BELIEF AND BEYOND

Ilkka Pyysiäinen

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BELIEF AND BEYOND
Religious Categorization of Reality

Ilkka Pyysiäinen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work in a way summarizes my thinking about the phenomenon we call 'religion', gradually developed during more than ten years of study. This is not the place to enter into the details of this development, however. I only want to recognize by name those people who have most contributed to the process by they help, advice, friendship and love.

This work would absolutely not be what it is without my friend Veikko Anttonen with whom I have had the pleasure to work during the past ten years or so. Our endless discussions of religion and culture as well as of the theory and methodology in their academic study have greatly influenced my way of thinking. I want to thank Veikko for this, and for many other things. In addition to these common interests, I have had my very own interests in Buddhism, mysticism, philosophy of religion and, more recently, the so-called consciousness studies.

Developing and utilizing Veikko's theory of the sacred is one of the leading ideas of this study. As to other Finnish scholars of religion, I have greatly benefited from discussions with Kimmo Ketola, whom I want to thank for many inspiring ideas. Otherwise my gratitude mostly goes overseas. Frank Reynolds (University of Chicago) has very kindly arranged me some important contacts, of which I remain grateful. Robert K.C. Forman (Hunter College, CUNY) introduced me to consciousness studies by his idea of the "pure consciousness event", has read an earlier version of the manuscript suggesting some useful revisions, and also kindly hosted me in New York in October 1995. E. Thomas Lawson (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo) taught me the relevance of the cognitive science in the study of religion, and has repeatedly given me friendly encouragement in my scholarly enterprise. Derek Bickerton (University of Hawaii) has kindly corresponded with me regarding the details of his linguistic theories. Most important, however, has been the penetrating criticism I received from Paul J. Griffiths (University of Chicago) and Laurie L. Patton (Bard College, Columbia University), who read two earlier versions of the manuscript. Without their critical encouragement I probably would never have brought this project to a close. So, thank you very much!

Margot Whiting helped me to revise the English language of an earlier version of the manuscript. She has not, however, seen this version and thus is not responsible for any shortcomings that may still remain. As to foreign words, I have left out certain diacritical

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marks difficult to produce by a computer. Specialists know where they should be included, and for a non-specialist they tell only little.

Were I a more expressive person, I would thank my beloved wife, Sari, for being a wonderful and most charming companion. Well, I guess I did all right ...

Helsinki, September 1996
Ilkka Pyysiäinen

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A. MYSTICISM AND THE SACRED

1. RELIGION AND THE SACRED

1.1. Introduction

This book is an attempt to show how religious doctrinal systems contain both a specific way of categorizing reality and a way of calling this system of categorization in question. In my interpretation, this calling in question happens in so-called mysticism. Some kind of mysticism, attempts to transcend the prevailing classificatory schemes, is to be found in all religions with a highly developed doctrinal system.

I shall here not analyse any particular religious doctrinal systems as integrated wholes, but will confine myself to a general analysis of the notion of mysticism and of one especially important instance of religious categorization, the category of the sacred. My treatment of the category of the sacred is based on Veikko Anttonen's research on the concept (Anttonen 1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1996a, 1996b). Of mysticism I have developed a theory of my own. After an analysis of the concepts of mysticism and the sacred, I proceed to apply the findings to the Theravâda Buddhist distinction between what is conditioned (Pali *samkhata*, Sanskrit *samskrta*) and what is unconditioned (*asamkhata*, *asamskrta*). This serves as a kind of case study of the logic and structure of religious doctrinal systems.

With emphasis being set on doctrinal structures and the nature of human cognition, this work mostly relates to such cognitive studies of religion as Lawson and McCauley's work on ritual systems based on the "competence approach" of Noam Chomsky, and Pascal Boyer's work on the universal cognitive constraints affecting the forming of religious ideas (Lawson & McCauley 1993; Boyer 1994). Within this approach, religion is viewed as one manifestation of the human cognitive activity which can be approached from such different angles as psychology, linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, or even computer science. (See also Dougherty 1985.)

