* cannot not be, and to deny it is to be unaware of the nature of the supreme Self. [THC, Primacy of Intellection]

Cosmic *Maya*, and with all the more reason, evil, is in the final analysis the possibility of Being not to be. All-Possibility must, by definition and on pain of contradiction, include its own impossibility; the Infinite must realize the finite on pain of not being the Infinite. [CI, On the Divine Will]

There is a *Maya* which is divine and attracts to God, another which is satanic and takes away from God, and an intermediary one which *a priori* is innocently passional and seeks only to be itself, so that it remains provisionally neutral in relation to the other two qualities. [SME, Creation as a Divine Quality]

An essential distinction must be made between the *Maya* that is divine (= *Ishvara*), another that is celestial (= *Buddhi* and *Svarga*), and a third that humanly speaking is “earthly” but which, in reality, encompasses the whole domain of transmigration (*Samsara*), the round of births and deaths. One can likewise distinguish in *Maya* an objective mode, which refers to the universe surrounding us and partly transcending us, and a subjective mode which refers to the experiences of our ego; in principle, man can act upon the magic of the world by dominating the magic of his soul.

Some near synonyms of the term *Maya* – which roughly signifies “magic power” – are *lila*, “play,” and *moha*, “illusion”; *Maha-Moha* is the “Great Illusion,” namely Manifestation in its full extension, metacosmic as well as cosmic. [SME, Dimensions of Omnipotence]

*Atma* became *Maya* so that *Maya* might become *Atma*. [LAW, *Maya*]

**Meditation:** The contact between man and God here becomes contact between the intelligence and Truth, or relative truths contemplated in view of the Absolute . . . Meditation acts on the one hand upon the intelligence, in which it awakens certain consubstantial “memories,” and on the other hand upon the subconscious imagination which ends by incorporating in itself the truths meditated upon, resulting in a fundamental and as it were organic process of persuasion . . . Meditation – as defined in the language of the Vedanta – is essentially “investigation” (*vichara*) leading to the assimilation of theoretical truth, and then discernment (*viveka*) between the Real and the unreal. [SW, Modes of Prayer]

Contrary to what is too often stated, meditation cannot of itself provoke illumination; rather, its object is negative in the sense that it has to remove inner obstacles that stand in the way, not of a new, but of a pre-existent and “innate” knowledge of which it has to become aware. Thus meditation may be compared not so much to a light kindled in a dark room, as to an opening made in the wall of that room to allow the light to enter – a light which preexists outside and is in no way produced by the action of piercing the wall . . . The role of meditation is thus to open the soul, firstly to the grace which separates it from the world, secondly to that which brings it nearer to God and thirdly to that which, so to speak, reintegrates it into God. [EH, On Meditation]

**Meditation / Concentration / Prayer:** These three words epitomize the spiritual life, while at the same time indicating its principal modes. Meditation, from our standpoint, is an activity of the intelligence in view of understanding universal truths; concentration, for its part, is an activity of the will in view of assimilating these truths or realities existentially, as it were; and prayer in its turn is an activity of the soul directed towards God. [THC, Fundamental Keys]

**Metaphysic:** The science of the Absolute and of the true nature of things. [LT, Rationalism, Real and Apparent]

**Metaphysic / Philosophy:** In reality, the transcendent character of metaphysic makes it independent of any purely human mode of thought. In order to define clearly the difference between the two modes in question, it may be said that philosophy proceeds from reason (which is a purely individual faculty), whereas metaphysic proceeds exclusively from the Intellect. [TUR, Preface]

**Metaphysical / Mystical:** “Metaphysical”: concerning universal realities considered objectively. “Mystical”: concerning the same realities considered subjectively, that is, in relation to the contemplative soul, insofar as they enter operatively into contact with it. [LT, Understanding and Believing]

. . . the two wisdoms, the one metaphysical and the other mystical; it would be entirely wrong to take certain mystical or unitive formulations as authority for denying the legitimacy of intellectual definitions, wrong at least for anyone who is himself outside the special state in question; for in fact it happens that certain contemplatives, speaking in the name of direct experience, reject doctrinal formulations, these having become for them “words,” which does not always prevent them from putting forward other formulations of the same order and possibly of the same value. Here we must avoid confusing the strictly intellectual or doctrinal plane, which has all the legitimacy and so all the efficacy conferred on it at its level by the nature of things, with the plane of inner experience, the plane of ontological perceptions or of mystical “perfumes” or “tastes.” It would be as wrong as to dispute the adequacy of a geographical map because one had undertaken an actual journey or, for example, to pretend that because one had travelled from North to South, the Mediterranean is situated “above” and not “below,” as shown on the map. [UI, The Path]

**Metaphysical Certitude (foundation):** The foundation of metaphysical certitude is the coincidence between truth and our being; a coincidence that no ratiocination could invalidate. Contingent things are proven by factors situated within their order of contingency, whereas things deriving from the Absolute become clear by their participation in the Absolute, hence by a “superabundance of light” – according to Saint Thomas – which amounts to saying that they are proven by themselves. In other words, universal truths draw their evidence not from our contingent thought, but from our transpersonal being, which constitutes the substance of our spirit and guarantees the adequacy of intellection. [PM, In the Face of Contingency]

**Metaphysical Discernment / Contemplative Concentration:** Metaphysical discernment is a “separation” between *Atma* and *Maya*; contemplative concentration, or a unifying consciousness, is on the other hand a “union” of *Maya* with *Atma*. Discernment is separative\* and is what “doctrine” is concerned with; concentration is unitive and is what “method” is concerned with; “faith” is related to the first element, and the “love of God” to the second.

(\* This is what the Arabic word *furqan* signifies, namely, “qualitative differentiation”, from *faraqa*, to separate, to discern, to bifurcate. It is well known that *Furqan* is one of the names of the Koran.) [LAW, *Religio Perennis*]

**Metaphysical Truth:** Metaphysical Truth is both expressible and inexpressible: inexpressible, it is not however unknowable, for the Intellect opens onto the Divine Order and therefore encompasses all that is; and expressible, it becomes crystallized in formulations which are all they ought to be since they communicate all that is necessary or useful to our mind. Forms are doors to the essences, in thought and in language as well as in all other symbolisms. [SME, Introduction: Epistemological Premises]

**Metaphysics:** *A priori*, metaphysics is abstract; but it would not be what it is if it did not give rise *a posteriori* to concrete prolongations on the plane of our human and earthly existence. The Real encompasses all that is; the consciousness of the Real implies all that we are. [PM, Being Conscious of the Real]

**Metaphysics (aim):** Without a doubt, metaphysics aims in the first place at the comprehension of the whole Universe, which extends from the Divine Order to the terrestrial contingencies – this is the reciprocity between *Atma* and *Maya* – yet it offers in addition intellectually less demanding but humanly crucial openings; which is all the more important in that we live in a world wherein the abuse of intelligence replaces wisdom. [PM, Foreword]

**Metaphysics (two dimensions):** Metaphysics has it were two great dimensions, the one “ascending” and dealing with universal principles and the distinction between the Real and the illusory, and the other “descending” and dealing on the contrary with the divine life in creaturely situations, and thus with the fundamental and secret “divinity” of beings and of things, for “all is *Atma*.” The first dimension can be called “static” and is related to the first *Shahadah* and to “extinction” (*fana*), or “annihilation” (*istihlak*), whereas the second appears as “dynamic,” and is related to the second *Shahadah* and to “permanence” (*baqa*). By comparison with the first dimension, the second is mysterious and paradoxical, seeming at certain points to contradict the first, or again, it is like a wine with which the Universe becomes intoxicated. But it must never be lost sight of that this second dimension is already implicitly contained within the first – even as the second *Shahadah* is derived from the first, namely from the “point of intersection” *illa* – so that static, elementary or separative metaphysics is sufficient unto itself and does not deserve any reproach from those who savor the intoxicating paradoxes of the unitive experience. That which, in the first *Shahadah*, is the word *illa* will be, in the first metaphysics, the concept of universal causality: we start out from the idea that the world is false since the Principle alone is real, but since we are in the world we add the reservation that the world reflects God; and it is from this reservation that springs forth the second metaphysics, from whose point of view the first is like an insufficient dogmatism. Here we see in a sense the confrontation between the perfections of incorruptibility and of life: the one cannot be had without the other, and it would be a pernicious optical error to despise doctrine in the name of realization, or to deny the latter in the name of the former. However, since the first error is more dangerous than the second – the second moreover

hardly arises in pure metaphysics and, if it does, consists in overestimating the letter of the doctrine in its formal particularism – we would recall for the glory of the doctrine this saying of Christ: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” The Hindu, or Hindu-Buddhist, theory of the *upayas* perfectly takes account of these dimensions of the spiritual realm: concepts are true according to the levels to which they relate; it is possible to transcend them, but they never cease to be true at their own level, and that level is an aspect of Absolute Reality.

In the sight of the Absolute, envisaged as pure Self and unthinkable Aseity, metaphysical doctrine is assuredly tinged with relativity, but it nonetheless offers absolutely sure reference points and “adequate approximations” such as the human spirit could not do without; and this is what the simplifiers in pursuit of the “concrete” are incapable of understanding. Doctrine is to the Truth what the circle or the spiral is to the center. [UI, The Path]

**Metempsychosis:** “Transmigration” . . . (is) not to be confused with metempsychosis, whereby psychic elements – perishable in principle – graft themselves upon the soul of a living person, which may give the illusion of a “reincarnation.” The phenomenon is benefic or malefic according to whether the psychism is good or bad; that of a saint or that of a sinner. [SME, Universal Eschatology]

**Microcosm:** The human microcosm is like a circle, the center of which is situated on the circumference of a larger circle, namely the sensible macrocosm, and the center of this second circle in its turn is situated on a still larger circumference, representing the total Macrocosm. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

**Miracle:** Miracles denote an interference of the marvellous in the sensory realm. [GDW, The Sense of the Absolute in Religions]

This phenomenon has in itself nothing mysterious or problematical about it: the so-called natural laws of a lower degree of Existence can always be suspended through the intervention of a higher degree, whence the perfectly logical term “supernatural”: but this degree also has its laws, which means that the miracle is “natural” on the universal scale, while being “supernatural” on the earthly scale. The purpose of the miraculous phenomenon is the same as that of the Revelation which it accompanies or as a result of which, or in the shadow of which, it is produced: to elicit or to confirm faith. [LT, Oriental Dialectic and Its Roots in Faith]

The miraculous is that which is due to a direct, thus vertical intervention of a heavenly Power, and not to a horizontal progression of causality. If one extends the notion of “nature” to all that exists, miracles too are “natural,” but in that case words would become meaningless, as it would then be impossible to make the essential distinction between blind or unconscious causes and the supra-conscious Cause, the source of all consciousness and of all power. Scientists confuse the miraculous with the irrational and the arbitrary. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

**Morality:** The notion of a moral qualification brings us to the question of the meaning of morality in itself, or in other words, the meaning of the distinction between what is “good” and what is “evil.” Independently of anything we may have heard on this subject,

we would say this: in normal conditions, that may be considered to be good which, first, is in conformity with the Divine Attraction, second, is in conformity with universal Equilibrium, and third, provides a positive result in regard to the ultimate destiny of man; and that may be considered to be evil which is contrary to the Divine Attraction and universal Equilibrium, and produces a negative result. These are concrete realities, and not sentimental evaluations or other reactions of human subjectivity.

Moreover, the sense of what is good or evil may be derived quite simply from the fact that Heaven has ordered or permitted one thing and has forbidden another. [LT, The Problem of Qualifications]

**Morality (double significance):** That is to say on the distinction between what is good according to the law and what is good according to virtue. The two do not always coincide, for a base man can obey the law, be it only through simple constraint, while a noble man may be obliged, exceptionally, to transgress a law out of virtue, to put pity above duty, for example.\* Legal or objective morality has its source in a given Revelation and also in the realities of social existence, whereas innate or subjective morality derives, on the contrary, from our theomorphic substance, or from the Intellect, as Socrates would say, and it is obviously this intrinsic morality that we have in view when we speak of moral qualification.

(\* Or on the contrary to put, without pity, spiritual duty above social duty, when the alternative is forced upon him: “Honour thy father and thy mother,” but also: “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother . . . he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26.) In other words: “He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37).) [LT, The Problem of Qualifications]

**Morality (intrinsic / extrinsic):** There is an intrinsic morality and an extrinsic morality. The first concerns innate laws, disposed with a view to the sacerdotal nature of man and also with a view to the equilibrium of society;\* the second concerns particular laws, disposed in accordance with the objective and subjective conditions of a given traditional humanity. Intrinsic or essential morality comprises the virtues; extrinsic morality, which alone is relative, concerns actions. It is the confusion of actions in themselves with inward values which constitutes moralism and gives rise to hypocrisy,<sup>^</sup> and it goes without saying that the moral qualification refers, not to actions as such, but to the virtues.

The two great dimensions, the one vertical and the other horizontal, are interdependent. One cannot follow the Divine Attraction without conforming to the cosmic Equilibrium, and one cannot conform to this Equilibrium without following the Divine Attraction, whence the two supreme commandments, namely, love of God and love of the neighbor, in which are found “the Law and the Prophets.”

(\* “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

<sup>^</sup> A typical example of moralism is the altruism of Vivekananda with its absurd notion of “egoistic salvation”: it is in the nature of heresy that it should obstinately inflate a relative principle the meaning of which has been forgotten and the aberrant exaggeration of which is presented as an end in itself.) [LT, The Problem of Qualifications]

**Morality (two sources):** Morality has two sources, the revealed Law and the voice of conscience. The Law . . . has in view the Attraction and the Equilibrium of which we have spoken, in the form of an adaptation to a particular world. Conscience, for its part, naturally takes account of the legitimate interest of one's neighbor or of the collectivity as well as the interest of the soul facing God; that is to say, the conscience of the normal man, while at the same time determined by a sacred Law, is founded on the evident fact that "the other" is also an "I" and that our own "I" is also "another," a truth that bears fruit to the extent that man is impartial and generous. But there is also, and more fundamentally, the evident truth that man does not have his end in himself, that he depends, like the whole world, on a Cause which determines everything and which is the measure of everything, and from which we cannot escape. We can only draw close to this Cause for the sake of our happiness, or remove ourselves therefrom to our loss.\*

(\* "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me . . . Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these ye did it not to me" (Matthew 25:40 and 45). By these words, which identify every ego with the Divine Ego, Christ testifies to the oneness of the Self, which dwells in every subjectivity.) [LT, The Problem of Qualifications]

**Morality / Virtue:** All that has been said up to this point makes possible an explanation of the meaning of the virtues and of moral laws; the latter are styles of action conforming to particular spiritual perspectives and to particular material and mental conditions, while the virtues on the contrary represent intrinsic beauties fitted into these styles and finding through them their realization. Every virtue and every morality is a mode of equilibrium or, to be more precise, it is a way of participating, even to the detriment of some outward and false equilibrium, in the universal Equilibrium; by remaining at the center, a man escapes from the vicissitudes of the moving periphery, and this is the meaning of Taoist "non-action." Morality is a way of acting, whereas virtue is a way of being – a way of being wholly oneself, beyond the ego, or of being simply That which is. This could also be expressed as follows: the various moralities are at the same time frameworks for the virtues and their application to collectivities; the virtue of the collectivity is its equilibrium determined by Heaven. Moralities are diverse, but virtue as it has been here defined, is everywhere the same, because man is everywhere man. This moral unity of humankind goes hand in hand with its intellectual unity: perspectives and dogmas differ, but truth is one. [UI, The Path]

**Moslem:** The Moslem . . . consists in opening out into a totality, in 'surrendering' (*aslama*, whence the word *islam*) his will to God, in 'abandoning' it in the mould of a divine Will which encompasses the whole human personality, from the body to the spirit, and from birth to the encounter with God. [GDW, The Sense of the Absolute in Religions]

**Muhammadan Substance:** The Muhammadan Substance is the love of God combined, by the nature of things, with contemplativeness and nobleness of character; as also with a sense of outward or practical values, such as the beauty of forms, and cleanliness, or the rules of propriety infused with generosity and dignity. The sense of outward things – although in no wise "vain" – stems in the final analysis from the emphasis on

“discernment,” or from the element “Truth”; for one who discerns initially between the Absolute and the contingent, between necessary Being and possible being – and this is the very content of the Shahadah – will readily apply analogous discernments in the sphere of contingency. As for the sense of beauty, it is related to the mystery of Immanence. [IFA, The Mystery of the Prophetic Substance]

**Mystery:** Mystery is the essence of truth which cannot be adequately conveyed through language – the vehicle of discursive thought – but which may suddenly be made plain in an illuminating flash through a symbol, such as a key word, a mystic sound, or an image whose suggestive action may be scarcely graspable. [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]

Mystery is as it were the inner infinity of certitude, the latter could never exhaust the former. [UI, Islam]

By ‘mystery’ we do not mean something incomprehensible in principle – unless it be on the purely rational level – but something which opens on to the Infinite, or which is envisaged in this respect, so that intelligibility becomes limitless and humanly inexhaustible. A mystery is always ‘something of God’. [GDW, Mysteries of Christ and of the Virgin]

**Mystical / Mysticism:** The terms “mystical” and “mysticism,” which cannot be passed over in silence here, lend themselves readily to misuse by being applied to everything inward or intuitive at whatever level. In reality these words denote all inward contact (other than the purely mental), with realities that are directly or indirectly Divine; and it is only right that they should suggest above all a spirituality of love because they are European terms and Europe is Christian. Their association with the idea of the “irrational” is clearly false; spiritual intuition is not irrational but suprarational. In any case, it seems to us that the only legitimate meaning one can give to the word “mystical” is, first, that traditionally given to it by theology and, second, the meaning proposed above, which compels acceptance by extension, or rather by considerations of etymology; this usage clearly cannot be associated with ill-intentioned attempts to devalue the word or with cases of simple misuse of language. [LT, The Contradiction of Relativism]

**Mysticism:** The word ‘mysticism’ denotes anything that refers in one way or another to a supra-rational communication with Divinity; since this word is European it must of necessity coincide with the mode of spirituality known in the West, which is a way of love. The word is, however, often used to designate, either a way that is without a method properly so called or one that is characterized by a predominance of a moralistic and sentimental individualism. It may be added that in German the word *Mystik* has the meaning of spirituality whereas *Mystizismus* means only a play of fantasies, and that in French *Mystique* refers to true and *Mysticisme* refers to false mysticism. The theological definition of ‘mystical states’ is doubtless too extrinsic, and this is explained by the fact that the way of love is nurtured on faith and asceticism and not on intellection, and is centered on grace and not on knowledge. [SPHF, Contours of the Spirit]

**Myth:** A myth is a doctrinal content and not a concrete spiritual force, a “saving emanation.” [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]



The mythological wording of a traditional perspective is essentially determined by a spiritual and social interest which in an ultimate sense coincides with the truth; this it does by definition. The sacred wording contains in its own way the infinite Truth, failing which it could not serve an interest concerning that very Truth. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

The notion of myth usually evokes a picture of traditional stories charged with a wealth of symbolism and more or less devoid of historical foundation; however, in defining myth one should not lay undue stress on this supposed lack of historical basis, for the function of myth is such that once it has been properly understood the question of historicity ceases to have any practical importance. What guarantees the spiritual function of a sacred story is its symbolism on the one hand, and its traditional character on the other. In the case of stories belonging to the Mahayana, it is the Buddha who stands surety for the reality and hence for the efficacy of the story; that is to say, if he does not guarantee absolutely the historical truth of the facts, at least he guarantees the certainty of their spiritual truth, which takes precedence over the historical aspect, and he guarantees also their power of salvation which is the reason for the myth's existence. [TB, Dharmakara's Vow]

**Naïvety:** A naïve outlook is often attributed to everyone who lived in the past. There is no simpler way of exalting oneself, and it is all the easier and more tempting because it is founded on accurate though fragmentary assessments which can be made the most of, with the help of false generalizations and arbitrary interpretations, by being related to an assumed all-embracing evolutionary progress. But the word "naïve" can be understood in more than one way, and so can other words that can be used in a more or less comparable sense. It would be better if people who use such words would first agree on what they are talking about. If to be naïve is to be direct and spontaneous, to know nothing of dissimulation and subterfuge and also no doubt nothing of certain experiences, then unmodernized peoples certainly possess – or possessed – that kind of naïvety; but if it is merely to be without intelligence or critical sense and to be open to all kinds of deception, then there is certainly no reason to suppose that our contemporaries are any less naïve than their forbears.

However that may be, there are few things that the "insulated" being who calls himself "modern man" endures less readily than the risk of appearing naïve; everything else can go by the board so long as the feeling of not being duped by anything is safeguarded. In reality the acme of naïvety is to believe that man can escape from naïvety on every plane, and that it is possible for him to be integrally intelligent by his own efforts; he who seeks to gain all things by cleverness ends by losing all in blindness and ineffectuality . . . One must get rid of the notion of a hopelessly naïve Middle Ages versus a breathtakingly intelligent twentieth century; against that view must be set the fact that history does not abolish simplicity of outlook, but merely displaces it, together with the fact that the most flagrant of naïveties is to fail to see naïvety where it exists . . . An ancient writer may give an impression of simplicity of outlook, but if he does so, it is largely because he had not got to take account of a thousand errors still unknown nor of a thousand possibilities of misinterpretation . . . seeing that the writer in question could in a large measure dispense with fine shades of meaning; words still possessed a freshness and a fullness, or a magic, which it is difficult for us to imagine, living as we do in a climate of verbal inflation . . .

And, the world being what it is, one is doubtless not guilty of a truism in adding that it is better to go to heaven artlessly than to go intelligently to hell.

. . . However that may be, there is naïvety everywhere and there always has been, and man cannot escape from it, unless he can surpass his humanity; in this truth lies the key and the solution of the problem. For what matters is, not the question of knowing whether the dialectic or the demeanour of Plato or of anyone else are naïve or not, or whether they are so to a certain extent and no farther (and one would like to know by what absolute standards any such question could be settled), but exclusively the fact that the sage or the saint has an inward access to concrete Truth; the most unpretentious formulation – doubtless the most “childish” in some people’s eyes – can be the threshold of a Knowledge as complete and profound as knowledge can be.\*

If the Bible is naïve, it is an honor to be naïve. If the philosophies that deny the Spirit are intelligent, there is no such thing as intelligence. A humble belief in a Paradise situated among the clouds has at least a background of inalienable Truth, but it has also and above all the background of a merciful reality in which is no deceit, and that is something beyond price.