By cognition is here meant human perception, learning, knowing, inference and memory, and cognitive science(s) is the study of cognition of intelligent systems. It is an open question whether cognitive science is only a higher order concept, like 'social science', referring to all individual fields in which information processing is studied, or whether it is an independent discipline with an object of its own. In the latter case, its relationship to other related fields would be similar to the relationship general linguistics has to the study of

individual languages. Although the problems of cognitive science are age-old, cognitive science as such can be said to have taken its start only in the 70's. (See Gardner 1987; Hirst 1988: esp. 90-109, 210-268; Rollins 1989; Leiber 1991: 10-24; Wagman 1995.)

My approach shifts the emphasis from such traditional questions as how religious traditions have been formed and handed down to new generations? What is the essence of religion and how it is manifested? What is the role of religion in a particular culture? How does religion affect society and *vice versa*? to the question of the universal structural properties of religious doctrinal systems and their relation to the human cognitive processing (see also Boyer 1994: 5, 12-13). Thus, the book is meant as a contribution to the methodological discussion within the study of religion, as well as a contribution to our understanding of the phenomenon of mysticism and the concept of the sacred. Mysticism and the sacred occupying a central place in religion, the book can also be read as a partial theory of religion in general.

I am well aware that the existing literature is already replete with theories of religion, and that both claims about the universal sameness of religious experience and a non-transcendent interpretation of religion are controversial issues. I have therefore wanted to be careful to back my argument by considerations from various related fields, and thus be able to show how new light on these old problems can be shed. For this reason, I have included a lot of references to previous work, explaining its results at some length, although restricting discussion in the notes to a minimum. It is for this reason that the leading thread may at times be difficult to follow, for which I beg the reader's pardon. I hope and believe, however, that careful reading will be a rewarding experience in the upshot.

1.2. The Concept of Religion

Let me say at the outset that I am not interested in providing any definition of religion. Boyer is right in saying that "(w)orries about general definitions of religion often stem from a misunderstanding of what purpose a definition should serve and from an exaggerated belief in the power of definitions over theories." The hitherto suggested "definitions" of religion neither have been real definitions in the sense of lists of the sufficient and necessary conditions for something to be an instance of religion, nor is such a definition necessary for the study of religion. A scholar can set out to work with a commonsense characterization of what is religion and then, in the course of investigation, this characterization may be revised.

The revision is not only a philosophical question but also an empirical one, however. It takes place in a hermeneutical circle between collecting data and analysing them in a specific frame of reference. (See Boyer 1994: 33-34.)

I agree with Anttonen that in the study of religion the starting-point should not be religion but culture (Anttonen 1996a: 22), religion being only a construct of the scholar, as I have previously argued. Like it is in vain that we ponder whether Buddhism really is a religion, a philosophy, a discipline of salvation, an ethics etc., it is also in vain that we debate which phenomena really are religious and which are not. We do not *find* religion; we only choose to view something as religious. Religion is a perspective in which we see certain cultural phenomena, and thus there can never be any absolute boundary between religious and other phenomena. We are not dealing with the ontological essences of things and events, but with the meanings of words. (Pyysiäinen 1993b: 14-15; Comstock 1984.)

The commonsense characterization of religion is based on common knowledge of what people that we consider religious do. When we are asked what religion consists of, we can list such things as prayer, gods, meditation, special kinds of meeting places, holy days, peculiar experiences etc. What is essential, is that no one such thing needs to be taken as common to all forms of religion. Religion is like a family whose members remind each other in various ways, although there is no one commonly shared feature. In other words, religion is a polythetic class the members of which do not have to share *all* the attributes that characterize the class, unlike in monothetic classes where all members of the class are in possession of the same set of attributes. (Southwold 1978; Comstock 1984; Pyysiäinen 1993b: 15, 26 n.63; Anttonen 1996a: 22-25.)

As to the history of the very term 'religion', the Latin *religio* has been derived either from *ligare*, 'to bind', or from *legere*, 'to read' whence *relegere*, 'to collect again, to take up again for a new choice'. Scholars remain divided among these alternatives. (See Buck 1949: 1462-1463; Benveniste 1973: 516-519). René Gothóni prefers *relegere* which, according to him, denotes the habit of repeating things in one's mind and listening carefully to what they sound like, before making any commitment. On this basis, he has put forward the view that true religion — in contrast to superstition and *religio falsa* — is a life-long virtuous task, intellectual activity containing unceasing re-reading, reflecting and reviewing the testimonies of sacred traditions. (Gothóni 1994.)

Gothóni, however, makes an unwarranted jump from Cicero's way of using the word to the conclusion that this is what religion as a global phenomenon really is about and even

should be. As to the etymological argument, a similar interpretation has been presented by Émile Benveniste, who thinks that the true meaning of 'religion' is 'to take again for a new choice, to reconsider a previous approach', (*retractare* as Cicero says). Benveniste backs his interpretation by linguistic evidence, but admits that scholars have not reached a final decision. (Benveniste 1973: 518-522.)

In practice, *'religio'* has had many, even mutually contradictory, connotations (Saler 1987), and can even be said to be a bipolar concept. Robert Schilling writes:

> Careful examination shows that the Latins, who were not concerned with philological rigor, connected *religio* more with the verb *religare* ("to tie"), alluding to the bonds between gods and men, than with the verb *relegere* ("to take up again with care"). Such as it is, *religio* expresses a fundamental preoccupation manifested in two complementary ways: the care to avoid divine wrath; the desire to win the benevolence and favour of the gods. (Schilling 1987: 452.)

With the establishment of the Christian Church, *'religio'* came to be identified with the catholic faith, a new understanding of this concept gaining ground only after profound changes in the prevailing world-view. These will be dealt with in chapter 1.6.3.

1.3. Doctrinal Systems and Categorization

Our ability to make sense of our existence, act in an adequate way and even to survive depends on the ability to classify information, i.e. to form classes, genera, or types to mark necessary divisions within our conceptual schemes (Thompson 1967: 46; Balzer 1987: 121; Boyer 1994: 67-75). According to Gregory Bateson and his research team, inability to classify messages adequately can even lead to schizophrenia, for example. This condition can result from the so-called "double bind" situation in which a child has repeatedly received mutually contradictory messages. (Bateson et al. 1956. See also Watzlawick 1990.)

Classifying is logically based on making distinctions, as we cannot make any indication without drawing a distinction. In information theory, the smallest difference is indicated by a *'bit'*. If we, for example, have to decide whether a man is less than six feet tall or more

than six feet tall, and if we know that the chances are fifty-fifty, then we need one *bit* of information to decide among the two alternatives. Two *bits* enable us to decide among four alternatives, three among eight, etc. (See Miller 1974: 23-24; Shannon & Weaver 1963; Roubiczek 1952: 3-97; Brown 1972: 1; Hirst 1988: 19-35; Rollins 1989: 149-150 n.14; Wagman 1995: 141-142).

As George Miller has shown, we can at best correctly differentiate between six alternatives (2.5 bits of information) in absolute judgements of unidimensional stimuli, with seven being the limit at which we begin to make a considerable amount of errors. The same limit of seven also holds for immediate memory. (Miller 1974. See Hirst 1988: 71-80; Gardner 1987: 89-91.) The shortes time it takes to discriminate between one set of bits and another is about 1/18 of a second, and thus one can process at most 126 bits of information per second (Csikszentmihalyi 1991: 28-29[1]). Thus, the minimum requirement for a conscious thought is a primary distinction of one bit. This fundamental role of dichotomy in human cognitive processing probably has its source in aspects of language structure: antonym pairs, syntactic structure, etc. (Bickerton 1990: 223).