(\* “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3); “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil” (Matthew 5:37); “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3); “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29).) [LAW, Reflections on Naïvety]

Naïvety is not stupidity. [THC, Intelligence and Character]

**Naturalism (error of):** The error of naturalism is not that it is blind to aesthetic qualities, certainly, but, in the first place, that it lacks sufficient reason insofar as it takes itself for an end in itself, or what amounts to the same thing, insofar as it attributes glory to the artist or to the sensible model alone; and second that it violates the rules resulting from tradition, on the one hand, and from the nature of things, on the other. [LT, The Saint and the Divine Image]

Art, as soon as it is no longer determined, illuminated, and guided by spirituality, lies at the mercy of the individual and purely psychic resources of the artist, and these resources must soon run out, if only because of the very platitude of the naturalistic principle that calls only for a superficial copying of Nature. Reaching the extreme limit of its own platitude, naturalism inevitably engendered the monstrosities of surrealism. The latter is but the decomposing body of an art and, in any case, should rather be called “infrarealism”; it is, properly speaking, the satanic consequence of naturalistic luciferianism. Naturalism, as a matter of fact, is clearly luciferian in its wish to imitate the creations of God, not to mention its affirmation of the psychic element to the detriment of the universal, and above all, of the bare fact to the detriment of the symbol. [TUR, Concerning Forms in Art]

**Naturalism (in art):** Naturalism in art violates tradition because it is unaware that style is a providential discipline proceeding from a genius at once spiritual and ethnic and developing according to the laws of organic growth in an atmosphere of contemplative piety which is not in the least individualistic or Promethean. It violates the nature of things because, in painting, it treats the plane surface as if it were three-dimensional

space, and the immobility of the surface as if it could contain movement; and in sculpture, naturalism treats inert matter as if it were living flesh, and then as if it were engaged in motion, and it sometimes treats one material as if it were another, without regard for the soul of each substance, and so on. [LT, The Saint and the Divine Image]

**Naturally Supernatural:** Let it be noted that, just as there is a “relatively absolute” – the logical absurdity of this formulation does not preclude its ontologically plausible meaning – so too is there a “naturally supernatural,” and this is precisely the permanent divine intervention, in virtue of immanence, in cosmic causality. [THC, Gnosis Is Not Just Anything]

**Nature:** Virgin nature is the art of God. [LT, Concerning the Love of God]

**Nirvana:** In their esoteric meaning, the words “God,” “divine,” “Divinity” signify none other than the terms *Shunya* and *Nirvana*, even though they can also refer to the Buddha and the Bodhisattva. That the Buddhist Absolute is not “nothingness” pure and simple is self-evident: “For some, Nirvana is a state in which there could be no memory of the past and present, it would thus be comparable to a lamp whose oil is used up or to a kernel of grain that one burns or a fire that has gone out, for in these cases there is a cessation of all substrata . . . But this is not Nirvana, for Nirvana is not simply destruction and emptiness” (*Lankavatara-Sutra*, XIII). [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]

According to an error widespread in the West, the spiritual “extinction” that Buddhism has in view – for generally it is Buddhism that is cited – is a “nothingness,” as if it were possible to realize something that is nothing. Now either Nirvana is nothingness, in which case it is unrealizable; or else it is realizable, in which case it must correspond to something real. It is too easily forgotten that Paradise – not to mention the uncreated Bliss that is none other than the positive content of Nirvana – can also be regarded as an “annihilation,” the relationship between formal and non-formal manifestation being analogous to that between manifestation as such and non-manifestation. [TB, Nirvana]

**Nirvana (three degrees):** It is necessary to distinguish between three Nirvanas, or three degrees of Extinction, two of which are still in the order of *Maya* or contingency, while the third, *Parinirvana*, is the Absolute; if another Nirvana were the Absolute there could not be a question of a *Parinirvana*. The first Nirvana is ontologically that of the Bodhisattva: it is extinction in relation to formal manifestation and corresponds to the degree of the Archangels, Heaven, Existence; we say “ontologically” because the Bodhisattva “lives” at this level even if he has already realized the second Nirvana, the one which coincides with the state of the terrestrial Buddha, that is to say with extinction in regard to universal manifestation, which corresponds to the degree of pure Being. The third Nirvana, beyond *Maya*, is that of the celestial or absolute Buddha: this is *Parinirvana*, extinction in relation to Being or to *Maya* and which corresponds to the supreme Self of the Vedantists. [TB, Mystery of the Bodhisattva]

**Nirvana / Parinirvana:** Nirvana is extinction in relation to the cosmos, and *Parinirvana* in relation to Being; Nirvana is thus identified with Being, according to a connection that is more initiatory than properly metaphysical, since a “principle” is here represented as a

“state”; and *Parinirvana* is identified with Non-Being, that is to say with the divine “Quiddity” which, according to Greek theology, “envelops” Being, and which, according to Sufism, “erases all predicates” (*munqat al-isharat*). [TB, Nirvana]

**Nobility:** Nobility is made of elevation and compassion; by elevation it withdraws from things, and by compassion it comes back to them; but it also comes back to them by discernment and justice, for it is made not only of charity, but also of resistance, given the nature of the world in which it manifests itself. [EchPW, 45]

Man has the right to be happy, but he must be so nobly and, what amounts to the same thing, within the framework of the Truth and the Way. Nobility is characterized by its correspondence to the real hierarchy of values: the higher takes precedence over the lower, and this applies on the plane of the sentiments as well as on that of thoughts and volitions. It has been said that nobility of character consists in putting honour and moral dignity above self-interest, which means in the last analysis that we must put the invisible real above the visible illusory, morally as well as intellectually.

Nobility is made of detachment and generosity; without nobility, the gifts of intelligence and the efforts of the will can never suffice for the Way, for man is not reducible to these two faculties, he also possesses a soul capable of love and destined for happiness; and the latter cannot be realized – except in a wholly illusory fashion – without virtue or nobility. We could also say that the Way is made of discernment, concentration and goodness: of discernment for the intelligence, of concentration for the will, of goodness for the soul; the fundamental goodness of the soul is at the same time its beauty, just as every sensible beauty reveals an underlying cosmic goodness.

Detachment implies objectivity with regard to oneself; generosity implies likewise the capacity to put oneself in the place of others, and thus to be “oneself” in others. These attitudes, which *a priori* are intellectual, become nobility on the plane of the soul; nobility is a mode of objectivity as well as of transcendence. [EPW, The Virtues in the Way]

**Nobility (true):** True nobility, which cannot in any case be the monopoly of a function, implies a penetrating consciousness of the nature of things and at the same time a generous giving of the self, consequently it excludes idle fancies no less than meanness. [LAW, The Ancient Worlds in Perspective]

**Nobility / Honor:** To be noble is to sacrifice one’s interest to the truth, and so to the “duty” which the former defines, whence also the notion of “honor,” a notion which is much more contingent, but not unreal; nobility is the natural conformity of the will and the sensibility to the demands of Equilibrium and Attraction (it is to see things “from above” and without any baseness), while honor is the social obligation never to betray this attitude, or not to betray the confidence that has been placed in us in the name of our preferment; whence the saying *noblesse oblige*. [LT, The Problem of Qualifications]

**Nobleness (of soul):** Nobleness of soul is to have the sense of the divine intentions, hence of the archetypes and essences, which readily reveal themselves to the noble and contemplative soul. [RHC, Pillars of Wisdom]

**Nothing / Being:** The notion of “nothing” is essentially a reference – obviously negative – to something possible or existent, otherwise it would be meaningless and even inconceivable. Indeed, “nothing” indicates by definition the absence of something: it excludes one or many objects, or all objects, according to context; to speak of an intrinsic “nothingness,” of a nothing in itself, without reference to the things which it excludes, would be a contradiction in terms. When a receptacle is filled and then emptied, there is a difference; now this difference is a reality, otherwise no one would ever complain about being robbed. If this “nothing” were in itself a “nothingness” – if it had no “referential” character – there would be no difference between presence and absence, plenitude and vacuity, existence and inexistence; and every thief could argue that the “nothing” he produced in someone’s purse does not exist; the word “nothing” would be devoid of meaning just as the nothingness is devoid of content. “Nothing,” envisaged in a concrete context, can in practice compete with “something”; while an intrinsic nothingness cannot concretely be opposed to anything or be affected by anything in any way. And similarly space, if it were an absolute emptiness – if it did not in practice coincide with ether – could not comprise distance and separation, for a nothingness added to another nothingness – if this were conceivable without absurdity – could not produce a distance. A logically utilizable “nothing” has therefore nothing absolute about it; it is by definition relative to something, although in a negative manner. However, it comprises an aspect of absoluteness through the totality of the negation it represents: the difference between 1 and 2 is relative, but the difference between 1 and 0 can be termed absolute, with evident metaphysical reservations. A thing cannot exist half-way, either it exists or it does not exist; consequently, since there is something absolute about existence in relation to inexistence – this being the whole miracle of creation – there is likewise *ipso facto* something absolute about the negation or exclusion of something existent – not the negation “in itself,” but in relation to that which is negated or excluded; this is our well-known thesis of the “relatively absolute.”\*

The idea of “being” positively implies reality, and restrictively manifestation; we say “restrictively” because manifestation or existence represents a “less” or a limitation in relation to the Principle which is pure Being. In signifying reality, the idea of “being” evokes *ipso facto* the “good” and also the “more,” hence quality and quantity; but above all it evokes “presence.” As for the opposite idea of “nothingness,” it implies first of all the “absence” of being, or impossibility, and more relatively the absence of determinate things; it also implies, by derivation and by analogy, the phenomenon of “less” and, in another respect, that of “evil.” But this idea can also be applied, quite paradoxically, to the transcendent or principial order: from the standpoint of the manifested world – hence from the standpoint of existence in the restricted sense of the term – all that transcends this world and consequently is free from existential limitations,<sup>^</sup> is “nothingness.”

(\* When one, two or three out of four candles are extinguished, the difference in luminosity is relative; but when the last one is extinguished, the difference is total, for it is that between light and darkness.

<sup>^</sup> This is what allows negative expressions such as “the Void” (*Shunya*), “not this, not this” (*neti neti*), and other terms of the kind to be applied to pure Being, and *a fortiori* to Beyond-Being. All apophatic theology stems from this principle of terminology.) [THC, Universal Categories]

**Nothingness:** Nothingness is, on the one hand, an intellectual notion and, on the other hand, a cosmic tendency; this notion of nothingness is identical with that of impossibility; that is to say, nothingness is total impossibility, whereas there do exist relative impossibilities, namely those which represent situations modifiable in principle. [FDH, The Problem of Possibility]

**Objectivity:** By “objectivity” must be understood not a knowledge that is limited to a purely empirical recording of data received from outside, but a perfect adequation of the knowing subject to the known object, which indeed is in keeping with the current meaning of the term. An intelligence or a knowledge is “objective” when it is capable of grasping the object as it is and not as it may be deformed by the subject. [EPW, Understanding Esoterism]

Objectivity is a kind of death of the subject in the face of the reality of the object; the subjective compensation of this extinction is the nobleness of character. One must not lose sight of the fact, moreover, that the transcendent Object is at the same time the immanent Subject, which is affirmed in the knowing subject, to the extent that the latter is capable of objectivity.

Objectivity is none other than the truth, in which the subject and the object coincide, and in which the essential takes precedence over the accidental – or in which the Principle takes precedence over its manifestation – either by extinguishing it, or by reintegrating it, according to the diverse ontological aspects of relativity itself. [EchPW, 58-59]

**Objectivity / Inwardness:** Objectivity is the perfect adaptation of the intelligence to objective reality; and inwardness is the persevering concentration of the will on that “Inward” which, according to Christ, coincides with the heart, whose door it is fitting to lock after having entered, and which opens onto the “Kingdom of God”, which in fact is “within you”.

And this needs a foundation of faith and virtue, of intensity and radiance, without which man, in the eyes of God, would not be man. [EPW, The Triple Nature of Man]

**Objectivity / Serenity:** “Objectivity” is often discussed in our times, but it is readily reduced to a purely volitional or moral attitude, a kind of softness in the face of error or injustice, as if indignation could not be a criterion of “consciousness of the object,” and so of objectivity. Serenity can, it is true, result from a higher point of view where disequilibriums are reabsorbed into the universal Equilibrium, and there is then nothing to refute, since phenomena appear in their ontological interdependence, and therefore in their necessity; but there is a false serenity which becomes the accomplice of evil, and proves only one thing, namely that the person concerned does not see that a disequilibrium is a disequilibrium: the man who mistakes a scorpion for a dragonfly remains calm, but it does not follow that his vision is objective. Christ’s wrath proved, not a lack of objectivity of course, but the ignominy of its object. [SW, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Objectivity / Subjectivity:** The word “objectivity” signifies, in short, “conformity to the nature of things,” independently of all interference of individual tendencies or tastes; the word “subjectivity,” for its part, ought to designate the contemplative withdrawal into the

“heart,” given that “the kingdom of God is within you.” [EH, Concerning Pythagorean Numbers]

**Objectivity / Transcendence:** Objectivity is the “horizontal” dimension: it is the capacity to know, to will and to love things as they are, thus without any subjectivistic deformation; while transcendence is the “vertical” dimension: it is the capacity to know, to will and to love God and, *ipso facto*, all the precious things that lie beyond our earthly experience and which relate more or less directly to the Divine Order . . . Without objectivity and transcendence there cannot be man, there is only the human animal; to find man, one must aspire to God. [PM, Prerogatives of the Human State]

**Occult:** The word “occult” has its origin in the *vires occultae*, the unseen forces of nature, and in the *occulta*, the secrets relating to the ancient mysteries; in fact, however, modern occultism is by and large no more than the study of extrasensory phenomena, one of the most hazardous of pursuits by reason of its wholly empirical character and its lack of any doctrinal basis. Occultism ranges from pure and simple experiment to pseudoreligious speculations and practices; it is only one step further to describe all authentically esoteric doctrines and methods as “occultism,” and this step has been taken either through ignorance, indifference, or carelessness, and without shame or scruple, by those who have an interest to serve by this kind of depreciation. It is as though one were to describe genuine mystics as occultists on the grounds that they too were concerned with the unseen. [LT, The Contradiction of Relativism]

**Orenda (Iroquois):** The spiritual fluid of a human person. [FS, The Symbolism of a Vestimentary Art]

**Orthodoxy:** Orthodoxy is the conformity of an idea – or of a form in general – to some revealed perspective, or, in other words, to some aspect of truth. [SPHF, Contours of the Spirit]

**Orthodoxy (criterion):** When we say that a doctrine is providential, we mean by this that it is contained in its own way in the Revelation itself and that it cannot fail to be “crystallized” at the cyclic moment assigned to it by its nature; thus, *bhakti* has always existed as a spiritual possibility, but its flowering required particular conditions, belonging to a given phase of the Hindu cycle. Every cycle has qualitative aspects: what is possible at a certain moment is not possible at another, so that the birth of a particular perspective cannot occur at some arbitrary moment. And this provides us with yet another criterion of orthodoxy – or of heterodoxy – for it is certain that in our times, that is for the last centuries, the cyclic moment for the manifestation of the great perspectives (*darshanas*) is past; readaptations – in the sense of a legitimate and therefore adequate and efficacious synthesis – are always possible, but not the manifestations of perspectives that are fundamental and “new” as to their form.

The least that can be said is that no present formulation could surpass the ancient formulations; commentaries can be made on the traditional perspectives, they can be summed up from a particular point of view or expressed according to a particular inspiration, but they cannot be contradicted or replaced . . . The spuriousness of such

attempts always shows itself – apart from intrinsic errors – in the belittling and falsifying spirit which is so characteristic of the modern world; in fact it requires a prodigious lack of spiritual sensibility and of sense of proportion to take any contemporary thinking, even the best possible, for one of the great providential “crystallizations” of the *philosophia perennis*. [SW, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Orthodoxy (Hindu):** Objections will no doubts be made that Hindu spirituality does not know orthodoxy, since opinions and systems contradict one another in Hinduism even more than in any other traditional wisdom; rightly or wrongly, according to the individual, it will be claimed that the “great thinkers” of India are beyond forms and so are free from all “narrow dogmatism.”\* It is true that Hindu orthodoxy is sometimes more difficult to grasp from outside than that of a monotheist tradition; this is because Hinduism is founded more directly on the metaphysical essence, so that the form can be treated more freely; also, dogma – or what corresponds to it – assumes forms more varied than in Western religions, which amounts to saying, not that Hinduism is not quite orthodox, but that its orthodoxy has a wider scope in respect of forms, which is all that is in question here.^

The wide range of forms belonging to Hinduism may be bewildering to some minds, but could never mean that Hinduism sanctions error, as is in fact done by modern philosophy, where “genius” and “culture” count as much as or more than truth, and where the very idea of truth is even called into question by some people. The formal “fluidity” proper to Hinduism in no way prevents error from being always recognizable, whether by the aid of scriptural criteria, or in the light of metaphysical truth, which immediately unmask absurdity, even when heterodoxy is founded on a sacred text, this of course through falsifying its meaning.

(\* Westernized heretics – pseudo-intellectual molluscs if ever there were any – are placed on the same level as the most venerable authorities of the Vedic tradition; the “breadth of mind” boasted by the moderns profits nothing except error and unintelligence.

^ Hinduism, despite its extreme conceptual “elasticity,” does not swallow everything, for otherwise Jainism and Buddhism would have become additional *darshanas* [orthodox perspectives] instead of being excluded from specifically Hindu orthodoxy; on the other hand, the very breadth of this orthodoxy allows it to recognize *a posteriori* – but “on the margin” and without any innovation – the celestial character both of the Buddha and of his message.) [SW, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Orthodoxy (intrinsic):** The first question to be asked concerning any doctrine or tradition is that of its intrinsic orthodoxy; that is to say one must know whether that tradition is consonant, not necessarily with another given traditionally orthodox perspective, but simply with Truth. [LS, Orthodoxy and Originality of Buddhism]

**Orthodoxy (Moslem):** Whatever may be the divergences between the Moslem denominations, the metaphysics of Unity and of Union dominates the entire horizon of thought, Shiite as well as Sunni; when all is said and done, the Moslem is orthodox to the extent that he identifies himself with the fundamental thesis of Islam and takes upon himself all its consequences. [CI, Images of Islam]



**Orthodoxy (quintessential):** Quintessential orthodoxy is sanctity, which in the purity of its experience combines or transcends all partial truths. [CI, Images of Islam]

**Orthodoxy (religion intrinsically orthodox):** For a religion to be considered intrinsically orthodox – extrinsic orthodoxy depending on specific formal factors that cannot be applied literally outside of the perspective to which they belong – it must be founded on a doctrine of the Absolute which, taken as a whole, is adequate; this religion must then advocate and achieve a spirituality that is proportioned to this doctrine, which is to say that it must comprise sanctity both in notion and in fact. Therefore, the religion must be of divine and not of philosophical origin, and consequently it must be the vessel for a sacramental or theurgic presence made manifest notably in miracles and also – though this may be surprising to some – in sacred art. Specific formal elements, such as apostolic personages and sacred events, are subordinated inasmuch as they are forms to the principal elements just mentioned; their meaning or value can therefore change from one religion to another – human diversity making such fluctuations inevitable – without this constituting any contradiction with regard to the essential criteriology that concerns both metaphysical truth and salvific efficacy, and secondarily – and on that basis – human stability; this stability can make demands that seem paradoxical at first sight given that it necessarily entails a certain compromise between earth and Heaven. Islam may appear markedly problematical from the Christian point of view, but it answers unquestionably to the overall description given above; it is intrinsically orthodox while differing extrinsically from the other orthodox monotheistic forms, and it is bound to differ most particularly from Christianity owing to a kind of regression – in appearance – to an Abrahamic and as it were timeless equilibrium.

Every religion has a form and a substance; Islam spread like lightning by virtue of its substance; but its expansion was brought to a halt on account of its form. Substance possesses every right; it derives from the Absolute; form is relative; its rights are therefore limited. [FSR, Truth and Presence]

A denomination or a religion is intrinsically orthodox when it comprises a metaphysical doctrine that is at least adequate, and which offers both the notion and the phenomenon of sanctity. [CI, Images of Islam]

**Orthodoxy / Intellectuality:** At first sight there seems to be no connection between intellectuality and orthodoxy, for the term orthodoxy is too often taken as a synonym of “conformity,” even of “prejudice” or “mental laziness,” while intellectuality, on the contrary, appears to most of our contemporaries as “unfettered exploration” or even “creative thinking,” hence as something at the antipodes of intellectual intuition and contemplation. From our standpoint, orthodoxy is the principle of formal homogeneity proper to any authentically spiritual perspective; it is therefore an indispensable aspect of all genuine intellectuality, which is to say that the essence of every orthodoxy is the truth and not mere fidelity to a system that eventually turns out to be false. To be orthodox means to participate by way of a doctrine that can properly be called “traditional,” in the immutability of the principles which govern the Universe and fashion our intelligence. [SW, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Outward / Inward:** For the Intellect or for the spiritual act conforming to it, there is no difference between the outward and the inward: the outward is also within, since the soul is everywhere the soul, on the macrocosmic scale as well as in the microcosm, while the inward for its part has an aspect of outwardness since phenomena are everywhere phenomena, within us and around us. In practice and “alchemically,” it is thus impossible to speak of the world and of life without at the same time taking account of the soul and the flux of thought. The world is the soul and the soul is the world. From this it follows, and herein lies the whole interest of a distinction that might seem to be tautological, that in acting on the inward we act upon the outward: we hold both the world and our life within our soul. However, when we speak about the “world,” the question of knowing whether we are thinking of the outward or the inward does not arise, because outward things come before what is within; our earthly environment existed before we were born, and a tree exists prior to our looking at it. The world is always *a priori* the realm of existence surrounding us; it is never, unless expressly specified, our inward cosmos only. [LT, Man and Certainty]

**Pantheism:** (To believe that) God is all that exists, no more no less [THC, Degrees and Scope of Theism]

In reality, pantheism consists in the admission of a continuity between the Infinite and the finite; but this continuity can only be conceived if it is first admitted that there is a substantial identity between the ontological Principle – which is in question in all forms of theism – and the manifested order, a conception that presupposes a substantial, and therefore false, idea of Being, or the confusing of the essential identity of manifestation and Being with a substantial identity. Pantheism is this and nothing else. [TUR, Transcendence and Universality of Esoterism]

**Paradise:** Paradise, precisely, is above all a dimension which unites us to God . . . Paradise is a reflection of God and not a veil which conceals Him. [CI, Paradise as Theophany]

**Passion / Pride:** In the fallen nature of man there is a double infirmity and, spiritually speaking, a double obstacle: on the one hand passion, which draws man outside himself while at the same time compressing him, and on the other hand pride, which shuts man within himself, while at the same time dispersing him. Passion reveals itself by attachment, and pride by ambition; even if the latter were spiritual, it still would be worldly, unless one were to give the word ambition – as is sometimes done – a transposed and neutral meaning. In an analogous way, if one understands by the word passion a force in itself neutral and of potential value one can evidently speak of holy passions, or passions sanctified by their object; but it is obviously not this conversion of a natural energy that is in question when we speak here of infirmities or obstacles. In this connection it must be pointed out that pride does not admit of such a conversion; it can only be destroyed or dissolved – the first term indicating a privative or penitential asceticism and the second an alchemy of love able to “melt the heart” – depending upon the degrees or modes of hardness. It is true that one can sometimes speak of “legitimate pride,” but this is situated on an inoffensive plane having nothing to do with vice or sin.

Passion, as it is to be understood here, is to prefer the world to God; pride is to prefer oneself to God or, metaphysically speaking, to prefer sensory consciousness to the immanent Self. Or again, to paraphrase the words of a saint: passion is to flee from God, pride is to rise up against Him. In consequence, one can say that to prefer the world – in the form of some thing – to truth or to good, is passion; to prefer oneself – in the form of some vanity – to truth or to good, is pride; for truth, or good, is the trace of God and represents God.

Passion expresses itself not only by attachment, but also, and in a more pernicious way, by insatiability. Pride expresses itself not only by ambition, it is yet more vicious when it takes the form of obstinacy. And this shows that the two vices necessarily intermingle: obstinate passion does not go without a measure of pride; insatiable pride does not go without a measure of passion. A man who is without any pride will also be without passion, and he who is wholly without passion will also be without pride.

A prideful man may have all the virtues, even some humility, but he arrogates them to his person and thus illusorily cuts them off from God, thereby taking away all their intrinsic value and profound efficacy; which means that the virtues of a prideful man are as it were deprived of their content. As for a humble man, he is well aware that the virtue belongs to him on loan, just as light belongs in a certain way to the water which reflects it, but he never loses sight of the fact that he is not the author of his virtues – any more than the water is the source of the light – and that the finest virtues are nothing apart from God. Conversely, even if one tries to separate them from God in order to appropriate them to oneself, whatever value they may retain still belongs to God . . .

It follows from nearly all our preceding considerations that our point of view is not that of individual and sentimental voluntarism: it coincides neither with penitentialism, according to which only the disagreeable leads to God, nor with humilitarianism, according to which every man should think himself the greatest of all sinners. In speaking of passion and attachment, we do not mean a natural attachment to certain things that every man can experience and that is in no way opposed to the sense of relativity or to serenity of spirit, or to detachment generally; we have solely in mind the passionate attachment which places an absolute value on relative things to the detriment of the love of God. And in speaking of pride, ambition and pretension, we do not mean natural self-respect, or the awareness which the most objective man may have of his worth, or the sense of dignity or honor – none of these is in any way opposed to the awareness of our metaphysical nothingness or to true humility in relation to others. We have solely in mind overestimation of oneself, which is inevitably accompanied by underestimation of others and which for that very reason renders sincere effacement before God impossible. Pride is the desire to “keep one’s life”; it is the refusal to “die before one dies.” [SME, Passion and Pride]

**Path:** The Path means return to the vision enjoyed by innocence, to the inward dimension where all things die and are reborn in the divine Unity – in that Absolute which, with its concomitances of equilibrium and inviolability, is the whole content of the human condition and the whole reason for its existence. [UI, The Path]

**People:** The word “people” itself admits of two meanings: it denotes either the majority, as distinguished from the intellectual and aristocratic elite, or the total or integral

collectivity, comprising the majority and the elite at one and the same time; in this last sense, it is self-evident that the government – apart from its celestial origin – derives from the “people” itself and that the chivalric and sacerdotal elite are an expression of the popular genius. [TM, Reflections on Ideological Sentimentalism]

**Perfection:** Perfection lies in the equilibrium between complementary opposites. [TM, Faculties and Modalities of Man]

**Phenomenology:** By “phenomenology” we simply mean the study of a category of phenomena, and not a particular philosophy which claims to resolve everything by observing or exploring in its fashion the phenomena that present themselves to one’s attention, without being able to account for the central and ungraspable phenomenon that is the mystery of subjectivity. [FS, The Sun Dance]

**Philosophia Perennis:** The term *philosophia perennis* . . . signifies the totality of the primordial and universal truths – and therefore of the metaphysical axioms – whose formulation does not belong to any particular system. One could speak in the same sense of a *religio perennis*, designating by this term the essence of every religion; this means the essence of every form of worship, every form of prayer and every system of morality, just as the *sophia perennis* is the essence of all dogmas and all expressions of wisdom. We prefer the term *sophia* to that of *philosophia*, for the simple reason that the second term is less direct and because it evokes in addition associations of ideas with a completely profane and all too often aberrant system of thought. [UT, The Perennial Philosophy]

**Philosophy:** It should be possible to restore to the word “philosophy” its original meaning: philosophy – the “love of wisdom” – is the science of all the fundamental principles; this science operates with intuition, which “perceives,” and not with reason alone, which “concludes.” Subjectively speaking, the essence of philosophy is certitude; for the moderns, on the contrary, the essence of philosophy is doubt: philosophy is supposed to reason without any premise (*voraussetzungsloses Denken*), as if this condition were not itself a preconceived idea; this is the classical contradiction of all relativism. Everything is doubted except for doubt. [TM, Thought: Light and Perversion]

Taking into account the fact that according to a – rightly or wrongly – universally recognized terminology, the word “philosophy” designates all that extrinsically pertains to thought, we would say that there is a philosophy according to the “spirit,” which is founded on pure intellection – possibly actualized by a particular sacred Text – and a philosophy according to the “flesh,” which is founded on individual reasoning in the absence of sufficient data and of any supernatural intuition; the first being the *philosophia perennis*, and the second, the ancient Protogorism as well as the rationalist thought of the moderns. [TM, Concerning the Principle of Sacrifice]

According to Pythagoras, wisdom is *a priori* the knowledge of the stellar world and of all that is situated above us; *sophia* being the wisdom of the gods, and *philosophia* that of men. For Heraclitus, the philosopher is one who applies himself to the knowledge of the profound nature of things; whereas for Plato, philosophy is the knowledge of the Immutable and of the Ideas; and for Aristotle, it is the knowledge of first causes and

principles, together with the sciences that are derived from them. In addition, philosophy implies for all of the Ancients moral conformity to wisdom: only he is wise, *sophos*, who lives wisely. In this particular and precise sense, the wisdom of Solomon is philosophy; it is to live according to the nature of things, on the basis of piety – of the “fear of God” – with a view to that which is essential and liberating.

All this shows that, to say the least, the word “philosopher” in itself has nothing restrictive about it, and that one cannot legitimately impute to this word any of the vexing associations of ideas that it may elicit; usage applies this word to all thinkers, including eminent metaphysicians – some Sufis consider Plato and other Greeks to be prophets – so that one would like to reserve it for sages and simply use the term “rationalists” for profane thinkers. It is nevertheless legitimate to take account of a misuse of language that has become conventional, for unquestionably the terms “philosophy” and “philosopher” have been seriously compromised by ancient and modern reasoners; in fact, the serious inconvenience of these terms is that they conventionally imply that the norm for the mind is reasoning pure and simple,\* in the absence, not only of intellection, but also of indispensable objective data. Admittedly one is neither ignorant nor rationalistic just because one is a logician, but one is both if one is a logician and nothing more^ . . .

. . . In short, the term “philosopher” in current speech signifies nothing other than the fact of expounding a doctrine while respecting the laws of logic, which are those of language and those of common sense, without which we would not be human; to practice philosophy is first and foremost to think, whatever may be the reasons which rightly or wrongly incite us to do so. But it is also, more especially and according to the best of the Greeks to express by means of the reason certainties “seen” or “lived” by the immanent Intellect, as we have remarked above; now the explanation necessarily takes on the character imposed on it by the laws of thought and language.

(\* Naturally the most “advanced” of the modernists seek to demolish the very principles of reasoning, but this is simply fantasy *pro domo*, for man is condemned to reason as soon as he uses language, unless he wishes to demonstrate nothing at all. In any case, one cannot demonstrate the impossibility of demonstrating anything, if words are still to have any meaning.

^ A German author (H. Turck) has proposed the term “misosopher” – “enemy of wisdom” – for those thinkers who undermine the very foundations of truth and intelligence. We will add that misosophy – without mentioning some ancient precedents – begins *grosso modo* with “criticism” and ends with subjectivisms, relativisms, existentialisms, dynamisms, psychologisms and biologisms of every kind. As for the ancient expression “misology,” it designates above all the hatred of the fideist for the use of reason.) [SVQ, Tracing the Notion of Philosophy]

**Philosophy (avant-garde):** Avant-garde philosophy is properly an acephalous logic: it labels what is intellectually evident as “prejudice”; seeking to free itself from the servitudes of the mind, it falls into infra-logic; closing itself, above, to the light of the intellect, it opens itself, below, to the darkness of the subconscious. Philosophical skepticism takes itself for an absence of prejudices and a healthy attitude, whereas it is something quite artificial: it is a result not of knowledge but of ignorance, and that is why it is as contrary to intelligence as it is to reality. [LS, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Philosophy (profane):** Profane philosophy is ignorant not only of the value of truth and universality in Revelation, but also of the transcendence of the pure Intellect; it entails therefore no guarantee of truth on any level, for the quite human faculty which reason is, insofar as it is cut off from the Absolute, is readily mistaken even on the level of the relative. The efficacy of reasoning is essentially conditional. [SW, The Nature and Arguments of Faith]

**Philosophy / Reason:** In the opinion of all profane thinkers, philosophy means to think “freely,” as far as possible without presupposition, which precisely is impossible; on the other hand, gnosis, or philosophy in the proper and primitive sense of the word, is to think in accordance with the immanent Intellect and not by means of reason alone. What favors confusion is the fact that in both cases the intelligence operates independently of outward prescriptions, although for diametrically opposed reasons; that the rationalist if need be draws his inspiration from a pre-existing system does not prevent him from thinking in a way that he deems to be “free” – falsely, since true freedom coincides with truth – likewise, *mutatis mutandis*: that the gnostic – in the orthodox sense of the term – bases himself extrinsically on a given sacred Scripture or on some other gnostic cannot prevent him from thinking in an intrinsically free manner by virtue of the freedom proper to the immanent Truth, or proper to the Essence which by definition escapes formal constraints. Or again: whether the gnostic “thinks” what he has “seen” with the “eye of the heart,” or whether on the contrary he obtains his “vision” thanks to the intervention – preliminary and provisional and in no wise efficient – of a thought which then takes on the role of occasional cause, is a matter of indifference with regard to the truth, or with regard to its almost supernatural springing forth in the spirit. [SVQ, Tracing the Notion of Philosophy]

**Philosophy (modern) / Wisdom (genuine):** No sooner does one thinker believe he has found the cause of phenomena than another philosopher comes forward to accuse him of failing to find the cause of the cause, and so on *ad infinitum*. This shows that when philosophy has become “art for art’s sake” it is no more than a search for the cause of the cause of the cause, carried on in a state of utter mental deception and without the least possibility of arriving at a conclusion; in the case of genuine wisdom, on the other hand, one knows before hand that the complete truth can and must spring forth from any adequate formulation like a spark from a flint, but that it will always remain incommunicable as far as its intrinsic infinitude is concerned. To search, as do modern thinkers and as did certain ancient writers, for completely adequate formulations capable of satisfying all causal needs, the most artificial and the least intelligent included, is assuredly the most contradictory and the most fruitless of occupations; the “quest” of philosophers, therefore, has nothing in common with that of contemplatives, since its basic principle of exhaustive verbal adequacy is opposed to any liberating finality, to any transcending of the sphere of words. It is not to be wondered at that after centuries of unsatisfied ratiocination – unsatisfied because in principle not capable of satisfaction – people should have become weary of what is looked upon, rightly or wrongly, as “abstract,” and that they should turn, alas, not to the “concrete” reality that lies within and which the sages of old and the saints always knew, but, on the contrary, to an outward counterfeit, at one and the same time hardening and dispersive in its effects, and totally

illusory. The innovators, nihilists and “constructivists” alike, claim that they wish “to start again from zero” in every field, as if it were possible for man to create himself over again, to create the intelligence with which he thinks and the will with which he desires and acts; in short, as if man’s existence came from nowhere else than from our own opinions and desires. [LT, Abuse of the Ideas of the Concrete and the Abstract]

**Piety:** By piety is to be understood wholehearted attachment to God, the sense of the hereafter, absolute sincerity, and thus a characteristic found quite generally in saints and *a fortiori* in messengers of Heaven; we mention it because in the life of the Prophet it appears with a particularly salient function, and because it prefigures in a sense the spiritual climate of Islam . . . On the plane of piety, attention must be drawn to the love of poverty, fasting and vigils . . .

It should be added that by piety we must understand the state of spiritual servitude (*‘ubudiyah*) in the highest sense of the term, comprising perfect “poverty” (*faqr*, whence the word *faqir*) and “extinction” (*fana’*) before God, and this is not unrelated to the epithet “unlettered” (*ummi*) which is applied to the Prophet. Piety is what links us to God; in Islam this something is, first of all an understanding, as deep as possible, of the evident Divine Unity – for he who is “responsible” must grasp this evidentness and there is here no sharp demarcation between believing and knowing – and next it is a realization of the Unity beyond our provisional and unilateral understanding which is itself ignorance when regarded in the light of plenary knowledge: there is no saint (*wali*, “representative,” thus “participant”) who is not a “knower through God” (*‘arif bi-Llah*). This explains why in Islam piety, and *a fortiori* the sanctity which is its flowering, has an air of serenity; it is a piety whose essence opens into contemplation and gnosis. [UI, The Prophet]

**Platonic recollection:** Platonic recollection is none other than the participation of the human Intellect in the ontological insights of the Divine Intellect; this is why the Sufi is said to be *‘arif bi-Llah*, “knower by Allah”, in keeping with the teaching of a famous *hadith* according to which God is the “Eye wherewith he (the Sufi) seeth”; and this explains the nature of the “Eye of Knowledge”, or of the “Eye of the Heart”. [EPW, The Religion of the Heart]

**Plenitude:** Plenitude is that which brings together a maximum of homogeneous aspects, or which introduces totality into form. [GDW, Seeing God Everywhere]

**Pneumatic:** The pneumatic is a man who identifies *a priori* with his spiritual substance and thus always remains faithful to himself; he is not a mask unaware of his scope, as is the man enclosed in accidentality. [PM, The Play of Masks]

In practice, it suffices to know that to say “yes” to God, while abstaining from what takes one away from Him and accomplishing what brings one closer to Him, pertains to the “pneumatic” nature and assures salvation, all question of “original sin” and “predestination” aside; thus in practice there is no problem, save that which we conceive and impose upon ourselves.

The “pneumatic” is the man who so to speak incarnates “faith which saves,” and thus incarnates its content, . . . he cannot sin – except perhaps from the point of view of

appearances – because, his substance being “faith” and therefore “justice through faith,” all that he touches turns to gold. [CI, The Question of Evangelicalism]

The “pneumatic” may incarnate either an attitude of knowledge or of love, although the former manifests more directly his essential nature; he is not necessarily a great sage, but he is necessarily a pure and quasi-angelic man. [EPW, The True Remedy]

A pneumatic is in a way the “incarnation” of a spiritual archetype, which means that he is born with a state of knowledge which, for other people, would actually be the goal, and not the point of departure; the pneumatic does not “go forward” towards something “other than himself”; he stays where he is in order to become fully what he himself is – namely his archetype – by ridding himself, one after the other, of veils or outer surfaces, shackles imposed by the ambience or perhaps by heredity. He becomes rid of them by means of ritual supports – “sacraments”, one might say – not forgetting meditation and prayer; but his situation is nonetheless quite other than that of ordinary men, even prodigiously gifted ones. From another point of view it must be recognized that a born gnostic is by nature more or less independent, not only as regards the “letter” but also as regards the “law”; and this does not make his relation with the ambience any simpler, either psychologically or socially.

At this point the following objection has to be parried: does not the “path” consist for every man in getting rid of obstacles and in “becoming oneself”? Yes and no; that is to say: metaphysically it is so, but not humanly because, I repeat, the pneumatic “realizes” or “actualizes” what he “is”, whereas the non-pneumatic realizes what he “must become” – a difference at once “absolute” and “relative” about which one could argue indefinitely. The quality of the born-gnostic involves not only modes but also degrees; there is the difference between the *jnani* and the *bhakta* on the one hand and, on the other, differences of plenitude or breadth in the manifestation of the archetype. In any case, the pneumatic is situated, by his nature, on the vertical and timeless axis – where there is no “before” or “after” – so that the archetype which he personifies or “incarnates”, and which is his true “himself” or “his very self” can, at any moment, pierce through the contingent, individual envelope; it is therefore really “himself” who is speaking. The real gnostic does not attribute any “state” to himself, for he is without ambition and without ostentation; he has a tendency rather – through an “instinct for holding back” – to disguise his nature inasmuch as he has, in any case, awareness of “cosmic play” (*lila*) and it is hard for him to take secular and worldly persons seriously, that is to say, “horizontal” beings who are full of self-confidence and who remain, “humanists” that they are, below the vocation of man.

What the natural gnostic seeks, from the point of view of “realization”, is much less a “path” than a “framework” – a traditional, sacramental and liturgical setting which will allow him to be ever more genuinely “himself”, namely a particular archetype of the celestial “iconostasis” . . .

“Know thyself” was the inscription written above the portico of the Temple of Delphi; that is, know thine immortal essence but also, by that very token, know thine archetype. This injunction no doubt applies in principle to every man, but it applies to the pneumatic in a far more direct manner, in the sense that he has, by definition, awareness of his celestial model in spite of the flaws which his earthly shell may have undergone in contact with an all too uncongenial ambience. [SCR, Volume 17, Numbers 1 & 2, A Note on René Guénon]



**Pneumatic / Psychic / Hylic:** The “pneumatic” is the man in whom the sense of the sacred takes precedence over other tendencies, whereas in the case of the “psychic” it is the attraction of the world and the accentuation of the ego that take priority, without mentioning the “hylic” or “somatic” who sees in sensory pleasure an end in itself. [SVQ, Paradoxes of an Esoterism]

**Polysynthesism:** (The) consciousness of the profound homogeneity of the created world and the sense of universal solidarity which results therefrom. [FS, A Metaphysic of Virgin Nature]

**Possibility:** Possibility is none other than the Infinitude of the Real. [FDH, The Problem of Possibility]

By definition, a possibility wants to be what it is, its nature is its will to be; God creates only by “giving existence” to that which wants to be this or that. Possibilities are differentiated revelations of Being; they proceed from It and not from an arbitrary Will which would conceive them *ex nihilo*; and it is this diversifying and contrasting refraction which brings forth the inverted and privative modalities of possibilities which are necessarily positive at their origin, or positive in their roots. [FDH, The Problem of Possibility]

**Potency:** Potency comes from the Latin *posse* “to be able,” from which, precisely, comes *possibilis*: to be potent is to be greatly “able,” and thus to be rich in “possibilities.” Potentiality is of the same order. [FDH, The Problem of Possibility]

**Poverty:** The all-embracing virtue of “poverty” (*faqr*) is conformity to the demands of the Divine Nature: namely effacement, patience, gratitude, generosity; and also, and even above all, resignation to the Will of God and trust in His Mercy. [RHC, Outline of the Islamic Message]

**Poverty / Generosity / Veracity:** The epithets applied to the Prophet mark the spiritual virtues, the chief of which are: “poverty” (*faqr*, which is a quality of the ‘*abd*’),\* next “generosity” (*karam*, a quality of the *Rasul*)^ and finally “veracity” or “sincerity” (*sidq*, *ikhlas*, a quality of the *Nabi al-ummi*).+ Poverty is spiritual concentration, or rather its negative and static aspect, non-expansion, and consequently humility in the sense of the cessation of the fire of the passions (in the words of Tirmidhi); as for generosity, it is akin to nobility (*sharaf*); it is the abolishing of egoism and this implies love of one’s neighbour in the sense that the passional distinction between “I” and “other” is transcended; finally, veracity is the contemplative quality of the intelligence and, on the plane of reason, is logic or impartiality, in a word, love of truth.

(\* In the sense that the ‘*abd*’ has nothing that belongs to him as his own.

^ The *Rasul* is indeed a “mercy” (*Rahmah*); he is disinterestedness itself, the incarnation of charity.

+ Veracity is inseparable from virginity of spirit in the sense that the spirit must be free from all artifice, from all prejudice and from any passional interference.) [UI, The Prophet]

**Prayer:** The remembrance of God is at the same time a forgetting of oneself; conversely, the ego is a kind of crystallization of forgetfulness of God. The brain is, as it were, the organ of this forgetfulness; it is like a sponge filled with images of this world of dispersion and of heaviness, filled too with the tendencies of the ego towards both dispersal and hardening. As for the heart, it is the latent remembrance of God, hidden deep down in our “I”; prayer is as if the heart, risen to the surface, came to take the place of the brain which then sleeps with a holy slumber; this slumber unites and soothes, and its most elementary trace in the soul is peace. “I sleep, but my heart waketh.” [UI, The Path]

**Prayer (aim of individual):** The aim of individual prayer is not only to obtain particular favors, but also the purification of the soul: it loosens psychological knots or, in other words, dissolves subconscious coagulations and drains away many a secret poison; it externalizes before God the difficulties, failures and tensions of the soul, which presupposes that the soul be humble and upright; this externalization – carried out in face of the Absolute – has the virtue of reestablishing equilibrium and restoring peace, in a word, of opening us to grace. [EchPW, 52]

**Prayer (quintessential):** The important thing to grasp here is that actualisation of the consciousness of the Absolute, namely the “remembrance of God” or “prayer,” insofar as it brings about a fundamental confrontation of creature and Creator, anticipates every station on the two axes. It is already a death and a meeting with God and it places us already in Eternity; it is already something of Paradise and even, in its mysterious and “uncreated” quintessence, something of God. Quintessential prayer brings about an escape from the world and from life, and thereby confers a new and Divine sap upon the veil of appearances and the current of forms, and a fresh meaning to our presence amid the play of phenomena.

Whatever is not here is nowhere, and whatever is not now will never be. As is this moment in which I am free to choose God, so will be death, Judgment and Eternity. Likewise in this center, this Divine point which I am free to choose in the face of this boundless and multiple world, I am already in invisible Reality. [LT, Man and Certainty]

**Pride:** Pride limits intelligence, which amounts to saying that in the last analysis it slays it: it destroys its essential functions, while allowing the surface mechanism to remain incidentally, as if in mockery. [THC, To Have a Center]

A symbolic notion which includes everything that imprisons the soul in outwardness and keeps it away from the Divine Life. [TM, The Impossible Convergence]

Pride: that ‘something’ which prevents man from ‘losing his life’ for God. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

**Pride / Cynicism / Hypocrisy:** Both cynicism and hypocrisy are forms of pride; cynicism is the caricature of sincerity or frankness, whilst hypocrisy is the caricature of scrupulousness or self-discipline or of virtue in general. Cynics believe that sincerity consists in exhibiting shortcomings and passions and that to hide them is to be a hypocrite; they do not master themselves and still less do they seek to transcend

themselves; and the fact that they take their faults for a virtue is the clear proof of their pride. Hypocrites believe, on the other hand, that it is virtuous to make a display of virtuous attitudes or that the appearances of faith suffice for faith itself; their vice lies, not in manifesting the forms of virtue – which is a rule that must apply to everyone – but in believing that the manifestation is virtue itself and, above all, in aping virtue in the hope of being admired: this is pride, because it is individualism and ostentation. Pride is to overestimate oneself and to underestimate others; and this is what the cynic does just as much as the hypocrite, in a blatant or a subtle way as the case may be.

All this amounts to saying that in cynicism as in hypocrisy, the self-willed and therefore tenebrous ego takes the place of the spirit and of light; these two vices are acts of theft by which the passionate and egoistic soul appropriates what belongs to the spiritual soul. Moreover, to present a vice as a virtue and, correspondingly, to accuse virtues of being vices, as is done by cynicism posing as sincerity, is nothing but hypocrisy, and it is a particularly perverse hypocrisy.

As for pride, it was defined very well by Boethius: “All the other vices flee from God, and only pride sets itself up against Him”; and by Saint Augustine: “Other vices attach themselves to evil, that evil may be accomplished; pride alone attaches itself to good, that good may perish.” When God is absent, pride necessarily fills the emptiness: it cannot but appear in the soul when there is nothing there to relate to the Sovereign Good. Beyond doubt, the virtues of worldly men or of unbelievers have their own relative worth, but the same is true of physical qualities at their own level: the only qualities that contribute to the soul’s salvation are those that are quickened by the Truth and by the Way; no virtue cut off from these bases has power to save, and this proves the relativity, and the indirectness, of purely natural virtues. A spiritual man does not feel that he owns his virtues; he renounces vices and extinguishes himself – actively and passively – in the Divine Virtues themselves. Virtue is that which is. [EPW, Sincerity: What It Is and What It Is Not]

**Pride / Egoism / Stupidity / Wickedness / Hypocrisy:** Life in human society favors the emergence of social vices, but this is not a reason for not resisting them, quite the contrary. Victory over the vices is owed to the people around us as well as to God who observes us and who will judge us.

First of all there is pride: it is to overestimate oneself while underestimating others; it is the refusal to accept humiliation when the nature of things requires it; and it is *ipso facto* to take for a humiliation every attitude that simply reveals our limits. Next there is egoism: it is to think only of one’s own interest and thus to forget that of others. It is in this sector that egocentrism and narcissism are situated, without forgetting touchiness. Then stupidity: it is the lack of discernment between the essential and the secondary and, as a result, that moral ugliness which is pettiness; it is also the lack of sense of proportions, hence of priorities. As for wickedness, it is the will to harm others, in one fashion or another; it is especially slander, calumny and spite. And finally hypocrisy: it consists in practicing all the vices while practicing spiritual exercises which, in this context, become sacrilegious. [EchPW, 74]

**Pride / Humility:** According to Saint Augustine, “all the other vices attach themselves to evil, that it may be done; only pride attaches itself to good, that it may perish.” And

likewise the Cure d'Ars: "Humility is to the virtues what the string is to the rosary; remove the string and all the beads scatter; remove humility and all the virtues disappear." In other words, pride consists in glorying in one's virtues, either before others or before oneself. And this destroys the virtues for two reasons: first of all because one takes them away from God, to whom they belong in reality, thus putting oneself – like Lucifer – in place of the Divine Source; and secondly because one attributes *de facto* a disproportionate value to a phenomenon which is necessarily relative. "When thou givest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." [SME, Anonymity of the Virtues]

**Primordially:** Primordially is the *fitrah* of the Sufis: it is essential and normative human nature, created in the image of the Creator; and for that very reason it is intelligence as such, projection of the Divine Consciousness. For "I was a hidden treasure and wished to be known, hence I created the world"; and with it the human spirit. [RHC, On Intelligence]

**Profound / Inferior Person:** A noble and profound person tends to see the Substance in the accidents, whereas an inferior person tends to reduce the substantial manifestations to a trivializing accidentality. The sense of the sacred and of the celestial is the measure of human worth.\*

(\* Which cuts short the hasty and barbarous distinction between the "savage" and the "civilized.") [PM, The Liberating Passage]

**Progress:** All too often things which some people call "useful" are anything but useful in their results. "Progress" is healing a paralytic while depriving him of his sight. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

"Progress" is most often but a transference, the exchange of one evil for another, otherwise our age would be perfect and sanctified. In the world of man, as it is in itself, it is scarcely possible to choose a good; one is always reduced to the choice of a lesser evil, and in order to determine which evil is the less, there is no alternative but to relate the question to a hierarchy of values derived from eternal realities, and that is exactly what "our age" never does. [LAW, The Universality of Monasticism]

**Proof:** All proof is relative by definition, since an absolute proof would be identical with the thing to be proved; a proof is always more or less separated from its object. There is something of its object, however, in the proof, and this something compels faith; in every manifestation of liberating truth there is an evidence to which we may or may not be sensitive, but which we grasp to the extent that our spirit recognizes in it some latent content of its own substance. The proof of the truth of the Invisible is the recollection which the expression of that truth actualizes in spirits that have remained true to their original vocation; the illuminative function devolves upon metaphysical argument, and also on symbols and miracles if account be taken of all the modes and imponderable factors of the intelligence or of the soul. To communicate Intellection to the receptive spirit is to remind it of what it is and at the same time of that Being through which it exists. [LT, Abuse of the Ideas of the Concrete and the Abstract]

**Prophet:** The Prophet is the human norm in respect both of his individual and of his collective functions, or again in respect of his spiritual and earthly functions.

Essentially he is equilibrium and extinction: equilibrium from the human point of view and extinction in relation to God. [UI, The Prophet]

As a spiritual principle, the Prophet is not only the Totality of which we are separate parts or fragments, he is also the Origin in relation to which we are so many deviations; in other words, the Prophet as Norm is not only the “Whole Man” (*al-Insan al-Kamil*) but also the “Ancient Man” (*al-Insan al-Qadim*). [UI, The Prophet]

**Psychoanalysis:** Psychoanalysis first of all eliminates those transcendent factors that make the essence of man and then replaces the complexes of inferiority or frustration by complexes of complacency and egotism; it allows one to sin calmly and with assurance, and to damn oneself serenely. [LT, The Contradiction of Relativism]

Psychoanalysis doubly deserves to be classed as an imposture, firstly because it pretends to have discovered facts which have always been known and could never have been otherwise than known, and secondly and chiefly because it arrogates to itself functions that in reality are spiritual, and thus poses practically as a religion . . . What is new in psychoanalysis, and what gives it its sinister originality, is its determination to attribute every reflex and every disposition of the soul to mean causes and to exclude spiritual factors; hence its notorious tendency to see health in what is commonplace and vulgar, and neurosis in what is noble and profound. [SME, The Psychological Imposture]

**Psychological Imposture:** What we term “psychological imposture” is the tendency to reduce everything to psychological factors and to call into question not only what is intellectual or spiritual – the first being related to truth and the second to life in and by truth – but also the human spirit as such, and therewith its capacity of adequation and, still more evidently, its inward illimitation and transcendence. The same belittling and truly subversive tendency rages in all the domains that “scientism” claims to embrace, but its most acute expression is beyond all doubt to be found in psychoanalysis. [SME, The Psychological Imposture]

**Rahmah / Ananda:** “Benevolence” (*Rahmah*) . . . The term *Rahmah* also contains the ideas of Mercy and Beauty, and then that of Love, and coincides in the final analysis with the *Ananda* of Brahmanism, radiant “Beatitude.” [THC, Degrees and Scope of Theism]

*Rahmah* – a term that is most often translated as “Clemency” – implies more profoundly, as does the Sanskrit term *Ananda*, all the aspects of Harmony:\* Goodness, Beauty and Beatitude; and *Rahmah* is integrated into the Divine Essence itself, inasmuch as it is fundamentally none other than the radiating Infinitude of the Principle; an identity that the Koran expresses by saying: “Call upon Allah or call upon *Ar-Rahman*, to Him belong the most beautiful Names” . . .

For one cannot appeal to the One without Mercy responding.

(\* *Sat* referring to the Absolute, and *Chit* to the Consciousness that *Atma* has of its inexhaustible Perfection, hence its Qualities.) [SVQ, Hypostatic Dimensions of Unity]

**Rahman / Rahim:** The divine Names *Rahman* and *Rahim*, both derived from the word *Rahmah* (“Mercy”), mean, the former the intrinsic Mercy of God and the latter His

extrinsic Mercy; thus the former indicates an infinite quality and the latter a limitless manifestation of that quality. The words could also be respectively translated as “Creator through Love” and “Savior through Mercy,” or drawing inspiration from a *hadith*, we could comment on them thus: *Ar-Rahman* is the Creator of the world inasmuch as *a priori* and once and for all He has furnished the elements of well-being of this lower world, while *Ar-Rahim* is the Savior of men inasmuch as He confers on them the beatitude of the world beyond, or inasmuch as He gives them here below the seeds of that other world or dispenses its benefits . . . The Name *Rahman* is like a sky full of light; the Name *Rahim* is like a warm ray coming from the sky and giving life to man. [UI, The Quran]

**Rational (extra-):** Existence is a reality in some respects comparable to a living organism; it cannot with impunity be reduced, in man’s consciousness and in his modes of action, to proportions that do violence to its nature; pulsations of the “extra-rational”\* pass through it from every quarter. Now religion and all forms of supra-rational wisdom belong to this extra-rational order, the presence of which we observe around us, unless we are blinded by a mathematician’s prejudice; to attempt to treat existence as a purely arithmetical and physical reality is to falsify it in relation to ourselves and within ourselves, and in the end it is to blow it to pieces.

(\* Ordinarily and in every sort of context, people speak of the “irrational,” but this is a dangerous abuse of terminology all too liable to reduce the supra-rational to the infra-rational.) [UI, The Path]

**Rationalism:** Cartesianism – perhaps the most intelligent way of being unintelligent – is the classic example of a faith which has become the dupe of the gropings of reasoning; this is a “wisdom from below” and history shows it to be deadly. The whole of modern philosophy, including science, starts from a false conception of intelligence; for instance, the modern cult of “life” sins in the sense that it seeks the explanation and goal of man at a level below him, in something which could not serve to define the human creature. But in a much more general way, all rationalism – whether direct or indirect – is false from the sole fact that it limits the intelligence to reason or intellection to logic, or in other words cause to effect. [UI, The Path]

**Rationalist:** A rationalist is a person who upholds the primacy, or rather the exclusive worth, of reason as compared with Intellection on the one hand and Revelation on the other, both of which he accuses of being “irrational.” He will claim, for example, that a miracle is irrational because it is contrary to reason, which is an inept argument, since there is nothing to be found in any religion which is opposed to reason as such; the most one can say is that the supernatural is contrary to common experience and also to certain subjective tendencies which have been systematized and then given the name of logic. [LT, Rationalism, Real and Apparent]

**“Realism”:** Literary “realism” is truly subversive because it aims at reducing reality to the vilest contingencies of nature or chance, instead of leading it back to its archetypes and consequently to the divine intentions, in short, to the essential which any normal man

should perceive without difficulty, and which any man perceives notably in love, or in connection with such phenomena as provoke admiration. [THC, To Have a Center]

**Reality:** To quote an expression of Pascal's we favor – Reality is “an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and its circumference nowhere”. [TB, Message and Messenger]

**“Realizationism”:** A pernicious error that must be pointed out here – one which seems to be axiomatic with the false gurus of East and West – is what could be designated by the term “Realizationism”: it is claimed that only “realization” counts and that “theory” is nothing, as if man were not a thinking being and as if he could undertake anything whatsoever without knowing where he was going. False masters speak readily of “developing latent energies”; now one can go to hell with all the developments and all the energies one pleases; it is in any case better to die with a good theory than with a false “realization.” What the pseudo-spiritualists lose sight of only too easily is that, according to the maxim of the maharajahs of Benares, “there is no right superior to that of the truth.” [PM, Prerogatives of the Human State]

**Reason:** Reason is the faculty of knowing indirectly in the absence of a direct vision and with the help of points of reference. [LT, Evidence and Mystery]

**Reason / Intellect:** Reason is formal by its nature and formalistic in its operations; it proceeds by coagulations, by alternatives and by exclusions – or, it can be said, by partial truths. It is not, like pure intellect, formless and fluid light; true, it derives its implacability, or its validity in general, from the intellect, but it touches on essences only through drawing conclusions, not by direct vision; it is indispensable for verbal formulation but it does not involve immediate knowledge. [UI, Islam]

Reason is not Intelligence in itself, it is only its instrument, and this on the express condition that it be inspired by intellectual Intuition, or simply correct ideas or exact facts; nothing is worse than the mind cut off from its root; *corruptio optimi pessima*.

The Intellect – *aliquid increatum et increabile* – dominates and ennobles our fundamental faculties: it is by it that our Reason exists and that it is objective and total; and again it is by it that our Will is free, hence capable of moral heroism, and that our Sentiment is disinterested, hence capable of compassion and generosity. [TM, Faculties and Modalities of Man]

**Rebellion:** Relativism engenders the spirit of rebellion and is at the same time its fruit. The spirit of rebellion is not, like holy anger, a passing state and directed against some worldly abuse; on the contrary, it is a chronic malady directed against Heaven and against all that represents Heaven or is a reminder of it. When Lao-Tse said that “in the latter times the man of virtue appears vile,” he had in mind this spirit of rebellion that characterizes our century; yet, for psychological and existentialist relativism, which by definition is always out to justify the crude *ego*, such a state of mind is normal, it is its absence which is a sickness; hence the would-be abolition of the sense of sin. The sense of sin is really the consciousness of an equilibrium that surpasses our personal will and which, even while wounding us on occasion, operates in the long run for the good of our

integral personality and that of the human collectivity; this sense of sin is a counterpart of the sense of the sacred, the instinct for that which surpasses us and which, for that very reason, must not be touched by ignorant and iconoclastic hands. [LT, The Contradiction of Relativism]

**Reforming Man:** Reforming man means binding him again to Heaven, reestablishing the broken link; it means tearing him away from the reign of the passions, from the cult of matter, quantity and cunning, and reintegrating him into the world of the spirit and serenity, we would even say: into the world of sufficient reason. [UI, Islam]

**Relatively Absolute:** We have alluded more than once to the seemingly contradictory, but metaphysically useful and even indispensable, idea of the “relatively absolute,” which is absolute in relation to what it rules, while pertaining to relativity in relation to the “Pure Absolute.” [IFA, Islam and Consciousness of the Absolute]

There could never be any symmetry between the relative and the Absolute; as a result, if there is clearly no such thing as the absolutely relative, there is nonetheless a “relatively absolute”, and this is Being as creator, revealer, and savior, who is absolute for the world, but not for the Essence: “Beyond-Being” or “Non-Being”. If God were the Absolute in every respect and without any hypostatic restriction, there could be no contact between Him and the world, and the world would not even exist; for in order to be able to create, speak, and act, it is necessary that God Himself make Himself “world” in some fashion, and He does so through the ontological self-limitation that gives rise to the “personal God”, the world itself being the most extreme and hence the most relative of self-limitations. [FSR, The Two Paradises]

. . . in the sense – paradoxical but real – of the ‘relatively absolute’; hypostases are relative in respect of the Essence, but they are principal – hence in practice absolute – in respect of cosmic Manifestation. [FDH, Transcendence Is Not Contrary to Sense]

The *Vedanta* distinguishes between the ‘non-supreme’ Principle (*Apara-Brahma*) and the ‘supreme’ Principle (*Para-Brahma*); the first is not, as is the second, the Absolute in itself, but it is ‘practically’ the Absolute in relation to the world; it is thus ‘relatively absolute’. The personal God is ‘absolute’ without being intrinsically ‘the Absolute’. [SME, The Mystery of the Hypostatic Face]

**Relativism:** Relativism sets out to reduce every element of absoluteness to a relativity, while making a quite illogical exception in favor of this reduction itself. In effect, relativism consists in declaring it to be true that there is no such thing as truth, or in declaring it to be absolutely true that nothing but the relatively true exists; one might just as well say that language does not exist, or write that there is no such thing as writing. In short, every idea is reduced to a relativity of some sort, whether psychological, historical, or social; but the assertion nullifies itself by the fact that it too presents itself as a psychological, historical, or social relativity. The assertion nullifies itself if it is true, and by nullifying itself logically proves thereby that it is false; its initial absurdity lies in the implicit claim to be unique in escaping, as if by enchantment, from a relativity that is declared alone to be possible. [LT, The Contradiction of Relativism]

Relativism, even when it makes a show of admitting the interventions of an absolute in the relative, gives them such a quantitative air as to take away precisely their



absoluteness; it seeks to destroy either the idea of truth, or that of intelligence, or both at once. To lend a relative character to what functionally stands for the absolute is to attribute absoluteness to the relative; to claim that knowledge as such can only be relative amounts to saying that human ignorance is absolute; to throw doubt on certitude is, logically, to avow that one knows “absolutely” nothing. [SW, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**Relativity:** Relativity has essentially two dimensions: distance and difference. It is by virtue of the “vertical” dimension of distance that *in divinis* Being becomes crystallized, so to speak, on this side of Beyond-Being and that, in consequence of this hypostatic polarization, the world becomes separated from God; and it is again by virtue of this dimension that the intellectual Substance engenders the animic Substance, which in turn engenders the material Substance. It is by virtue of the “horizontal” dimension of difference that the All-Powerfulness is distinguished from the All-Goodness, or that on earth a rose is distinguished from a water lily. The whole Universe is a tissue of these two dimensions: all phenomena can be explained by their infinitely varied combinations; what unites them is Existence and, in the last analysis, a Reality at once absolute and infinite, the only Reality there is. [LT, Evidence and Mystery]

**Religere / Tradere:** The first of these terms has the advantage of expressing an intrinsic reality (*religere* = “to bind” the earthly with the heavenly), and not simply an extrinsic reality like the second (*tradere* = “to hand down” scriptural, ritual and legal elements). [EPW, The Supreme Commandment]

**Religio / Traditio:** *Religio* is that which “binds” (*religat*) man to Heaven and engages his whole being; as for the word “*traditio*”, it is related to a more outward and sometimes fragmentary reality, besides suggesting a retrospective outlook. At its birth a religion “binds” men to Heaven from the moment of its first revelation, but it does not become a “tradition”, or admit more that one “tradition”, till two or three generations later. [LAW, *Religio Perennis*]

**Religio Perennis:** The essential function of human intelligence is discernment between the Real and the illusory, or between the Permanent and the impermanent, and the essential function of the will is attachment to the Permanent or to the Real. This discernment and this attachment are the quintessence of all spirituality. Carried to their highest level or reduced to their purest substance they constitute, in every great spiritual patrimony of humanity, the underlying universality or what may be called the *religio perennis*. It is to this that the sages adhere, while basing themselves necessarily on divinely instituted elements. [EchPW, 84]

The *religio perennis* is fundamentally this, to paraphrase the well-known saying of St. Irenaeus: the Real entered into the illusory so that the illusory might be able to return into the Real. It is this mystery, together with the metaphysical discernment and contemplative concentration that are its complement, which alone is important in an absolute sense from the point of view of gnosis. For the gnostic (in the etymological and rightful sense of that word) there is in the last analysis no other religion. It is what Ibn Arabi called the “religion of love”, putting the accent on the element of “realization”.

The two-fold definition of the *religio perennis*, discernment between the Real and the illusory, and a unifying and permanent concentration on the Real – implies in addition the criteria of intrinsic orthodoxy for every religion and all spirituality. In order to be orthodox a religion must possess a mythological or doctrinal symbolism establishing the essential distinction in question, and must offer a way that secures both the perfection of concentration and also its continuity. [LAW, *Religio Perennis*]

*Religio perennis* – the primordial, universal and underlying religion. This is what in the language of the Koran is designated by the term *fitrah*: the primordial norm, the profound nature of things. [CI, *Alternations in Semitic Monotheism*]

**Religion:** First, religion is essentially discernment. It is discernment between God and the world, between the Real and the unreal, or between the Everlasting and the ephemeral. Secondly: religion is union. It is union with God, the Great Spirit. Everything in religion has its foundation in one of these two elements: in discernment or in union. Man is intelligence and will, and religion is discernment and concentration . . .

Religion is discernment between the Everlasting and the ephemeral, and union with the Everlasting. In other words, religion is basically discernment and concentration; separation from evil, which is illusion, and union with the Divine Good, which is Truth and eternal Reality. [FS, *A Message on Indian Religion*]

A religion is an integral whole comparable to a living organism that develops according to necessary and exact laws; one might therefore call it a spiritual organism, or a social one in its most outward aspect. In any case, it is an organism and not a construction of arbitrary conventions; one cannot therefore legitimately consider the constituent elements of a religion independently of their inward unity, as if one were concerned with a mere collection of facts. [TUR, *Christianity and Islam*]

Religions are like lamps of colored glass; now a lamp lights a dark place because it is luminous and not because it is red or blue or yellow or green. On the other hand, the color transmits the light, but on the other hand, it falsifies it; if it is true that without a given colored lamp one would see nothing, it is quite as true that visibility cannot be identified with any one color. [CI, *The Idea of “The Best” in Religions*]

**Religion (orthodox / heterodox):** A religion is orthodox on condition that it offers a sufficient, if not always exhaustive, idea of the absolute and the relative, and therewith an idea of their reciprocal relationships, and also a spiritual activity that is contemplative in its nature and effectual as concerns our ultimate destiny. It is notorious that heterodoxies always tend to adulterate either the idea of the divine Principle or the manner of our attachment to it; they offer either a worldly, profane or, if you like, “humanist” counterfeit of religion, or else a mysticism with a content of nothing but the *ego* and its illusions. [LAW, *Religio Perennis*]

**Remembrance:** The essential act of faith is the remembrance of God; “to remember”, in Latin, is *recordare*, that is *re-cordare*, which indicates a return to the heart, *cor*. [EPW, *The Way of Oneness*]

**Renunciation:** Because modern men live almost entirely for the things of the senses and from that very fact remain ignorant of the human condition in its totality and in its

ultimate purpose, it is difficult for them to comprehend the meaning of an attitude seemingly as negative and senseless as that of renunciation; they will regard it merely as a wholly unnatural superstition. In reality it can easily be seen that renunciation is not self-explanatory; far from being an end in itself, it only supplies provisional support for the development of an awareness infinitely greater than our ego. Renunciation would be purposeless were it not a case of grasping with our whole being – and not the mind alone – what we really are, and above all of understanding what total Reality is, that “something” by virtue of which we exist, and from which we cannot for a moment escape. Renunciation aims at preventing man from becoming imprisoned in an ephemeral illusion, from identifying himself with it and finally perishing with it; it aims at helping him to free himself from the tyranny of dreams that leave no outlet. A sage never loses sight of the universal context of life; he does not give himself up to fragments of consciousness such as events agreeable or disagreeable, joyful or sad, for he is perpetually conscious of the whole, so much so that in the end the question of “renunciation” does not even exist for him any longer; he has ceased to be involved in fragmentary experience, he is not bound by it, he does not identify himself with it, nor is he consumed by it. [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]

**Revelation:** Revelation is none other than the objective and symbolic manifestation of the Light which man carries in himself, in the depths of his being; it reminds him of what he is, and of what he should be since he has forgotten what he is. [SME, Universal Eschatology]

It is because Adam at the time of the fall was no longer at the level of the paradisaical ambience that the state of semi-death that is post-Edenic matter came to be produced: we die because this matter is of itself a substance of death, an accursed substance; our state is something like that of fishes unknowingly enclosed in a block of ice. Revelation is then the ray of Omniscience which teaches us that this ice is not everything, that there is something else around it and after it, that we are not the ice and that the ice is not us. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

Each Revelation is indeed “true man and true God”, that is to say, “true ego and true Self”, whence precisely the meaning of the divergences on the surface of Unity. A Revelation is a “means of salvation”, and such a means is what Buddhists term an *upaya*, a “heavenly mirage”,\* without there being in this word the slightest pejorative connotation, except that the Absolute alone is purely real; this means is necessarily drawn from the cosmic or samsaric Substance, hence from *Maya*; and the same meaning is understood or implied, not only in the *Shahadah*, but also in the doctrine of the two natures of Christ, notably in this saying: “Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is, God.”

(\* A “mirage” rendering pure Truth intelligible and without which it would remain inaccessible. The so to speak feminine complement is *Prajna*, liberating Knowledge.) [FSR, The Koranic Message of Sayyidna Isa]

Those who enter hell are not those who have sinned accidentally, with their “husk” so to speak, but those who have sinned substantially or with their “kernel,” and this is a distinction that may not be perceptible from without; they are in any case the proud, the wicked, the hypocrites, hence all those who are the opposite of the saints and the sanctified.

Exoterically speaking, man is damned because he does not accept a given Revelation, a given Truth, and does not obey a given Law; esoterically, he damns himself because he does not accept his own fundamental and primordial Nature which dictates a given knowledge and a given comportment.\* Revelation is none other than the objective and symbolic manifestation of the Light which man carries in himself, in the depths of his being; it reminds him of what he is, and of what he should be since he has forgotten what he is. If all human souls, before their creation, must attest that God is their Lord – according to the Koran<sup>^</sup> – it is because they know “preexistentially” what Being, the Truth and the Law are; fundamental sin is a suicide of the soul.

(\* “God wrongeth not mankind in aught; but mankind wrong themselves.” (Koran, Sura “Jonah,” 44).

<sup>^</sup> “And (remember) when thy Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves, (saying): Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea, verily. We testify. (That was) lest ye should say at the Day of Resurrection: Lo! Of this we were unaware; Or lest ye should say: (It is) only (that) our fathers ascribed partners to God of old and we were (their) seed after them . . .” (Sura “The Heights,” 172 and 173) – These preexistential creatures are the individual possibilities necessarily contained within All-Possibility, and called forth to Existence, not produced by a moral Will, but by the existentiating Radiation.) [SME, Universal Eschatology]

Revelation is the objectivation of the transcendent Intellect and to one degree or another awakens the latent knowledge – or elements of knowledge – we bear within ourselves.

[UI, The Quran]

Revelation is an objectivization of the Intellect and that is why it has the power to actualize the intelligence which has been obscured – but not abolished – by man’s fall.

[UI, The Path]

**Revelation / Intellection:** Revelation is a kind of cosmic Intellection, whereas personal Intellection is comparable to a Revelation on the scale of the microcosm. [LT, Rationalism, Real and Apparent]

Revelation is as it were the intellection – or the intellect – of the collectivity, in the sense that it compensates for the absence of intellectual intuition, not in an individual, but in a human collectivity subject to given conditions. By contrast, intellectual intuition is as it were Revelation within the individual; that is to say, that which is Revelation with regard to “a humanity” will be, analogously, intellection for an individual, and conversely. [SW, The Nature and Arguments of Faith]

The Intellect is infallible in itself or it is nothing; pure Intellection is a subjective and immanent Revelation just as Revelation properly so called is an objective and transcendent Intellection; Intellection is guaranteed to the extent that the Intellect is able to operate without obstacles, and this presupposes conditions that are not only intellectual but also moral in the deepest sense of the word, concerned therefore with the virtues and not merely with social behavior. [LT, Abuse of the Ideas of the Concrete and the Abstract]

To affirm that the Bible is both symbolistic and revealed means, then, on the one hand that it expresses complex truths in a language that is indirect and full of imagery and on the other that its source is neither the sensorial world nor the psychological or rational

plane, but rather a sphere of reality that transcends these planes and immensely envelops them, while yet in principle being accessible to man through the intellective and mystical center of his being, or through the “heart,” if one prefers, or pure “intellect.” It is the intellect that comprises in its very substance the evidence for the sphere of reality that we are speaking of and that thus contains the proof of it, if this word can have a meaning in the domain of direct and participative perception. Indeed the “classical” prejudice of scientism, or the fault in its method if one wishes, is to deny any mode of knowledge that is suprasensorial and suprarational, and in consequence to deny the planes of reality to which these modes refer and that precisely constitute the sources both of revelation and of intellection.

Intellection in principle is for man what revelation is for the collectivity; in principle, we say, for in fact man cannot have access to direct intellection – or gnosis – except by virtue of the pre-existent scriptural revelation. What the Bible describes as the fall of man or the loss of paradise coincides with our separation from total intelligence; this is why it is said that “the kingdom of God is within you,” and again: “Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” The Bible itself is the multiple and mysterious objectivation of this intellect or Logos. It is thus by way of images and enigmas the projection of what we carry in a quasi-inaccessible depth at the bottom of our heart; and the facts of sacred history – where nothing is left to chance – are themselves cosmic projections of the unfathomable divine truth. [SG, Keys to the Bible]

**Rhythm:** Rhythm is the fixation of an instant – or of the present – in duration, in the same way as immobility is the fixation of a point – or of the center – in space. [LAW, The Universality of Monasticism]

**Sacrament / Revelation:** Outward means are necessary only because – or to the extent that – we have lost the access to their interior archetypes; a sacrament is the exteriorization of an immanent source of grace – the “living water” of Christ – exactly as Revelation is an outward and macrocosmic manifestation of Intellection. [CI, The Question of Evangelicalism]

**Sacred:** That is sacred which in the first place is attached to the transcendent order, secondly, possesses the character of absolute certainty and, thirdly, eludes the comprehension and control of the ordinary human mind. Imagine a tree whose leaves, having no kind of direct knowledge about the root, hold a discussion about whether or not a root exists and what its form is if it does: if a voice then came from the root telling them that the root does exist and what its form is, that message would be sacred. The sacred is the presence of the center in the periphery, of the immutable in the moving; dignity is essentially an expression of it, for in dignity too the center manifests outwardly; the heart is revealed in gestures. The sacred introduces a quality of the absolute into relativities and confers on perishable things a texture of eternity. [UI, The Quran]

What then is the sacred in relation to the world? It is the interference of the uncreate in the created, of the eternal in time, of the infinite in space, of the supraformal in forms; it is the mysterious introduction into one realm of existence of a presence which in reality contains and transcends that realm and could cause it to burst asunder in a sort of divine explosion. The sacred is the incommensurable, the transcendent, hidden within a fragile

form belonging to this world; it has its own precise rules, its terrible aspects and its merciful qualities; moreover any violation of the sacred, even in art, has incalculable repercussions. Intrinsically the sacred is inviolable, and so much so that any attempted violation recoils on the head of the violator. [LS, Principles and Criteria of Art]

**Sacred / Sense of the Sacred:** The sacred is the projection of the celestial Center into the cosmic periphery, or of the “Motionless Mover” into the flux of things. To feel this concretely is to possess the sense of the sacred, and thereby the instinct of adoration, devotion and submission; the sense of the sacred is the awareness – in the world of that which may or may not be – of That which cannot not be, and whose immense remoteness and miraculous proximity we experience at one and the same time . . .

The sense of the sacred is also the innate consciousness of the presence of God: it is to feel this presence sacramentally in symbols and ontologically in all things. Hence the sense of the sacred implies a kind of universal respect, a kind of circumspection before the mystery of animate and inanimate creatures; and this without any favourable prejudice or weakness towards phenomena which manifest errors or vices, and which for that reason no longer present any mystery unless it be that of the absurd. Undoubtedly such phenomena are metaphysically necessary, but they signify precisely an absence of the sacred, and thus they are integrated into our respect for existence in a negative manner and by way of contrast; but apart from this, the pious and contemplative soul feels a natural respect for the things with which nature surrounds us . . .

The sacred is the projection of the Immutable into the mutable; as a result, the sense of the sacred consists not only in perceiving this projection, but also in discovering in things the trace of the Immutable, to the point of not letting oneself be deceived and enslaved by the mutable. Thus, one must live the experience of beauty so as to draw from it a lasting, not ephemeral, element, hence realizing in oneself an opening towards the immutable Beauty, rather than plunging oneself into the current of things; it is a question of viewing the world, and living in it, in a manner that is sacred and not profane; or sacralizing and not profanating. This brings us back once again to the mystery of the two aspects of *Maya*, the one that imprisons and the one that delivers. [FDH, The Sense of the Sacred]

The sense of the sacred is the essence of all legitimate respect; we insist on legitimacy, for it is a question of respecting, not just anything, but what is worthy of respect; “there is no right superior to that of the truth.” [THC, Intelligence and Character]

The sense of the sacred, which is none other than the quasi-natural predisposition to the love of God and the sensitivity to theophanic manifestations or to celestial perfumes – this sense of the sacred implies essentially the sense of beauty and the tendency toward virtue; beauty is outward virtue as it were, and virtue, inward beauty. It also implies the sense of the metaphysical transparency of phenomena, that is, the capacity of grasping the principal within the manifested, the uncreated within the created; or of perceiving the vertical ray, messenger of the Archetype, independently of the plane of horizontal refraction, which determines the existential degree, but not the divine content. [TM, The Sense of the Sacred]

**Sacred Language:** A language is sacred when God has spoken in it, and in order that God should speak in it, it must have certain characteristics such as are not found in any modern language. [UI, The Quran]

**Sacred Scripture:** A sacred Scripture . . . is a totality, a diversified image of Being, diversified and transfigured for the sake of the human receptacle; it is a light that wills to make itself visible to clay, or wills to take the form of that clay; or still in other words, it is a truth which, since it must address itself to beings compounded of clay, has no means of expression other than the very substance of the nescience of which our soul is made. [UI, The Quran]

**Sacred Thought / Profane Thought (difference between):** There is an essential distinction to be made here: there are errors that lie within the framework of integral and decisive truth, and there are errors that break this framework, and therein lies the whole difference between sacred and profane thought. It is sometimes said that no doctrine is entirely wrong and that there is truth in everything, but this is altogether false, because, while fundamental – and thus decisive – truths can neutralize any minor errors in a doctrine, minor truths are valueless within the framework of a major error; this is why one must never glorify an error for having taught us some truth or other, nor look for truth in errors on the pretext that truth is everywhere the same – for there are important nuances here – and above all one must not reject a fundamental and comprehensive truth because of a minor error that may happen to accompany it.

Be that as it may, the human soul is capable, paradoxically and up to a certain point, of combining spiritual knowledge with a singular incapacity to express it in accordance with the total context and the logic of things. There is, after all, no common measure between the inner man attracted by the emanations of the Infinite, and the outer man living on preconceptions and habits and sometimes allowing his thought to move on a level proportionally far below his intelligence. It is of course desirable for man to match his thought to his real knowledge without letting any purely formal inconsistencies persist, but this is a particular grace. [CI, Dilemmas of Moslem Scholasticism]

**Saint:** A saint is a void open for the passage of God. [SW, Complexity of the Concept of Charity]

The saint is the man who acts as if he had died and returned to life; having already ceased to be ‘himself’, in the earthly sense, he has absolutely no intention of returning to that dream, but maintains himself in a kind of wakefulness that the world, with its narrowness and impurities, cannot understand. [GDW, The Christian Tradition, Some Thoughts on its Nature]

**Salvation / Morality:** Salvation consists in leaving the infernal circle of “concordant actions and reactions”; and in this connection, morality appears as a quite provisional and fragmentary thing, and even as inoperative in the sight of the Absolute, since it is still involved in the indefinite chain of acts and the existential fruit of acts. [TB, Originality of Buddhism]

**Sanatana Dharma:** The “Eternal (or Primordial) Law”. [TUR, Limits of Religious Expansion]

**Sanctity:** Sanctity is essentially contemplativity: it is the intuition of the spiritual nature of things; profound intuition which determines the entire soul, hence the entire being of man. [EchPW, 11]

**Sannyasi:** The *sannyasi* abandons rites, certainly, but he abandons them ritually and does not propose that anyone so choosing should abandon them just anyhow; the *sannyasi* is casteless, and is able to take no account of castes, but he does not dream of preaching their abolition. [GDW, Vicissitudes of Different Spiritual Temperaments]

**Sat-Chit-Ananda:** The Vedantic triad *Sat* (supraontological Reality), *Chit* (Absolute Consciousness) and *Ananda* (Infinite Beatitude). [UI, The Quran]  
Being-Consciousness-Bliss. [EH, Concerning Pythagorean Numbers]

**Satori:** *Satori* is not absolute illumination; it amounts already to a degree of *bodhi*, but is not yet the *Samyaksambodhi* of the Buddha. If the profane state is separated from that of the Awakened Buddha as the circle is separated from its center, *satori* would be the sudden realization of the ray which, without itself being identical with the center, is as it were a prolongation of it. In relation to the profane state one may say that *satori* “is” Illumination in itself; distinctions between degrees of Illumination have a meaning only on the spiritual plane, not in relation to the world. [TB, Remarks on the Enigma of the Koan]

**Science:** Modern science, with its denial in practice or in principle of all that is really fundamental, and its subsequent rejection of the “one thing needful,” is like a planimetry that has no notion of the other directions. It shuts itself up entirely in physical reality or unreality, and there it accumulates an enormous mass of information, while at the same time committing itself to ever more complex conjectures. Starting out from the illusion that nature will end by yielding its ultimate secret and will allow itself to be reduced to some mathematical formula or other, this Promethean science everywhere runs up against enigmas which give the lie to its postulates and which appear as unforeseen fissures in this laboriously erected system. These fissures get plastered over with fresh hypotheses and the vicious cycle goes on unchecked, with all the threats we are aware of. [LT, Concerning the Proofs of God]

Modern science, which is rationalist as to its subject and materialist as to its object, can describe our situation physically and approximately, but it can tell us nothing about our extra-spatial situation in the total and real Universe . . . Profane science, in seeking to pierce to its depths the mystery of the things that contain – space, time, matter, energy – forgets the mystery of the things that are contained: it tries to explain the quintessential properties of our bodies and the intimate functioning of our souls, but it does not know what intelligence and existence are; consequently, seeing what its “principles” are, it cannot be otherwise than ignorant of what man is. [LAW, Man in the Universe]

The sage sees causes in effects, and effects in causes; he sees God in all things, and all things in God. A science that penetrates the depths of the “infinitely great” and of the “infinitely small” on the physical plane, but denies other planes although it is they that reveal the sufficient reason of the nature we perceive and provide the key to it, such a science is a greater evil than ignorance pure and simple; it is in fact a “counter-science”,



and its ultimate effects cannot but be deadly. In other words, modern science is a totalitarian rationalism that eliminates both Revelation and Intellect, and at the same time a totalitarian materialism that ignores the metaphysical relativity – and therewith also the impermanence – of matter and of the world. It does not know that the supra-sensible, situated as it is beyond space and time, is the concrete principle of the world, and that it is consequently also at the origin of that contingent and changeable coagulation we call “matter”. A science that is called “exact” is in fact an “intelligence without wisdom”, just as post-scholastic philosophy is inversely a “wisdom without intelligence”. [LAW, Man in the Universe]

To postulate a science without metaphysic is a flagrant contradiction, for without metaphysic there can be no standards and no criteria, no intelligence able to penetrate, contemplate and co-ordinate. [LAW, The Universality of Monasticism]

Modern science, as it plunges dizzily downwards, its speed increasing in geometrical progression towards an abyss into which it hurtles like a vehicle without brakes, is another example of that loss of the “spatial” equilibrium characteristic of contemplative and still stable civilizations. This criticism of modern science – and it is by no means the first ever to be made – is made not on the grounds that it studies some fragmentary field within the limits of its competence, but on the grounds that it claims to be in a position to attain to total knowledge, and that it ventures conclusions in fields accessible only to a supra-sensible and truly intellectual wisdom, the existence of which it refuses on principle to admit. In other words, the foundations of modern science are false because, from the “subject” point of view, it replaces Intellect and Revelation by reason and experiment, as if it were not contradictory to lay claim to totality on an empirical basis; and its foundations are false too because, from the “object” point of view, it replaces the universal Substance by matter alone, either by denying the universal Principle or reducing it to matter or to some kind of pseudo-absolute from which all transcendence has been eliminated. [LAW, In the Wake of the Fall]

**Scientia Sacra:** *Scientia sacra* or *philosophia perennis*, that universal gnosis which always has existed and always will exist. [UI, Foreword]

**Scientism:** Scientism in fact is less interested in the real as such – which necessarily goes beyond our limitations – than in what is non-contradictory, therefore in what is logical, or more precisely, in what is empirically logical; thus in what is logical *de facto* according to a given experience, and not in what is logical *de jure* in accordance with the nature of things . . .

The fundamental contradiction of scientism is to want to explain the real without the help of that first science which is metaphysics, hence not to know that only the science of the Absolute gives meaning and discipline to the science of the relative; and not to know at the same stroke that the science of the relative, when it is deprived of this help, can only lead to suicide, beginning with that of the intelligence, then with that of the human, and in the end, with that of humanity. [FDH, To Refuse or To Accept Revelation]

**Scripture / Books:** Important is the fact that the Scriptures are sacred, not because of their subject matter and the way in which it is dealt with, but because of their degree of inspiration, or what amounts to the same, their divine origin; it is this that determines the

contents of the book, and not the inverse. The Bible can speak of a multitude of things other than God without being the less sacred for it, whereas other books can deal with God and exalted matters and still not be the divine word. [SG, Keys to the Bible]

**Self:** The Self has no complementary opposite; it is pure Subject, that is to say It is Its own Object at once unique and infinite, and innumerable on the plane of a certain diversifying relativity . . . The Self radiates even into nothingness and lends it, if one may provisionally express oneself in a more or less paradoxical manner, Its own Reality made of Being, Consciousness, and Life or Beatitude . . . This is the Vedantic ternary *Sat, Chit, Ananda*. [LT, The Servant and Union]

**Self-Knowledge:** It is to discern the ambiguity, pettiness and fragility of the ego. And it is also, and essentially, to “love the neighbor as oneself”; that is, to see in the “other” a “myself” and in the “myself” an “other.” [THC, Intelligence and Character]

**Self-Power / Other-Power:** “Power of Oneself” and the “power of the Other” (in Japanese *jiriki* and *tariki*). The first power is that of intelligence and of will seen from the point of view of the salvific capacity which they possess in principle and which consequently can operate in fact once the required conditions are met; in the first case, man is freed thanks to his intelligence and by his own efforts, at least according to human appearances, for metaphysically the enlightening and liberating power lies outside the grasp of an individual, who is simply its instrument. The second power does not belong to us in any way; it belongs to the “Other” as its name indicates and as its reason for being demands; in this context, man is saved by Grace, which does not however mean that he need not collaborate with this salvation by his receptivity and according to the modes that human nature allows or imposes on him.

. . . It is certain that man can, in principle, save himself “by his own means”, but it is necessary that such an effort be blessed by a celestial Power, hence a “power of the Other”; and it is likewise certain that man can, in principle, be saved by simply abandoning himself to Mercy, but such an abandonment must contain an element of initiative, for the absence of any “power of Oneself” is contrary to the nature of man . . . All told, there are three possible paths: predominance of the “power of Oneself”; predominance of the “power of the Other”; and a balance between the two. [FSR, Truth and Presence]

**Semite / Aryan:** For the Semite, everything begins with Revelation, and consequently with faith and submission; man is *a priori* a believer and consequently a servant: intelligence itself takes on the color of obedience. For the Aryan on the contrary – and we are not thinking of the Semiticized Aryan – it is intellection that comes first, even if it be kindled thanks to a Revelation; Revelation here is not a commandment which seems to create intelligence *ex nihilo* while at the same time enslaving it, but appears rather as the objectivation of the one Intellect, which is both transcendent and immanent. Intellectual certainty has here priority over obediential faith; the Veda does not give orders to the intelligence, it awakens it and reminds it of what it is.

*Grosso modo*, the Aryans – except in cases of intellectual obscurantism in which they have only retained their mythology and ritualism – are above all metaphysicians and therefore

logicians, whereas the Semites – if they have not become idolaters and magicians – are *a priori* mystics and moralists; each of the two mentalities or capacities repeating itself within the framework of the other, in conformity with the Taoist symbol of the *yin-yang*. Or again, the Aryans are objectivists, for good or ill, while the Semites are subjectivists; deviated objectivism gives rise to rationalism and scientism, whereas abusive subjectivism engenders all the illogicalities and all the pious absurdities of which sentimental fideism – over-zealous and conventional – is capable. It is the difference between intellectualism and voluntarism; the first tends to reduce the volitive element to the intelligence or to integrate it therein, and the second on the contrary tends to subordinate the intellectual element to the will; this is said without forgetting the fluctuations necessarily comprised in the concrete reality of things. It is sometimes necessary to express oneself in a schematic manner for the sake of clarity if one is to express oneself at all. [SVQ, The Exo-Esoteric Symbiosis]

The Aryan, insofar as he is observer and philosopher, has a tendency to describe things as they are, while the Semite, who is a moralist, readily presents them as they ought to be according to his pious sentiment; he transcends them by sublimizing them before having had time to extract from them the arguments comprised in their nature. This tendency obviously does not prevent him from being a philosopher when he wants to be, but we are speaking here of the most immediate and most general predispositions. [SVQ, Paradoxes of an Esoterism]

It is perhaps not too hazardous to say that the Aryan spirit tends *a priori* to unveil the truth, in conformity with the realism – sacred or profane – that is proper to it, while the Semitic spirit – whose realism is more moral than intellectual – tends towards the veiling of the Divine Majesty and of its secrets that are too dazzling or too intoxicating; as is shown, precisely, by the innumerable enigmas of the monotheistic Scriptures – in contrast with the *Upanishads* – and as is indicated by the allusive and elliptical nature of the corresponding exegesis. [SVQ, The Exo-Esoteric Symbiosis]

**Sentiment:** Sentiment, if it is rightly inspired, is an adequation: it is to love what is lovable, detest what is detestable, admire what is admirable, disdain what is contemptible, fear what is fearful and trust what is trustworthy; the positive quintessence of sentiment being love, which is a divine dimension. From this priority it follows that to detest is not properly speaking to create an aversion, it is rather to withdraw love, which exists before hate, as lovable things exist before detestable things, ontologically speaking; whereas to love is not to withdraw a preexisting hatred – inexistent in fact – it is to remain in the original attitude: in the love that, according to Dante, “moves the sun and the other stars.” [RHC, Pillars of Wisdom]

Sentiment, envisaged in all its aspects, operates on the one hand a sort of vital discrimination between what is noble, lovable and useful and what is not so and on the other, an assimilation of what is worthy of being assimilated and thereby realized; in other words love is dependent on the worth of the object. If love takes precedence over hatred to the point that there is no common measure between them, this is because absolute Reality is absolutely lovable; love is substance, hatred is accident, except in the case of creatures that are perverse. [EPW, The Nature and Role of Sentiment]

Sentiment in itself is not sentimentalism; it is not an abuse unless it falsifies a truth; in itself, it is the faculty of loving what is objectively lovable: the true, the holy, the

beautiful, the noble; “beauty is the splendor of the true.” [THC, Intelligence and Character]

The Intellect – that kind of static Revelation, permanent in principle and “supernaturally natural” – is not opposed to any possible expression of the Real; it is situated beyond sentiment, imagination, memory and reason, but it can at the same time enlighten and determine all of these since they are like its individualized ramifications, ordained as receptacles to receive the light from on high and to translate it according to their respective capacities. The positive quintessence of sentiment is love; and love, to the extent that it transcends itself in the direction of its supernatural source, is the love of man for God and of God for man, and finally it is Beatitude without origin and without end. [TM, Reflections on Ideological Sentimentalism]

**Sentiment / Sentimentality / Sentimentalism:** It is important not to confuse the notions of sentiment, sentimentality and sentimentalism, as is too often done as the result of either a rationalistic or an intellectualistic prejudice. The second case, moreover, is more surprising than the first, for if the reason is in a certain sense opposed to sentiment, the intellect remains neutral in this regard, just as light remains neutral with regard to colors; we intentionally say “intellectualistic” and not “intellectual” for intellectuality cannot admit of prejudice.

That a sentiment which is opposed to a truth is not worthy of esteem, everyone will agree, and this is the very definition of sentimentalism. When one justifiably reproaches an attitude for being sentimental, this can only mean one thing, namely that the attitude in question contradicts a rational attitude and usurps its place; and it must be borne in mind that an attitude can be positively rational only when it is based either on intellectual knowledge or simply on adequate information regarding a real situation. An attitude cannot be termed rational just because it makes use of logic, inasmuch as it is possible to reason in the absence of the necessary data.

Just as intellectuality signifies on the one hand the nature of what is intellectual and on the other a tendency towards the intellect, so sentimentality signifies both the nature of what is sentimental and a tendency towards sentiment; as for sentimentalism, it systematizes an excess of sentimentality to the detriment of the normal perception of things: denominational and political fanaticisms are in this category. If we draw attention to these distinctions which in themselves are obvious, it is solely because of the frequent confusions which we observe in this domain – we are certainly not alone in so doing – and which run the risk of falsifying the notions of intellectuality and spirituality. [EPW, The Nature and Role of Sentiment]

**Sentimental / Intellectual:** The trivialization of certain terms obliges us to specify that we use the words “sentimental” and “intellectual” in their proper and neutral meaning, without applying to “sentimental” the pejorative and to “intellectual” the profane and banal nuances that conventional language lends them. “Sentimental” is that which pertains to sentiment, whether base or lofty, stupid or intelligent, worldly or sacral; “intellectual” is that which pertains to the intellect, whether doctrinal or methodical, discriminating or contemplative. Thus the term “intellectual” does not have the same ambivalence as the term “sentimental”, for the simple reason that sentiment is a

horizontal and ambiguous faculty, whereas the intellect – not just intelligence or reason alone – is by definition a vertical and ascending faculty. [FSR, The Human Margin]

**Sentimental Doctrine:** A doctrine merits the epithet “sentimental,” not because it makes use of a symbolism of the feelings or because it reflects incidentally in its form the sentiments of the writer who expounds it, but because its point of departure is determined more by feeling than by objective reality, which means that the latter is violated by the former. To this definition we must add a reservation in favor of the traditional doctrines, or some of them: strictly speaking, a true doctrine could be qualified by use of the word “sentimental” when sentiment is introduced into the very substance of that doctrine, while limiting the truth, by force of circumstance, on account of the “subjective” and affective character of sentimentality as such; it is in this sense that Guénon spoke of the presence of a sentimental element in the Semitic exoterisms, while pointing out that it is this element which causes the incompatibilities between dogmas of different origins. But in this case, the term “sentimental” cannot mean that the doctrine itself originates in a sentimental and therefore human reaction, as happens with profane ideologies; on the contrary, here the marriage between truth and sentiment is a providential and beneficial concession to certain psychological predispositions, so that the epithet in question is only applicable on condition that one specifies that it concerns orthodox doctrines. [TM, Reflections on Ideological Sentimentalism]

**Serenity:** It is necessary to accept “God’s will” when evil enters into our destiny and cannot possibly be avoided; indeed, the partially paradoxical nature of All-Possibility requires of man an attitude of conformity to this situation, namely the quality of serenity, of which the sky above us is the visible sign. Serenity is to keep oneself so to speak above the clouds, in the calm and coolness of emptiness and far from all the dissonances of this lower world; it is never to allow the soul to immerse itself in impassés of disturbances, bitterness, or secret revolt, for it is necessary to beware of implicitly accusing Being when accusing some phenomenon. We do not say that one should not accuse evil in all justice, we say that one should not accuse it with an attitude of despair, losing sight of the everywhere-present Sovereign Good and, in another respect, of the imperatives of universal equilibrium; the world is what it must be.

Serenity is resignation, at once intellectual and moral, to the nature of things: it is patience in relation to All-Possibility insofar as the latter requires, by its very limitlessness, the existence of negative possibilities, those that deny Being and the qualities manifesting It, as we have noted above. We would also say, in order to provide one more key, that serenity consists in resigning oneself to that destiny, at once unique and permanent, which is the present moment: to this itinerant “now” that no one can avoid and that in its substance pertains to the Eternal. The man who is conscious of the nature of pure Being willingly remains in the moment that Heaven has assigned him; he is not feverishly straining towards the future nor lovingly or sadly bent over the past. The pure present is the moment of the Absolute: it is now – neither yesterday nor tomorrow – that we stand before God.

. . . Serenity is the quasi-unconditional moral victory either over the natural shadows, or over the absurd dissonances of the world and of life; in the case of encounters with evil – and we owe it to God and to ourselves to remain in Peace – we may use the following

arguments. First, no evil can take anything away from the Sovereign Good or ought to disturb our relationship with God; we must never lose sight of absolute values when in contact with the absurd. Second, we must be conscious of the metaphysical necessity of evil; “it must needs be that offences come.” Third, let us not lose sight of the limits or the relativity of evil; for God shall have the last word. Fourthly, it is clearly necessary to be resigned to God’s will, that is, to our destiny; destiny, by definition, is what we cannot but encounter; and thus it is an aspect of ourselves. Fifth – and this follows from the preceding argument – God wishes to try our faith, hence also our sincerity and our patience, not to mention our gratitude; this is why one speaks of the “trials of life.” Sixth, God will not ask us to account for what others do, nor for what happens to us without our being directly responsible for it; He will only ask us to account for what we are directly responsible for; He will only ask us to account for what we ourselves do. Seventh and last, pure happiness is not for this life, it is for the next; perfection is not of this world, but this world is not everything, and the last word belongs to Beatitude. [RHC, Cosmic Shadows and Serenity]

Serenity is Beauty of the True. [RH, Peace]

**Shahadatan:** The doctrine of Islam consists of two statements: first “There is no divinity (or reality, or absolute) save the sole Divinity (or Reality, or Absolute)” (*La ilaha illa 'Llah*), and “Muhammad (the Glorified, the Perfect) is the Messenger (the spokesman, the intermediary, the manifestation, the symbol) of the Divinity” (*Muhammadun Rasulu 'Llah*); these are the first and the second Testimonies (*Shahadatan*) of the faith. [UI, Islam]

**Shakti:** The term *shakti* means fundamentally the efficient energy of the Supreme Principle envisaged in itself or at a given ontological degree. For the Principle, or let us say the metacosmic Order, comprises degrees and modes in virtue of Universal Relativity, *Maya*, in which it reverberates.

In the domain of the spiritual life, the same term *shakti* signifies the celestial energy that allows man to enter into contact with the Divinity, by means of the appropriate rites and on the basis of a traditional system. Essentially, this divine *Shakti* aids and attracts: She aids as “Mother,” and attracts as “Virgin”; Her aid descends upon us from Heaven, whereas Her attraction raises us towards Heaven. This is to say that the *Shakti*, as *pontifex*, on the one hand confers a second birth, and on the other offers liberating graces. In the Absolute, the *Shakti* is the aspect of Infinitude that coincides with All-Possibility and gives rise to *Maya*, the universal and efficient *Shakti*. [RHC, *Mahashakti*]

**Shamanism:** The word “Shamanism” is used here to mean the traditions of prehistoric origin that are associated with Mongoloid peoples, including the American Indians. [FS, The Shamanism of the Red Indians]

**Sign:** The word “sign” when it does not relate to phenomena of this world, is applied to the verses of the Quran, and this clearly shows the analogy between Nature and Revelation. [UI, The Prophet]

**Simplicity:** Simplicity is indifference to the egoistic reactions of the soul; it is imperturbable and calm concentration on the “one thing necessary.” [CI, The Spiritual Virtues According to St. Francis of Assisi]

**Sin:** By “sin” must be understood our separation from the Divine Center insofar as this shows itself in attitudes or acts; the essence of sin is a forgetting of the Absolute, which is at the same time the Infinite and the Perfect, and this forgetting coincides with centrifugal passion and at the same time with egoistic hardening. [TM, Usurpations of Religious Feeling]

If we wish to give the word “sin” its broadest or deepest meaning, we would say that it expresses above all an attitude of the heart; hence a “being” and not a simple “doing” or “not doing” . . .

According to the Bible, the forbidden tree was that of the discernment between “good” and “evil”; now this discernment, or this difference, pertains to the very nature of Being; consequently, its source could not be in the creature; to claim it for oneself is to wish to be equal to the Creator, and that is the very essence of sin; of all sin. Indeed, the sinner decides what is good, counter to the objective nature of things; he willingly deludes himself about things and about himself, whence the fall, which is nothing other than the reaction of reality. [PM, Delineations of Original Sin]

“Sin” is thus defined as an act which, firstly, is opposed to the divine Nature in one or another of its forms or modes (the reference here is to the Divine Qualities and the intrinsic virtues which reflect them) and which, secondly, engenders in principle posthumous suffering; it does so “in principle”, but not always in fact, for repentance and positive acts on the one hand and the divine Mercy on the other efface sins, or can efface them. [LAW, In the Wake of the Fall]

**Sin (by omission):** According to the Apostle James, he who knows to do good and does not do it, commits a sin; this is the very definition of sin by omission, but at the same time it goes beyond the framework of a formalistic and exoteric morality. [PM, Delineations of Original Sin]

**Sincerity:** Sincerity is the passage from the cerebral to the cardiac, from the intellectual to the existential, from the partial to the total. The content of this transfer is the idea of Unity, and it is realized with the concurrence of the virtues, which for their part are so many modes or proofs of sincerity. [IFA, Transcendence and Immanence in the Spiritual Economy of Islam]

The root of all true sincerity is sincerity towards God, not towards our own good pleasure; this means that it is not enough to believe in God, but that all the consequences of belief must be drawn in our outer and inner comportment; and when we aspire to a perfection – since God is perfect and wants us to be perfect – we seek to have a semblance of it even before we realize it, and in order to realize it . . . The content of sincerity is our leaning towards God and our consequent adherence to the rules which this leaning imposes on us and not our nature pure and simple with all its shortcomings; to be sincere is not to be imperfect before men, but to be virtuous before God, and to enter accordingly into the mould of virtues as yet unassimilated, whatever men may think . . . Sincerity is the absence of falsehood in inward and outward behaviour; to lie is

deliberately to mislead; one can lie to one's neighbour, to oneself and to God. But a pious man who wraps his weakness in a veil of rectitude does not mean to lie and in virtue of that very fact he is not lying; he does not mean to manifest that which in fact he is, but he cannot help manifesting that which he wishes to be. And in the nature of things, he ends up by being perfectly truthful; for what we wish to be is, in a certain sense, what we are. [EPW, Sincerity: What it Is and What it Is Not]

Sincerity implies two initial concrete attitudes: abstention from what is contrary to truth, and accomplishment of what is in conformity to it; in other words, it is necessary to abstain from all that draws one away from the Sovereign Good – which coincides with the Real – and to accomplish all that brings us closer to it. This is why to the virtues of veracity and sincerity are added those of temperance and fervor, or of purity and vigilance, and also, even more fundamentally, those of humility and charity. [RHC, Virtue and Way]

**Smriti / Shruti:** *Smriti* denotes a derived or secondary inspiration, while . . . the word *shruti* refers to Revelation properly so-called, that is to say, to the Divine Word in a direct sense. [TUR, Universality and Particular Nature of the Christian Religion]

**Solitude:** Solitude in God has nothing privative about it, given the Infinitude of the Sovereign Good; man is “alone” because God is “one,” but this Unity is Totality. [PM, Prerogatives of the Human State]

**Sophia Perennis:** The *Sophia Perennis* is to know the total Truth and, consequently, to will the Good and love Beauty; and this in conformity to this Truth, hence with full awareness of the reasons for doing so. The doctrinal *Sophia* treats of the Divine Principle on the one hand and of its universal Manifestation on the other: hence of God, the world and the soul, while distinguishing within Manifestation between the macrocosm and the microcosm; this implies that God comprises in Himself – extrinsically at least – degrees and modes, that is to say that He tends to limit Himself in view of His Manifestation. Therein lies all the mystery of the Divine *Maya*.

To know the Truth, to will the Good, to love Beauty. We have just characterized the element Truth; as for the Good, it is *a priori* the supreme Principle as quintessence and cause of every possible good; and it is *a posteriori* on the one hand that which in the Universe manifests the Principle, and on the other hand that which leads back to the Principle; in a word, the Good is first of all God Himself, then the “projection” of God into existence, and finally the “reintegration” of the existentiated into God. Let us specify that for man, the three highest goods are: firstly religion, secondly piety, and thirdly salvation, taking these terms in an almost absolute sense and outside any restrictive specification. As for the goods that do not enter into these three categories, they participate in them either in a direct or in an indirect manner, for every good has the value of a symbol, hence of a key.

As for Beauty, it stems from Infinitude, which coincides with the divine Bliss; seen in this connection, God is Beauty, Love, Goodness and Peace, and He penetrates the whole Universe with these qualities. Beauty, in the Universe, is that which reveals the divine Infinitude: every created beauty communicates to us something infinite, beatific,



liberating. Love, which responds to Beauty, is the desire for union, or it is union itself; according to Ibn 'Arabi, the way towards God is Love because God is Beauty.

Goodness, for its part, is the generous radiation of Beauty: it is to Beauty what heat is to light. Being Beauty, God is thereby Goodness or Mercy: we could also say that in Beauty, God lends us something of Paradise; the beautiful is the messenger, not only of Infinitude and Harmony, but also, like the rainbow, of reconciliation and pardon. From an altogether different standpoint, Goodness and Beauty are the respectively “inward” and “outward” aspects of Beatitude, whereas from the standpoint of our preceding distinction, Beauty is intrinsic inasmuch as it pertains to the Essence, whereas Goodness is extrinsic inasmuch as it is exercised in relation to accidents, namely towards creatures.

In this dimension, Rigor, which stems from the Absolute, could not be absent: intrinsically, it is the adamantine purity of the divine and of the sacred; extrinsically, it is the limitation of pardon, owing to the lack of receptivity of given creatures. The world is woven of two major dimensions, mathematical rigor and musical gentleness; both are united in a superior homogeneity that pertains to the very fathomlessness of the Divinity.

In such truths or mysteries, the exoteric and esoteric perspectives – religions and wisdoms – participate in accordance with their capabilities and their vocations: esoterism in considering strictly the nature of things, and exoterism in filtering and adapting it to human opportunities, while conveying behind this veil the treasures of the one and unanimous *Sophia*. In the very depths of certain men there always resides, intact, man as such; and consequently also the plenary knowledge of God.

What defines man is that of which he alone is capable: namely total intelligence – endowed with objectivity and transcendence – free will, and generous character; or quite simply objectivity, hence adequation of the will and of sentiment as well as of intelligence. The *Sophia Perennis* is, basically, objectivity freed from all shackles: it is the capacity to “perceive” that which is, to the point of being able to “be” that which is; it is the capacity to conform to necessary – not only possible – Being.

The animal cannot leave his state, whereas man can; strictly speaking, only he who is fully man can leave the closed system of the individuality, through participation in the one and universal Selfhood. There lies the mystery of the human vocation: what man “can,” he “must”; on this plane, to be able to is to have to, given that the capacity pertains to a positive substance. Or again, which fundamentally amounts to the same thing: to know is to be; to know That which is, and That which alone is. [RHC, Pillars of Wisdom] Strictly speaking, there is but one sole philosophy, the *Sophia Perennis*; it is also – envisaged in its integrality – the only religion. *Sophia* has two possible origins, one timeless and the other temporal: the first is “vertical” and discontinuous, and the second, “horizontal” and continuous; in other words, the first is like the rain that at any moment can descend from the sky; the second is like a stream that flows from a spring. Both modes meet and combine: metaphysical Revelation actualizes the intellective faculty, and once awakened, this gives rise to spontaneous and independent intellection. [TM, Thought: Light and Perversion]

**Sophia Perennis / Exoterism:** All things considered, only the *sophia perennis* can be considered a total good without reservations; exoterism, with its evident limitations always comprises an aspect of “lesser evil” owing to its inevitable concessions to collective human nature, hence to the intellectual, moral and spiritual possibilities of an

average that by definition is “fallen”; “God alone is good,” Christ said. From the operative even more than from the speculative point of view, exoterism places pure intelligence between brackets, as it were: it replaces it with belief and reasonings linked to belief, which means that it puts the accent on will and sentiment. It must do so, given its mission and its reason for being; but this limitation is nonetheless a double-edged sword whose consequences are not as purely positive as religious prejudice would have it. It is true that the ambiguity of exoterism is not unrelated to the designs of Providence. [THC, Intelligence and Character]

**Sophia Perennis / Humanism:** The question may be asked whether the *sophia perennis* is a “humanism”; the answer would in principle be “yes,” but in fact it must be “no” since humanism in the conventional sense of the term *de facto* exalts fallen man and not man as such. The humanism of the moderns is practically a utilitarianism aimed at fragmentary man; it is the will to make oneself as useful as possible to a humanity as useless as possible. [THC, Foreword]

**Soul:** Aristotle says ‘the soul is all that it knows’. [GDW, The Sense of the Absolute in Religions]

**Space (concrete / abstract):** Concrete space is the amplitude, the delimitation and the situation of spatial phenomena; abstract space is extension in itself, which phenomena render measurable. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

**Space / Time:** Space has three dimensions: length, width and height; then six subjective dimensions: above, below, right, left, before, behind. Analogously, time has four objective dimensions – the four phases of a cycle: morning, day, evening, night; or spring, summer, autumn, winter; or again, childhood, youth, maturity, old age – and two subjective dimensions: the past and the future; the present being beyond our grasp, as is the center in space. [THC, Universal Categories]

Space goes from the ungraspable point to limitless extension; and time, from the instant to perpetuity. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

Space is “round,” therefore it is limited, but not spatially so; it would be impossible to reach its confines otherwise than in an indirect way, given the fact that our faculties of sensation cannot under any circumstances step outside the spatial condition. As for time, it is “spiroidal” and irreversible, hence its cyclic rhythm. [TB, Cosmological and Eschatological Viewpoints]

**Spiritual Ascent:** The basis of spiritual ascent is that God is pure Spirit and that man resembles Him fundamentally through the intelligence; man goes towards God by means of that which is, in him, most conformable to God – namely the intellect – which is at the same time both penetration and contemplation and has as its “supernaturally natural” content the Absolute which illumines and delivers. The character of a Path depends on a particular preliminary definition of man: if man is defined as passion, as the general perspective of Christianity would have it – though there is here no principial restriction – then the Path is suffering; if as desire, then the Path is renunciation; if as will, then the

Path is effort; if as intelligence, then the Path is discernment, concentration, contemplation. [UI, Islam]

**Stupidity:** Stupidity is the inability to discern the essential from the accidental: it consists in attaching oneself to mere facts and in considering them simply in themselves, that is, without the least induction. [EH, Transgression and Purification]

It is not without reason that popular opinion tends to associate pride with stupidity. One can in fact be pretentious through stupidity just as one can be stupid through pretension; the two things go together. Of course, lack of intelligence does not necessarily lead to pretension, but pretension cannot avoid harming the intelligence. And if, as is commonly admitted, stupidity is the incapacity to discern between the essential and the secondary, or between cause and effect, it includes for that very reason a measure of pride; a stupidity combined with a perfect humility and a perfect detachment would no longer be stupidity, it would be a simplicity of mind which could trouble no intelligent and virtuous person. [SME, Passion and Pride]

Let us specify that stupidity often manifests itself through confusion between a material cause and a moral cause, or between a phenomenon due to circumstances and another resulting from a fundamental quality, in short, between an “accident” and a “substance”; for example, a government is taken for a people, or a collective psychosis for an ethnic character. [THC, Intelligence and Character]

**Subconscious:** The subconscious covers all whereof we have no consciousness in an actual fashion, be it a matter of higher realities or of psychic complexes; but in fact, what people ordinarily understand by “subconscious” is merely the inferior psychism, as is moreover consistent with its etymology whenever *sub* is opposed to *super* or *supra*. If the word “infra-conscious” were a current term, it should serve to indicate, not that of which we are only faintly conscious, but rather that which is little endowed with consciousness. [TB, The Question of Illusion]

**Subconscious (spiritual):** The idea of the subconscious is susceptible, not only of a psychological and lower interpretation, but also of a spiritual, higher, and consequently purely qualitative interpretation. It is true that in this case one should speak of the “supra-conscious” but the fact is that the supra-conscious has also an aspect that is “subterranean” in relation to our ordinary consciousness, just as the heart resembles a submerged sanctuary which, symbolically speaking, reappears on the surface thanks to unitive realization; it is this subterranean aspect that allows us to speak – in a provisional way – of a “spiritual subconscious,” which must never at any time be taken to mean the lower, vital psyche, the passive and chaotic dreaming of individuals and collectivities. [UI, The Path]

**Subject / Object:** As for the categories “subject” and “object,” we shall begin by taking note of the fact that the object is reality in itself, or reality envisaged in connection with its perceptibility, whereas the subject is consciousness in itself, or consciousness envisaged in relation to its faculty of perception. In both cases there is a relationship of reciprocity and a relationship of divergence: with respect to the first, we would say that the world insofar as it is a perception is part of the subject, which perceives it; inversely

the ego, insofar as it is something which the subject perceives as being outside itself, is part of the object. In the second case, that of divergence, we oppose the “in itself,” which is evidently objective, to pure consciousness “withdrawn into itself”; in the last analysis this brings us back to transcendence and to immanence, which meet in Unity and in the Indivisible. [THC, Universal Categories]

**Substance / Accident:** There is discontinuity between accidents and Substance, although from Substance to accidents there is an extremely subtle continuity in the sense that, Substance alone being fully real, accidents must necessarily be aspects of it; but in that case they are being considered only in terms of their cause and not in any other terms and the irreversibility of relationship is therefore maintained. In other words, the accident is reduced to Substance; as accident it is an exteriorization of Substance and to this corresponds the Divine Name *Azh-Zhahir* (The Outward) . . .

The common meaning of the word “substance” clearly shows that there are intermediate substances which are “accidental” by comparison with pure Substance but nonetheless play the part of substances in relation to what is accidental for them. These substances are, in ascending order: matter, ether, the animic substance, supraformal and macrocosmic substance – which could also be termed “angelic” – and finally universal, metacosmic Substance which is one of the poles of Being, or its horizontal dimension or feminine aspect . . .

To know that the “Substance of substances” is alone absolutely real, or that it is strictly speaking the only reality, means to see Substance in and through every accident; thanks to this initial knowledge of Reality, the world becomes metaphysically transparent. [UI, The Path]

**Substance / Essence:** The terms substance and essence which – rightly or wrongly – are taken in practice to be more or less synonymous, differ in that substance refers to the underlying, immanent, permanent nature of a basic reality, whereas essence refers to the reality as such, that is as “being” and, in a secondary sense, as the absolutely fundamental nature of a thing. The notion of essence denotes an excellence which is, so to say, discontinuous in respect to accidents, whereas the notion of substance implies on the contrary a kind of continuity, and this is why we employ it when speaking of *Atma* in connection with *Maya*. [FSR, *Atma-Maya*]

Substance may be compared to the center of a spiral, and Essence to the center of a system of concentric circles; one may also say that the notion of Substance is nearer to that of the Infinite and the notion of Essence nearer to that of the Absolute; again, there is in Substance an aspect of femininity and in Essence an aspect of masculinity. [LT, The Argument Founded on Substance]

However, the terms “substance” and “essence” are synonymous inasmuch as they simply designate the archetypal content of a phenomenon. [PM, The Liberating Passage]

In fact, the terms “substance” and “essence” are often synonymous, but strictly speaking, the first term suggests a continuity, and the second, a discontinuity; the first refers more to immanence, and the second, to transcendence. On the one hand, one distinguishes between the substance, which is permanent, and the “accidents,” which change; on the other hand, one makes a distinction between the essence, which is the fundamental nature

– whether it is a question of the Principle or of manifestation – and the “form,” which is its reflection or mode of expression. [SME, Creation as a Divine Quality]

**Sufic Onomatology:** “The First” (*Al-Awwal*): the Supreme Principle insofar as It is “before” Manifestation, and insofar as its Infinitude “desires” its Radiation. Mystery of the Origin, of the primordial Perfection.

“The Last” (*Al-Akhir*): The Principle insofar as It is “after” Manifestation, and insofar as its Absoluteness “desires” its Unicity. Mystery of the final Good, of eternal Peace.

“The Outward” (*Azh-Zhahir*): the Principle insofar as It manifests Itself through and in the World; from this derives the perspective of analogy. Mystery of universal Manifestation; of Symbolism.

“The Inward” (*Al-Batin*): the Principle insofar as It remains hidden behind the appearances of Manifestation; from this derives the perspective of abstraction. Mystery of Immanence as well as of Transcendence.

“God” (*Allah*): the Principle insofar as It includes all of its possible aspects. Mystery of Divinity.

“The One” (*Al-Ahad*): the Principle insofar as It is One in Itself. Mystery of intrinsic Unity.

“The Unique” (*Al-Wahid*): the Principle insofar as It is One in relation to Manifestation. Mystery of extrinsic Unity.

“The Impenetrable” (*As-Samad*): the Principle insofar as nothing can be added to It, given that It contains everything; there is nothing that It does not already possess, thus nothing can enter into It. Mystery of exclusivity.

“He” (*Huwa*): the Principle insofar as It is Itself; the Essence beyond the Qualities. Mystery of Ipseity, of Essentiality, of Aseity.

“There is no divinity save the sole Divinity” (*La ilaha illa Llah*): the Principle insofar as It excludes and annuls the illusory World, while at the same time affirming the unique and supreme Reality. Mystery of Negation and of Affirmation; of Reality.

“The Clement” (*Ar-Rahman*): the Principle insofar as it is in its nature to wish to communicate its Goodness, its Beauty, its Beatitude, insofar as It is the Sovereign Good “before” the creation of the World. Mystery of intrinsic Goodness.

“The Merciful” (*Ar-Rahim*): the Principle insofar as It manifests its Goodness “after” the creation of the World and within it. Mystery of extrinsic Goodness. [TM, Sufic Onomatology]

**Sufism:** The concrete content – and thus the origin – of Islamic spirituality is the spiritual Substance of the Prophet, the Substance whose modalities Qushayri, Ibn al-‘Arif and others have tried to catalog by means of the notion of “stations” (*maqamat*). Sufism is the realization of Union, not only by starting from the idea of Unity that is both transcendent and immanent, but also, and correlatively, by being reintegrated into the hidden and yet ever-present Muhammadan Substance, directly or indirectly or in both ways at once: thus the mystical “traveller” (*salik*) may “follow the example of the Prophet” in a way that is either formal or formless, hence indirect or direct; for the Sunna is not just the multitude of precepts, it is also the “Muhammadan Substance”\* of which these precepts are the reflections at various levels, and which coincides with the mystery of the “immanent Prophet.” In principle or in themselves the intrinsic qualities are independent of outward

comportment, whereas the latter's entire reason for being lies in the former; rather as, according to the Shaykh al-'Alawi, the sufficient reason of the rites is the remembrance of God, which contains all rites in an undifferentiated synthesis.

(\* "And verily thou art of a supereminent nature" (*la 'ala khuluqin 'azim*): that is, of a most lofty character (Sura "The Pen," 4.) [IFA, The Mystery of the Prophetic Substance] In fact, the term "Sufism" includes the most shallow fanaticism as well as the most profound speculation; now neither one nor the other constitutes total *Tasawwuf*, which goes without saying in the case of the first attitude, whereas the second is integral esoterism only on condition that it be accompanied by an appropriate method and not merely by pious observances, whose emotional accentuation moreover is scarcely compatible with the perspective of gnosis. Authentic esoterism – let us say it again – is the way it is founded on total or essential truth, and not merely on partial or formal truth, and which makes an operative use of the intelligence, and not only of the will and the feelings. The totality of truth demands the totality of man. [SVQ, Human Premises of a Religious Dilemma]

Sufism is "sincerity of faith" and this sincerity – which has absolutely nothing in common with the modern cult of sincerity – is, on the level of doctrine, nothing other than an intellectual vision that does not halt halfway but on the contrary draws from the idea of Unity its most rigorous consequences. The final term of this is not only the idea of the nothingness of the world but also that of the Supreme Identity and the corresponding realization: "the unity of Reality" (*wahdat al-Wujud*). [UI, The Path]

In defining Sufism as an asceticism, it is implicitly defined as a succession of realizatory and liberating Stations; and this corresponds perfectly to the specific nature of esoterism, which "transforms" man instead of simply saving him; or rather, which saves him in transforming him, and transforms him in saving him. [SME, Enigma and Message of Islamic Esoterism]

**Supernatural:** It is necessary . . . to be clear as to the meaning of the word "supernatural": the supernatural can be what is contrary to the laws of nature, but it cannot be contrary to the very principles of the Universe; if we term "natural" that which simply obeys the logic of things, with no other restriction, the supernatural is also natural, but it is so on a scale far vaster than that of physical causality, that of this lower world. The supernatural is the "divinely natural" which, irrupting into an eminently contingent and limited plane of the natural, contradicts the laws of this plane, not by virtue of the causality proper to the latter, of course, but by virtue of a far less contingent and limited causality. [FDH, The Sense of the Sacred]

**Superstition:** However restricted the experience of modern man may be in things belonging to the psychic or subtle order, there are still phenomena of that kind which are in no way inaccessible to him in principle, but he treats them from the start as "superstitions" and hands them over to the occultists.

Acceptance of the psychic dimension is in any case part of religion: one cannot deny magic without straying from faith; so far as miracles are concerned, their cause surpasses the psychic plane, though their effects come by way of it. In theological language the term "superstition" tends to be confusing because it expresses two entirely different ideas, namely, on the one hand a wrong application of religious sentiment, and on the

other a belief in unreal or ineffectual things. Thus spiritualism is called “superstition”, but rightly so only with respect to its interpretations of phenomena and its cult, and not with respect to the phenomena themselves; on the other hand sciences like astrology are perfectly real and effectual, and imply no deviation of a pseudo-religious kind. The word “superstition” ought really not to be applied to sciences or facts that are unknown and are ridiculed although not a single word about them is understood, but to practices that are either intrinsically useless, or totally misunderstood and called upon to fill the gap left by an absence of true spirituality or of effectual rites. No less superstitious is a false or improper interpretation of a symbolism or of some coincidence, often in conjunction with fantastic fears or scruples, and so on. In these days the word “superstition” no longer means anything; when theologians use it – the point will bear repetition – one never knows whether they are finding fault with a concrete diabolism or with a mere illusion; in their eyes a magical act and a pretence at magic look like the same thing, and they do not notice the contradiction inherent in declaring in the same breath that sorcery is a great sin and that it is nothing but superstition. [LAW, Reflections on Naïvety]

**Supreme Principle:** The Supreme Principle is pure Substance, which is to say It is without accident. Without accident, that is: without contingency, without limit and without imperfection; contingency being opposed to Absoluteness as the accident is opposed to the Substance; and similarly, limit being opposed to Infinitude, and imperfection to Perfection, or the Potentiality of Good. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

**Symbol:** A symbol is anything that serves as a direct support for spiritual realization, as, for example, a *mantra* or a Divine name, or, in a secondary way, a graphic, pictorial or sculptured symbol such as a sacred image (*pratika*). [LS, The Vedanta]

A symbol is intrinsically so concrete and so efficacious that celestial manifestations, when they occur in our sensory world, “descend” to earth and “reascend” to Heaven; a symbolism accessible to the senses takes on the function of the supra-sensible reality which it reflects . . . The word “symbol” implies “participation” or “aspect”, whatever difference of level may be involved. [LAW, In the Wake of the Fall]

A symbol is truly what it symbolizes as far as its essential reality is concerned. [TUR, Concerning Forms in Art]

**Symbol / Rite:** Let us specify that the accident is to the Substance what ice or steam is to water, and that the form is to the Essence what the reflection is to the sun; or again, on quite a different plane, the relationship between the participle and the verb equals that of the accident and the Substance, and the relationship between the word and the thing signified equals that between the form and the Essence. And similarly in the spiritual domain: when we distinguish between the symbol and its principal archetype, the “Idea” (*Eidos*), we refer to the discontinuous and static relationship “form-Essence”; but when we distinguish between the rite and its effect, we refer to the relationship “accident-Substance,” which is continuous and dynamic. This is to say that the accident is a “mode” of the Substance, whereas the form is a “sign” of the Essence.

Every sacred symbol is an “enlightening form” that invites to a “liberating rite”: the “form” reveals the Essence to us, whereas the “rite” leads us back to the Substance; to the

Substance we are, the only one that is . . . Vision of the Essence through the form, and return to the Substance by means of the rite. [PM, The Liberating Passage]

**Symbolism:** Symbolism would have no meaning if it were not a contingent, but always conscious, mode of perception of Unity; for ‘to see God everywhere’, is to perceive above all the Unity – *Atma*, the Self – in phenomena. [GDW, Seeing God Everywhere]

**Symbolism (abstract / concrete):** A symbolism is abstract inasmuch as it signifies a principial reality; it is concrete inasmuch as it communicates the nature of this reality, that is, makes it present to our experience. [FDH, The Message of the Human Body]

**Symbolism (direct / indirect):** When perceiving a sign-proof of the divine Principle, the contemplative mentality has two spontaneous reactions, namely essentialization and interiorization, the first being objective, and the second subjective: through the first, man sees in the sign or quality that which is essential – the divine intention if one will – whereas through the second, he finds the sign or quality in his own soul; on the one hand “unto the pure all things are pure”; on the other, “the kingdom of God is within you.” The first reaction refers to transcendence, and the second to immanence, although transcendence too relates to what we bear within ourselves, and although immanence also exists outside ourselves.

Thus, we live in a fabric of theophanies of which we are a part; to exist is to be a symbol; wisdom is to perceive the symbolism of things. And perhaps we ought to recall here the distinction between a symbolism that is direct, concrete, and evident, and another that – while being traditional – is indirect and more or less arbitrary with respect to formal adequacy, which precisely it does not have in view. Direct symbolism “manifests” the reality symbolized, whereas indirect symbolism merely “indicates” a fragmentary, contingent or accidental aspect of the image chosen. From another vantage point, we would say that the worship of symbols must obey sacramental rules: to worship the sun in place of God is one thing; to be aware of its spiritual emanation, and to know how to impregnate oneself with it ritually, is another. [RHC, Traces of Being, Proofs of God]

**Symbolist Mind:** The symbolist vision of the cosmos is *a priori* a spontaneous perspective that bases itself on the essential nature – or the metaphysical transparency – of phenomena, rather than cutting these off from their prototypes . . . The symbolist mind sees appearances in their connection with essences . . . This means that it sees things, not “superficially” only, but above all “in depth,” or that it perceives them in their “participative” or “unitive” dimension as well as their “separative” dimension. [FS, The Symbolist Mind]

**Syncretism / Eclecticism:** Syncretism is never an affair of substance: it is an assembling of heterogeneous elements into a false unity, that is to say, into a unity without real synthesis; eclecticism on the other hand is natural wherever different doctrines exist side by side, as is proved by the integration of Platonism or Aristotelianism with Christianity. The important thing in any case of the kind is that the original perspective should remain faithful to itself and should only accept alien concepts in so far as they corroborate its faithfulness by helping to illuminate the fundamental intentions of its own perspective.



The Christians had no reason at all for refusing to be inspired by Greek wisdom since it was at hand, and in the same way the Moslems could not help making use to a certain extent in their mystical doctrine of Neoplatonic concepts as soon as they became aware of them; but it would be a serious mistake to speak of syncretism in these cases, on the false assumption of an analogy between them and artificial doctrines such as those of the modern Theosophical Society. There have never been borrowings between two living religions of essential elements affecting their fundamental structures. [LAW, The Universality of Monasticism]

**System:** We mean this word, not in the sense of an elaboration or coordination which is purely logical and thus completely outward and profane, but in that of a homogeneous ensemble of spiritual precepts, ordered in virtue of a metaphysical perspective. A traditional doctrine is never narrowly systematic, but it nonetheless constitutes a system, like every living organism or like the universe. [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]

**Theism / Atheism:** Each of the ideas associated with the term “theism” can have a legitimate meaning, on condition that it be interpreted in accordance with a metaphysically correct intention. Even “atheism” has an admissible meaning if – interpreted in accordance with the Buddhist point of view – it refers to an exclusively “subjective” and immanentist perspective, and this in a spiritual, not humanistic and profane, sense of course; however, this term is too spoiled by its purely negative application to be acceptable. [THC, Degrees and Scope of Theism]

**Theology:** Theology is on the whole the philosophical commentary on Revelation; “inspired” commentary in the sense that, to the extent possible, it forestalls heresies properly so called, while taking into account psychological and moral opportunity. [CI, Atomism and Creation]

Theology to be sure is far from disdaining the assistance of logic; it could never fall into rationalism, purely and simply, however, since it is based on Revelation. It nevertheless finds itself in an analogous position in so far as its reasonings display limitations both from a subjective and an objective standpoint: subjectively, because the theologian relies on a certain logic only and not on Intellection; objectively, because the premises or data on which it is based are confined to fixed and exclusive conceptual forms, namely dogmas or their Scriptural roots. However, the intrinsically supernatural character of the dogmas and also a certain grace inherent in religion guarantee that theological reasoning when properly used is free from the arbitrariness of profane thought, and allow it always to remain to a certain degree a vehicle of truth or at least a means of reference thereto; the reasoning in question is nevertheless restrictive owing to its exclusiveness, and it can even be aberrant in regard to total truth. In any case theology, whether influenced by Aristotelian thought or not, takes a partially rationalistic form out of fear of gnosis, a fear explained by the nonformal, supradogmatic and in principle universalist character of the latter. Hence the paradox of an intellectuality, or spirituality, that has an interest in limiting the definition of the intelligence, which it thinks can be reduced to a purely “natural” level, in order that the quality of “supernaturalness,” may be reserved for the dogmas and the “mysteries,” whether real or otherwise. [LT, Rationalism, Real and Apparent]

Theology is a type of thought which, being founded on the necessarily antinomic and elliptical – but by no means contradictory or insoluble – data of the sacred Scriptures, interprets these data by means of reason and in accordance with a piety often more fervent than enlightened. This results in theories which are doubtless opportune and efficacious in a given psychological or moral connection, but which are restrictive or even unsound from the point of view of pure and simple truth, and in any case unacceptable on the plane of metaphysics. [CI, Dilemmas of Moslem Scholasticism]

**Theory / Reality:** A doctrinal theory can merely offer points of reference, if only for the simple reason that an expression is necessarily something other than the reality to be expressed. The identity between theory and reality is moreover as unnecessary as it is impossible, precisely because a theory is able to furnish perfectly sufficient points of reference, otherwise there would be no adequate and effectual symbolism, nor consequently any doctrine; it is this which most profane thinkers are incapable of understanding, they who wish to exhaust everything in words, and who imagine that one knows only what one expresses. [CI, Atomism and Creation]

**Thought:** By “thought” we mean here, not an artificial elaboration but the mental crystallization of real knowledge. With all due deference to anti-Platonic theologians, Platonism is not true because it is logical, it is logical because it is true; and as for the possible or apparent illogicalities of the theologians, these can be explained not by an alleged right to the mysteries of absurdity, but by the fragmentary character of particular dogmatic positions and also by the insufficiency of the means of thought and expression. We may recall in this connection the alternativism and the sublimism proper to the Semitic mentality, as well as the absence of the crucial notion of *Maya* – at least at the ordinary theological level, meaning by this reservation that the boundaries of theology are not strictly delimited. [EPW, The Primordial Tree]

**Thought (exoteric):** Theological or, to be more precise, exoteric thought – the two things do not always coincide exactly – generally shows itself incapable of grasping simultaneously two divergent aspects of one and the same reality: it works by alternatives which tend to be moralizing, the more “pious” option being the “truer” one in its eyes, the type of piety being determined by the perspective which is characteristic of the Revelation in question, even though this Revelation may not necessarily imply the same option on the plane of the pure truth. It is not Christ who is anti-Platonic, it is Christians who are, to the extent that they are: however traditional the anathema pronounced in certain liturgical practices of the Greek Church against the Platonists may be, it nonetheless clearly derives from what we may call the “human margin.” Theologically, the falsity of the Platonic thesis can only amount to a hypothesis, and one which is all the more senseless in that no theologian can contest that the principles of things necessarily preexist in the creative Intellect, or Providence, if one so prefers, and that each positive cosmic possibility is presided over by an angelic power which is its prototype or “idea.” [LT, Rationalism, Real and Apparent]

**Thought (profane):** Profane thought is not confined to thought which is ignorant of metaphysical and mystical truths, but also includes thought which, while knowing these

truths well enough in theory, has nonetheless a disproportionate approach to them, an approach that is unaccompanied by a sufficient adaptation of the soul; not that such thought is profane by definition as in the case of ignorant thought, but it is so secondarily or morally and lies in grave danger of error, for man is not merely a mirror, he is a cosmos which is both complex and fragile. [LT, Understanding and Believing]

**Time:** Time is but a spiroidal movement around a motionless Center. [LAW, *Religio Perennis*]

**Time (concrete / abstract):** Concrete time is the changing of phenomena; abstract time is the duration which this change renders measurable. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

**Time (objective / subjective):** Objective time is so to speak a spiroidal movement comprising four phases, and this movement is qualitatively ascending or descending, according to what the period of the full cycle requires; this is to say that time is like a wheel that turns, this rotation being itself submitted to a greater rotation, exactly as the rotation of the earth is inscribed in the rotation of the planet around the sun. As for subjective time, the definition of which is just as elementary as that of the corresponding space, it is divided into present, past and future: what we are, what we were and what we will be, and in addition, what our surroundings are, were and will be. [FDH, Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence]

**Tradition / Science:** Tradition speaks to each man the language he can understand, provided he be willing to listen; this reservation is essential, for tradition, we repeat, cannot become bankrupt; it is rather of man's bankruptcy that one should speak, for it is he who has lost the intuition of the supernatural and the sense of the sacred. Man has allowed himself to be seduced by the discoveries and inventions of an illegitimately totalitarian science; that is, a science which does not recognize its own limits and for that reason is unaware of what lies beyond them. Fascinated by scientific phenomena as well as by the erroneous conclusions he draws from them, man has ended up being submerged by his own creations; he is not ready to realize that a traditional message is situated on an altogether different level, and how much more real this level is. Men let themselves be dazzled all the more easily since scientism gives them all the excuses they want to justify their attachment to the world of appearances and thus also their flight before the presence of the Absolute in any form. [PM, No Initiative without Truth]

**Traditional:** That is "traditional" which is transmitted from a divine source. [FDH, The Sense of the Sacred]

**Traditionalism:** "Traditionalism", like "esoterism," . . . has nothing pejorative about it in itself and one might even say that it is less open to argument and a far broader term, in any case, than the latter; in fact, however, with a particularly reprehensible arbitrariness it has been associated with an idea which inevitably devalues its meaning, namely the idea of "nostalgia for the past"; it is hardly credible that such an idiotic and dishonest circumlocution should be freely resorted to as an argument against strictly doctrinal

positions or even purely logical ones. Those who look back longingly at some past age because it embodied certain vital values are reproached for adhering to these values because they are found in the past, or because one would like to situate them there “irreversibly”; one might as well say that the acceptance of an arithmetical proof is the sign, not of the unimpaired functioning of the intelligence, but of a morbid obsession with numbers. If to recognize what is true and just is “nostalgia for the past,” it is quite clearly a crime or a disgrace not to feel this nostalgia.

The same goes for other accusations prompted by the idea of tradition, such as those of “romanticism,” “aestheticism,” or “folklore”; far from disclaiming any affinity with these things, we adopt them in the precise measure that they have a relationship either with tradition or with virgin nature, restoring to them in consequence their legitimate and, at the very least, innocent meanings. For “beauty is the splendor of the true”; and since it is possible to be capable of perceiving this without lacking “seriousness,” to say the least, we do not feel obliged to offer excuses for being particularly sensitive to this aspect of the Real. [LT, Introduction]

**Transcendence / Immanence:** God is one, and as a result the Transcendent comprises a dimension of immanence, just as for its part the Immanent comprises a dimension of transcendence: for on the one hand, the divine Presence in the depths of the sanctified heart, or in the pure Intellect, does not lose its transcendence by the fact of its immanence, since the ego is not identified *tale quale* with the Self; and on the other hand, the transcendence of the creative Principle does not preclude the objective and existentiating immanence of the same Principle in creation. In other words to say transcendence is to say, first of all macrocosm, and to say immanence, is to say *a priori* microcosm; however, each pole always includes the other, as is shown graphically by the Far Eastern symbol of the *Yin-Yang*, whose testimony we never tire of invoking in our doctrinal expositions.

On the one hand, there is no transcendence without immanence; for the very perception of transcendence implies immanence in the sense that the knowing subject is situated at the level of the object known; one can know divine truth only “by the Holy Spirit” which is immanent in the Intellect, otherwise man would not be “made in the image of God.” On the other hand, there is no immanence without transcendence: that is to say, the ontological, and in principle mystical, continuity between the immanent Divinity and the individual consciousness in no way excludes the discontinuity between these two poles which in truth are incommensurable. [THC, “Our Father Who Art in Heaven”]

To say transcendence is to say both metaphysical Truth and saving Divinity; and to say immanence is to say transpersonal Intellect and divine Selfhood. [PM, Delineations of Original Sin]

Transcendence means discontinuity between the Principle and its manifestation, hence separation, and Immanence means continuity, hence union. [PM, The Liberating Passage] Immanence is not only the presence of the divine in our soul, it is also this presence around us, in the world, just as inversely, transcendence is the inaccessibility of God, not only above us, in the Heavens, but also within us, in the depths of the heart. [THC, Degrees and Scope of Theism]

**Transcendence / Immanence (objective / subjective):** Transcendence is objective inasmuch as it concerns the Divine Order in itself, immanence is subjective inasmuch as it refers to the Divine Presence in us; nonetheless there is also a subjective transcendence, that which within us separates the divine Self from the human “I,” and an objective immanence, namely the divine Presence in the world surrounding us. To be really conscious of “God-as-Object” is also to be conscious of His immanence, and to be conscious of “God-as-Subject,” is also to be conscious of His transcendence. [PM, Delineations of Original Sin]

In Immanence as well as in Transcendence, it is necessary to distinguish two aspects, one objective and one subjective: objective Transcendence is that which is indicated by the world itself; but it may be termed “subjective” when its situation at the core of our personality is considered, in which case it indicates the Transcendence of the Self which, although subjective by definition, is nonetheless transcendent in relation to the “I.” As for Immanence, it is termed “subjective” when it indicates the Self which is situated within us, as well as the continuity which exists in principle between the “I” and the Self, or more precisely, between the latter and the former; but Immanence may be termed “objective” when, in the beings and things surrounding us, we discern Immanence as the existentiating and qualifying Substance. [IFA, Transcendence and Immanence in the Spiritual Economy of Islam]

**Transcendence / Immanence (Yin-Yang):** When we speak of transcendence, we understand in general objective transcendence, that of the Principle, which is above us as it is above the world; and when we speak of immanence, we understand generally speaking subjective immanence, that of the Self, which is within us. It is important to mention that there is also a subjective transcendence, that of the Self within us inasmuch as it transcends the ego; and likewise there is also an objective immanence, that of the Principle in so far as it is immanent in the world, and not in so far as it excludes it and annihilates it by its transcendence.

One finds here an application of the Taoist *Yin-Yang*: transcendence necessarily comprises immanence, and immanence just as necessarily comprises transcendence. For the Transcendent, by virtue of its infinity, projects existence and thereby necessitates immanence; and the Immanent, by virtue of its absoluteness, necessarily remains transcendent in relation to existence. [EPW, The Way of Oneness]

**Transcendent Unity of Religions:** If the expression “transcendent unity” is used, it means that the unity of the religious forms must be realized in a purely inward and spiritual way and without prejudice to any particular form. [TUR, Preface]

**Transgression:** Transgression is essentially non-conformity of action. [EH, Transgression and Purification]

**Trial:** A trial is not necessarily a chastisement, it can also be a grace, and the one does not preclude the other. At all events: a trial in itself not only tests what we are, but also purifies us of what we are not. [SME, Trials and Happiness]

**Trinity (Koranic):** The Trinity “Father, Son, and Mother”, which the Koran attributes to Christianity, has three meanings: first, it expresses a psychological situation *de facto*, Mary being much more present to Christian people, so far as a truly divine function is concerned, than is the Holy Ghost; second, it implies that the Holy Virgin is identified with the Spirit insofar as she is the Wisdom that has been “set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (Proverbs 8:23); third, the Koranic formulation has to stress the exoteric incompatibility of Christian Trinitarianism with Islamic Unitarianism. [LT, Evidence and Mystery]

**Trinity (metacosmic, macrocosmic, microcosmic):** The “Father” is God as such, that is as metacosm; the “Son” is God insofar as He manifests Himself in the world, hence in the macrocosm; and the “Holy Spirit” is God insofar as He manifests Himself in the soul, hence in the microcosm. From another point of view, the macrocosm itself is the “Son”, and the microcosm itself – in its primordial perfection – is identified with the “Holy Spirit”; Jesus corresponds to the macrocosm, to the entire creation as divine manifestation, and Mary corresponds to the “pneumatic” microcosm; and let us recall in this respect the equation that has been made sometimes between the Holy Spirit and the Divine Virgin, an equation that is linked, in some ancient texts, to the feminization of the Divine *Pneuma*. [FSR, Form and Substance in the Religions]

**Trinity (“vertical” and “horizontal”):** The Trinity can be envisaged according to a “vertical” perspective or according to either of two “horizontal” perspectives, one of them being supreme and the other not. The vertical perspective – Beyond-Being, Being, Existence – envisages the hypostases as “descending” from Unity or from the Absolute – or from the Essence it could be said – which means that it envisages the degrees of Reality. The supreme horizontal perspective corresponds to the Vedantic triad *Sat* (supraontological Reality), *Chit* (Absolute Consciousness) and *Ananda* (Infinite Beatitude), which means that it envisages the Trinity inasmuch as it is hidden in Unity.\* The non-supreme horizontal perspective on the contrary situates Unity as an Essence hidden within the Trinity, which is then ontological and represents the three fundamental aspects or modes of Pure Being, whence the triad: Being, Wisdom, Will (Father, Son, Spirit).

(\* The Absolute is not the Absolute inasmuch as it contains aspects, but inasmuch as it transcends them; inasmuch as it is Trinity it is therefore not Absolute.) [UI, The Quran]

**Truth (efficacious):** A truth is efficacious to the extent that we assimilate it; if it does not give us the strength we need, this merely proves we have not grasped it. It is not for the truth to be “dynamic,” it is for us to be dynamic thanks to the truth. What is lacking in today’s world is a penetrating and comprehensive knowledge of the nature of things; the fundamental truths are always accessible, but they could not be imposed on those who refuse to take them into consideration. [PM, No Initiative without Truth]

**Truth (metaphysical):** Metaphysical truth is in the first place discernment between the Real and the unreal or the less real; and concentration or the operative act of the spirit – prayer in the very broadest sense – is in a way our response to the truth which offers itself

to us; it is Revelation entering into our consciousness and becoming in some degree assimilated by our being. [UI, The Path]

**Truth (universal):** We have spoken of universal truths; by this term we mean principles which determine everything that exists. [THC, Fundamental Keys]

**Truth / Intellection:** Truth in the current sense of the word, that of a concordance between a state of fact and our consciousness, is indeed situated on the plane of thought, or at least it applies *a priori* to that plane. As for Intellection, its object is “reality” of which “truth” is the conceptual clothing. But in practice the terms “reality” and “truth” usually merge into one another. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]

**Truth / Presence:** The saving manifestation of the Absolute is either Truth or Presence, but it is not one or the other in an exclusive fashion, for as Truth It comprises Presence, and as Presence It comprises Truth. Such is the twofold nature of all theophanies; thus Christ is essentially a manifestation of Divine Presence, but he is thereby also Truth: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” No one enters into the saving proximity of the Absolute except through a manifestation of the Absolute, be it *a priori* Presence or Truth . . . [FSR, Truth and Presence]

**Truth / Reality:** Truth and reality must not be confused: the latter relates to “being” and signifies the aseity of things, and the former relates to “knowing” – to the image of reality reflected in the mirror of the intellect – and signifies the adequation of “being” and “knowing”; it is true that reality is often designated by the word “truth,” but this is a dialectical synthesis which aims at defining truth in relation to its virtuality of “being,” of “reality.” If truth is thus made to embrace ontological reality, aseity, the inexpressible, and so also the “personal” realization of the Divine, there is clearly no “total truth” on the plane of thought; but if by “truth” is understood thought insofar as it is an adequate reflection, on the intellectual plane, of “being,” there is a “total truth” on this plane, but on condition firstly that nothing quantitative is envisaged in this totality, and secondly that it is made clear that this totality can have a relative sense, according to the order of thought to which it belongs. There is a total truth which is such because it embraces, in principle, all possible truths: this is metaphysical doctrine, whether its enunciation be simple or complex, symbolical or dialectical; but there is also a truth which is total on the plane of spiritual realization, and in this case “truth” becomes synonymous with “reality.” [LS, Orthodoxy and Intellectuality]

**“Understand” / “Understanding”:** It is necessary to point out the common abuse of the word “understand,” or of the notion of “understanding”: we are told that one has to “understand” an evil-doer or a bad man and that to understand is to forgive. If this were so, what is one to think of sinners who convert, and above all of the traditional injunction to “know thyself”? The good thief of the Gospel did not go to Paradise for nothing, and Saint Augustine knew what he was doing when writing his Confessions. With a quite characteristic inconsistency, the partisans of unconditional “understanding” – it is as if it sufficed to be “me” to always be right – are always careful to keep from “understanding”

those who think otherwise, and whom they vilify shamelessly; a one-way charity necessarily ends in an upside-down justice. [PM, On Intention]

**Unity:** Unity is the first principle that penetrates and regulates universal Manifestation, in the sense that on the one hand it projects its reflections everywhere, and on the other hand brings phenomena back to Unity. [EH, Concerning Pythagorean Numbers]

**Universal Radiation:** Universal radiation is the unfolding of accidents, starting from initial Relativity; necessary Being, radiating by virtue of its infinitude, gives rise to Contingency. [EPW, The Mystery of the Veil]

**Universal Spirit:** The Universal Spirit is the divine Intelligence incarnate in Existence; it is like the reflection of the divine Sun in the cosmic Substance: God projects Himself, so to speak, into that “void” or “nothingness” which is the plane of the creature. He creates Himself, it might be said, as “the Spirit of God” moving “upon the face of the waters,” and it is from these – from the chaos of cosmic possibilities – that He causes the world to come forth. This Spirit is thus the divine Intellect immanent in the Cosmos, of which It constitutes the center and the heart; It penetrates as by innumerable arteries of light into all realms – or into all microcosms – of the manifested Universe; it is thus that God is present at the center of everything. [SW, Manifestations of the Divine Principle]

**Universe:** The universe is an order that is so to speak architectural, deployed from the Supreme Principle by way of intermediaries, or of hierarchies of intermediaries, down to earthly creatures; all the cosmic principles and their rays are divine, or half-divine, which amounts to saying that they are envisaged in relation to their essential and functional divinity. [LAW, Dialogue between Hellenists and Christians]

**Upaya:** The *upaya* is a “skillful means” by which Heaven seeks to win souls; since souls are in illusion, the “means” necessarily takes on something of the illusory, hence the diversity of doctrines, methods, and religions, or rather the incomparability of their various aspects. [FSR, Truth and Presence]

Let us recall that in Buddhist terminology an *upaya* is a “celestial stratagem” meant to save us from the world of suffering, and which can vary according to the needs of men; its “truth” is not literal, it is primarily practical or efficient. [SME, The Irrefutable Religion]

Let us recall that by *upaya* the Buddhists understand a “divine stratagem” or a “saving mirage”: it is not intrinsic truth that is of primary importance, but saving efficacy. [CI, Alternations in Semitic Monotheism]

If, on the one hand, it is as an *upaya* that the limitative dogma is given or accepted by Heaven, it is, on the other hand, because of its limitation that this *upaya* will be providentially contradicted by other *upayas*: hence religious divergences, which are at once a scandal and a blessing. It is the limitlessness of *Atma* that necessitates the plurality of *upayas*; every limit demands a repetition that completes it while apparently contradicting it. [LT, Evidence and Mystery]

We have had recourse more than once to the Buddhist notion of *upaya*, the “saving stratagem”: now an *upaya*, by the very fact that it is a means “sanctified by the end,” has



a certain right to sacrifice the truth to opportunity; that is, it has this right to the extent that a given truth remains foreign to its own fundamental truth and to the corresponding spiritual strategy.

An *upaya*, in order to be effective, must exclude; the way of “God as such” must exclude the way of “God become man” and conversely; but either way will retain a reflection of the other, the function of which will remain secondary. Islam, on pain of being ineffectual or something other than itself, must exclude the Christian dogma; Christianity for its part must exclude the characteristic axiom of Islam – as it excluded at the outset the axiom of Judaism, which in this connection coincides with that of Islam. The Epistles of Saint Paul show how the Apostle simplifies Mosaism with the intention of buttressing Christianity from the point of view of both doctrine and method; in an analogous manner, all that shocks Christians in Moslem imagery must be interpreted as a symbolism meant to clear the ground in view of the efficacy of the Muhammadan *upaya*. In order to understand a religion, it is useless to stop short at its extrinsic polemic; its fundamental intention lies in its intrinsic affirmation which testifies to God and leads to God. The imagery is nothing, the underlying geometry is everything. [SME, Confessional Speculation: Intentions and Impasses]

**Veil:** The veil is a notion which evokes the idea of mystery, because it hides from view something that is either too sacred or too intimate; but it also enfolds a mystery within its own nature when it becomes the symbol of universal veiling. [EPW, The Mystery of the Veil]

**Veracity / Sincerity:** Veracity is the propensity to accept the primacy of the true or the real, thereby acknowledging that no right is superior to the right of the Truth, whereas sincerity is the inclination to accept and realize totally that which by its very uniqueness requires totality; sincerity is likewise to do what is just, and not simply what flatters, and to do it to please God, not men. [IFA, The Mystery of the Prophetic Substance]

The first of the virtues is veracity, for without truth we can do nothing. The second virtue is sincerity, which consists in drawing the consequences of what we know to be true, and which implies all the other virtues; for it is not enough to acknowledge the truth objectively, in thought, it must also be assumed subjectively, in acts, whether outward or inward. [RHC, Virtue and Way]

**Vigilance:** Vigilance is the affirmative and combative virtue that prevents us from forgetting or betraying the “one thing needful”: it is the presence of mind which ceaselessly calls us back to the remembrance of God, and which thereby keeps us attentive with regard to anything that might separate us from it. This virtue excludes all negligence and all carelessness – in little things as well as in big ones – since it is founded on awareness of the present moment of this ceaselessly renewed instant that belongs to God and not to the world, to Reality and not to dreaming. [EPW, The Virtues in the Way]

**Virgin Mary:** The Blessed Virgin is both pure universal Substance (*Prakriti*), the matrix of the manifested divine Spirit and of all creatures in respect of their theomorphism, and

the primordial substance of man, his original purity, his heart inasmuch as it is the support of the Word which delivers. [UI, The Prophet]

The Virgin is the prototype of the perfect soul; she incarnates the universal soul in her purity, her receptivity towards God, her fecundity and her beauty, attributes which are at origin of all the angelic and human virtues, and even of every possible positive quality, as, for example, the purity of snow or the incorruptibility and luminosity of crystal. [CI, The Spiritual Virtues According to St. Francis of Assisi]

Religious life is a complex system that includes the whole of man and thus engages the soul, leaving nothing outside; this system is presented to us as an indispensable condition of salvation, outside of which there is nothing that could save us, although other systems, just as demanding and exclusive, coexist beside it. This being so, there must necessarily be a level where these systems as such lose much of their importance, and where by way of compensation the essential elements they have in common are affirmed, elements which, whether we like it or not, give the systems all their value; and we do not hesitate to define this as the domain of Mary, the Virgin Mother who, according to a symbolism common to Christianity and Islam, has suckled her children – the Prophets and the sages – from the beginning and outside of time . . . Mother of all the Prophets and matrix of all the sacred forms, she has her place of honor in Islam even while belonging *a priori* to Christianity;\* for this reason she represents a kind of link between these two religions, which have in common the purpose of universalizing the monotheism of Israel. The Virgin Mary is not only the personification of a particular mode of sanctity as such: she is not one particular color or one particular perfume, she is colorless light and pure air. In her essence she is identified with that merciful Infinitude which, preceding all forms, overflows upon them all, embraces them all and reintegrates them all . . .

The Virgin Mother personifies supraformal Wisdom; it is from her milk that all the Prophets have drunk. In this respect she is greater than the Child, who here represents formal wisdom, hence the particular revelation.^ Next to the adult Jesus, on the contrary, Mary is not the formless and primordial essence, but his feminine prolongation, the *shakti*: she is, then, not the Logos under its feminine and maternal aspect, but the virginal and passive complement of the masculine and active Logos, its mirror, made of purity and mercy.

(\* Mary is Virgin, Mother, Spouse: Beauty, Goodness, Love; their sum being Beatitude. Mary is Virgin in relation to Joseph, Man; Mother in relation to Jesus, God-Man; Spouse in relation to the Holy Spirit, God. Joseph personifies humanity; Mary incarnates either the Spirit considered in its feminine aspect or the feminine complement of the Spirit.)

(^ It could also be said that the Child is the formal and determinative Intellect which drinks the milk of the formless and indeterminate Intellect. It is thus that a crystal absorbs the undifferentiated light which it is called upon to polarize through its own form; a perfect form because it is a divine reflection, but a form nonetheless. On the one hand, Christ is the rigorous center, and the Virgin the gentle ray which prolongs it; on the other, the Mother is the ray which infuses itself into the circle represented by the Child; limitlessness infuses itself into perfection.) [CI, Alternations in Semitic Monotheism]

**Virtue:** Virtue in itself is the worship that attaches us to God and attracts us to Him, while radiating around us. [EPW, The Virtues in the Way]

A spiritual virtue is nothing other than consciousness of a reality. [SPHF, The Spiritual Virtues]

Virtue consists in allowing free passage, in the soul, to the Beauty of God. [EchPW, 15]

Virtue is not a merit in itself, it is a gift; but it is nonetheless a merit to the extent that we exert ourselves towards it. [RHC, Virtue and Way]

Virtue consists essentially in humility and charity; these are the fundamental qualities from which all others derive, to which they all relate and without which no sanctity is possible. Humility presents itself under two aspects: awareness of one's metaphysical nothingness in the face of the Absolute and awareness of one's personal imperfection; this second humility implies not only a relentless instinct for detecting one's own limitations and weaknesses, but also a simultaneous capacity to discern the positive qualities in one's neighbor, for a virtue which is blind to virtues in others destroys itself thereby. Consciousness of one's individual insufficiency springs from the necessarily fragmentary character of the ego; in other words, to say "ego" is to say partial imperfection in regard to other individuals. Humility is moreover owed to all creatures, since all of them manifest qualities and glorify God after their manner; the first relation goes from God to the thing, and the second from the thing to God; man has a right to the things of creation only on condition that he respect them, that is to say on condition that he discern in each one both its divine property and its spiritual language; man never has a right to destroy simply for the pleasure of destroying. Among virtue the position of humility is a special one – like that of the apex in a triangle – because it conforms to God, not by "participation" but by "opposition," in the sense that the attitude of humility, poverty or self-effacement, is analogically opposed to the divine Majesty; this opposition is however a relative one, since it rejoins the direct analogy through its intrinsic perfections which is, *mutatis mutandis*, the simplicity of the Essence. Humility, therefore, is distinguishable from the other virtues by the fact that it marks a relatively indirect participation in the Divine Prototype, or in other words by the fact that it is, depending on the point of view, either "more" or "less" than the other fundamental virtues.

As for charity, it consists in abolishing the egocentric distinction between "me" and the "other": it is seeing the "I" in the "other" and the "other" in the "I." Humility and charity are the two dimensions of self-effacement: they are, to use a Christian symbolism, like the vertical and horizontal branches of the Cross. The one can always be reduced to the other: humility is always to be found in charity, and conversely. To these two virtues must be added the virtue of veracity: it is love of truth, objectivity, impartiality; it is a virtue that situates intelligence in the framework of the will – to the extent that the nature of things allows of this or demands it – and its function consists in keeping away every passional element from the intelligence. Discernment must remain independent of love or hate: it must see things as they are, firstly according to universal Truth which assigns to each thing its degree in the hierarchy of values, and secondly according to the truth proper to things in their immediate nature; when the alternative presents itself, preference must be given to essential aspects, for which accidental aspects must not be substituted, and so forth. This serenity and this precision exclude neither love nor holy indignation, because these arise parallel to intellection and not within it: holy indignation, far from being opposed to truth, derives from truth as from its enabling cause. Truthfulness corrects any arbitrariness that might result from a humility or charity regarded in too subjective a way: it prevents humility from becoming an end in itself and thus sinning

against intelligence and the nature of things; it likewise controls charity and determines its various modes. One has to be humble because the ego tends to think itself more than it is; and one has to be truthful because the ego tends to prefer its own tastes and habits to the truth. [THC, Intelligence and Character]

**Virtue (essence):** Virtue is the conformity of the soul to the divine Model and to the spiritual work; conformity or participation. The essence of the virtues is emptiness before God, which permits the divine Qualities to enter the heart and radiate in the soul. Virtue is the exteriorization of the pure heart. [EchPW, 15]

**Virtue (natural / supernatural):** It is important to understand that the natural virtues have no effective value save on condition of being integrated into the supernatural virtues, those precisely which presuppose a kind of death. Natural virtue does not in fact exclude pride, that worst of illogicalities and that preeminent vice; supernatural virtue alone – rooted in God – excludes that vice which, in the eyes of Heaven, cancels all the virtues. Supernatural virtue – which alone is fully human – coincides therefore with humility; not necessarily with sentimental and individualistic humilitarianism, but with the sincere and well-grounded awareness of our nothingness before God and of our relativity in relation to others. To be concrete, we would say that a humble person is ready to accept even a partially unjust criticism if it comprises a grain of truth, and if it comes from a person who is, if not perfect, at least worthy of respect; a humble person is not interested in having his virtue recognized, he is interested in surpassing himself; hence in pleasing God more than men. [THC, Survey of Integral Anthropology]

**Virtue / Art:** Virtue realizes in the human subject a conformity with the divine Object; spiritual art eliminates – or conjointly with knowledge contributes to eliminating – the human objectification that veils the divine Subject. [LS, A View on Yoga]

**Virtue / Beauty:** Virtue is the beauty of the soul as beauty is the virtue of forms. [LT, Truths and Errors Concerning Beauty]  
Virtue cut off from God becomes pride, as beauty cut off from God becomes idol; and virtue attached to God becomes sanctity, as beauty attached to God becomes sacrament. [EchPW, 17]

**Virtue / Grace:** “Virtue” in this sense is not equivalent to the natural qualities which of necessity accompany a high degree of intellectuality and contemplativity, it is a conscious and permanent striving after perfection, and perfection is essentially self-effacement, generosity and love of truth; “grace” in this sense is the divine aid which man must implore and without which he can do nothing, whatever his gifts; for a gift serves no purpose if it be not blessed by God. [LAW, In the Wake of the Fall]

**Virtue / Union:** God . . . is . . . One; the unity of the divine object demands – and logically involves – the totality of the human subject; and it demands it in the double respect of individual, and therefore horizontal, perfection, and universal, and therefore vertical perfection. This second perfection closes the circle since it opens onto the Divine

Subject, which is immanent, while at the same time remaining transcendent in relation to the human subject.

In other words, the discernment that allows the intelligence to distinguish between the absolute and the relative has, as a corollary, both moral virtue and spiritual union. Virtue is the conformity of the soul to the divine nature; and union is extinctive concentration on the immanent Self. [EPW, The Way of Oneness]

**Wakan:** *Wakan* is whatever conforms integrally to its proper “genius”; the Principle is *Wakan-Tanka*, namely: what is absolutely “Self”; on the other hand a sage is he who is wholly in conformity with his “genius” or with his “essence,” with that which is none other than the “Great Spirit” or the “Great Mystery.” *Wakan* is what enables us to apprehend directly the Divine Reality; a man is *wakan* when his soul manifests the Divine with the spontaneous and flashing evidence of the wonders of Nature. [FS, The Sacred Pipe]

**Wakan-Tanka:** The name *Wakan-Tanka*, literally “Great Sacred” (*wakan* = sacred) is commonly translated “Great Spirit” or “Great Mystery,” and has also been rendered as “Great Powers,” the plural being justified in view of the polysynthetic significance of the concept. [FS, The Shamanism of the Red Indians]

Objections are sometimes raised to the name “Great Spirit” as a translation of the Sioux word *Wakan-Tanka*, and of similar terms in other Indian languages; but although *Wakan-Tanka* (and the terms which correspond to it) can also be translated by “Great Mystery” or “Great Mysterious Power” (or even “Great Medicine”), and although “Great Spirit” is no doubt not absolutely adequate, it nonetheless serves quite well enough and in any case conveys the meaning in question better than any other term; it is true that the word “spirit” is rather indefinite, but it has for that very reason the advantage of implying no restriction, and this is exactly what the “polysynthetic” term *Wakan* requires. The expression “Great Mystery” which has been suggested by some as a translation of *Wakan-Tanka* (or of the analogous terms, such as *Wakonda* or *Manitu*, in other Indian languages) is no better than “Great Spirit” at expressing the idea in question: besides, what matters is not whether the term corresponds exactly to what we mean by “Spirit,” but whether the ideas expressed by the Red Indian term may be translated by “Spirit” or not. [FS, The Sacred Pipe]

**Weakness:** Weakness is abandonment to illusions and lack of intellectual penetration with regard to appearances, and hence a lack of inward homogeneity and consequently of resistance. [EH, Transgression and Purification]

**Weakness / Strength:** Weakness is the habitual conviction of being weak; to be weak is to be unaware that every man has access to strength, to all the strength there is. Strength is not a privilege of the strong, it is a potentiality of every man; the problem is to find access to this strength.

To be weak is to be passively subject to duration; to be strong is to be actively free in the instant, in the Eternal Present.

To be weak is to give way to pressures, and one gives way to pressures because one does not see the effects in the causes. Sin is a cause, punishment is its concordant effect. Man

is weak because he lacks faith; his faith is abstract, hypocritical and inoperative; he believes in Heaven and in Hell, but he behaves as if he did not believe in them. Now we must flee from evil as we would flee from a fire we see rushing towards us, and we must attach ourselves to the good as we would attach ourselves to an oasis we see in the midst of a desert. [PM, Weakness and Strength]

**Wickedness:** An abstraction which is the reverse of that brought about by the intelligence: whereas the intelligence permits one to see the inner relationship of things, wickedness represents an expressly limitative, negative and destructive tendency. [EH, Transgression and Purification]

**Wisdom:** The ideal for *homo sapiens* is the combination of a perfect intelligence with a perfect character, and this is the proper meaning of the word “wisdom”; it is the ideal represented by gnosis, which *a priori* is set on the restoration of the primordial perfection of man. [THC, Intelligence and Character]

Wisdom is not only to see the archetypes through the form or the heavenly in the earthly, it is also to be resigned to contingency. [PM, In the Face of Contingency]

Wisdom consists not only in knowing truths and being able to communicate them, but also in the sage’s capacity to recognize the most subtle limitations or hazards of human nature. Since, for various reasons, this condition is not always fulfilled – and extenuating circumstances for this are not lacking – we encounter errors of a certain kind even on the part of traditional authorities, with all due deference to those who view such authorities in far too superhuman a light. It is a fact that the doctors of the Law and of the Spirit contradict one another even apart from any heresy, and for reasons which are not always a simple question of point of view, unless one calls lack of intellectual intuition or a false piece of reasoning a “point of view.” [CI, Dilemmas of Moslem Scholasticism]

Wisdom is simple, inasmuch as its expressions converge on That which alone is, and wisdom has the gift of simplifying; but it also comprises, for that very reason, all the sanctifying riches which the human soul, so diverse in its nature, may need during its pilgrimage towards the Immutable. [TB, Dharmakara’s Vow]

**World:** From the standpoint of the Self there is no confrontation between a Principle and a manifestation, there is nothing but the Self alone, the pure and absolute Subject which is its own Object. But, it will be asked, what then becomes of the world that we still cannot help perceiving? . . . The world is *Atma*, the Self, in the guise of *Maya*; more especially it is *Maya* insofar as the latter is distinct from *Atma*, that goes without saying, for otherwise the verbal distinction would not exist; but while being *Maya*, it is implicitly, and necessarily, *Atma*, in rather the same way that ice is water or is “not other” than water. [LT, The Servant and Union]

The world is a movement which already bears within itself the principle of its own exhaustion, a deployment which displays at every point the stigmata of its limitations and in which Life and the Spirit have gone astray, not by some absurd chance but because this encounter between inert Existence and living Consciousness is a possibility and thus something which cannot but be, something posited by the very infinitude of the Absolute. [UI, The Path]

The world is divine through its character as a divine manifestation, or by way of the metaphysical marvel of its existence. [LAW, Dialogue Between Hellenists and Christians]

**Yoga:** Yoga is the most direct and also the most ample manifestation possible of a spiritual principle which, as such, must be able to reveal itself whenever the nature of things permits or demands it: this principle is essentially that of a technique – or an “alchemy” – designed to open the human microcosm to the divine influx. Yoga itself is defined as a “cessation of the activities of the mental substance,” and strictly speaking there is only one Yoga – the art of perfect concentration, of which *Hatha-Yoga* and *Raja-Yoga* are the two essential forms, and of which the other Yogas (*Laya* and *Mantra*) are special modalities or developments. It is true that the word Yoga also designates – in virtue of its literal sense of “Union” – the three great paths of gnosis (*jnana*), love (*bhakti*) and action (*karma*); but the connection with the principle that characterizes the yogic art is then much less direct. Yoga, as defined in the Sutras of Patanjali and related works, is always the interior alchemy, or the ensemble of technical means for realizing – with the aid of intellectual, corporal, moral and sometimes emotional elements – union through ecstasy or *samadhi*. [LS, A View of Yoga]

**Yogic Principle:** In reality, the yogic principle has its foundation in the cosmological aspect of man, an aspect that implies the possibility of applying to the microcosm disciplines which are “quasi-geometrical” and consequently as foreign to the circuitous ways of reasoning as to the impulses of sentiment; that is to say, these disciplines have a character that is purely “physical,” using this term according to its primitive sense as applying to the whole realm of “concordant actions and reactions,” hence to all that is subject to the impersonal laws and forces of the cosmos. On the other hand, when viewed according to a more profound perspective, the yogic principle is based on the idea that man is as though steeped in the Infinite: his essence – that by which he exists and knows – is “not other than” infinite just as a piece of ice is not other than the water in which it floats; man is “Infinity congealed” – if one can express oneself thus. It is our hardness alone, the opacity of our fallen condition, that renders us impermeable to the pre-existing Grace; the practice of Yoga is the art of opening – on the basis of our cosmic structure – our carapace to the Light which infinitely surrounds us.\*

(\*But which is, practically speaking and doubtless, “within us.” “The Kingdom of God is within you,” said Christ. And if he enjoins praying that “Thy Kingdom come,” what is meant is not only universal regeneration, but also – and for all the more reason – the coming of the “Kingdom of Heaven” in our heart, which is like the point of intersection – or “strait gate” – towards the Infinite.) [LS, A View of Yoga]

**Zen:** Zen is a wisdom that readily draws inspiration from the image, the thing seen, be it only for the reason that it originates from the vision of a flower in the hand of the Buddha. [TB, A Defense of Zen]

**Zen Koans:** Verbal symbols calculated to provoke an ontological breach in our carapace of ignorance. [TB, Treasures of Buddhism]

Formulas both meaningless and explosive, and intended to shatter the shell of mental habits that obstruct the vision of the Real. [SME, Confessional Speculation: Intentions and Impasses]

The *koan* is a formula by intention absurd, destined to bring about a kind of liberating rupture in the mind of the person meditating on it, the mind in this instance being considered with regard to its hardness and blindness. [TB, Remarks on the Enigma of the Koan]



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