The idea of primary distinction has been explored by the logician and work psychologist David Philip Herbst, who attempted to show how the binary connectives in Georg Boole's logical algebra could be derived from a primary distinction. His starting point, however, was not so much in Boole's logic as in G. Spencer Brown's attempt to show that Boole had designed his algebra to fit logic, to re-align it with mathematics and to discard Russell & Whitehead's theory of logical types as incoherent and unnecessary. (Herbst 1972; Brown 1972.)

It is not necessary here to explain in detail how Herbst derives various logics and contextual process networks from the primary distinction. It suffices for my purposes to summarize the basic idea as follows: Let us assume a primary state, preceding all distinctions. This primary state cannot be described at all, as description involves differentiations. We can only postulate its existence. The first distinction that breaks the primary unity can be thought of as a boundary that separates an inside and an outside of a form. The triadic unit that is thus created has four characteristics: 1) it is co-genetic in the sense that the three elements always come into existence together; 2) it is non-separable in the sense that we cannot take the components apart; 3) it is non-reducible in the sense that

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[1] Csikszentmihalyi, however, mistakenly speaks of seven bits instead of seven alternatives.

if one of the elements is taken away, all three disappear; and it is 4) contextual in the sense that none of the components have individually definable characteristics. (Herbst 1972. Cf. Roubiczek 1952: 3-97.)

Making distinctions is then the basis for constructing conceptual schemes and categorial systems by which we understand reality. Categories have interested philosophers ever since Aristotle whom the scholastics took to have presented an exhaustive and final list of ten highest genera of being (substance, quality, relation etc.). Immanuel Kant's 12 categories of understanding, grouped in those of quantity, quality, relation and modality, never became as influential as Aristotle's, although his *way of forming* the list marked an important change in perspective. Kant's categories, as opposed to Aristotle's, were purely formal, and every appearance could be judged according to every category. (Thompson 1967: 46-49.)

Under the influence of Russell and Whitehead's theory of types, as it appears in the *Principia Mathematica*, the notion of category has come to be used as a synonym for 'logical type'. According to this theory, whenever an entity involves all the members of a given class, its logical type is said to be higher than the type of the members of this class. Logical types thus form an infinite hierarchy with individuals at the lowest level, classes of individuals at the next, and then classes of classes etc. On this is based the rule which says that "What involves all of a collection must not be one of the collection." (Thompson 1967: 49; Balzer 1992: 191-192.)

But the Russellian theory is contradictory, and Russell himself has admitted to Brown that it was "the most arbitrary thing he and Whitehead had ever had to do, not really a theory but a stopgap ... (Brown 1972: ix-x. See also Nagel & Newman 1964: esp. 42-43, 58-59)." The word 'type', for instance, is itself a particular entity with reference to all entities, which means that one entity is made to involve the collection of all entities. Russell tried to solve this problem by proposing that it was rather words and phrases that formed logical types, not real entities. (Thompson 1967: 50.)

Noel Balzer, for his part, has offered a similar solution based on the realization that classes do not exist as objective entities. Balzer starts with the Fregean conception that the reference (*Bedeutung*) of the concept 'a man', for example, is the collection of every man (see Frege 1966; Carnap 1947: 2, 18-27, 40-41; Hintikka 1973: 372-397). Thus, the class 'a man' is the collection of every man, which leads to the "ruinous" conclusion that 'a man' is 'all men', but yet 'all men' is not 'a man'. (Balzer 1987.)

Therefore, Balzer redefines 'class' as 'what is classified', and takes 'a man' to classify a

man, 'some men' some men, 'all men' all men, etc. Now he can also say that an instance of a class is the class, and that a class can be an instance of itself. In other words, any man is an instance of the class 'a man', which of course requires that a class can be an instance of itself (a man is an instance of 'man'). (Balzer 1987.)

What is essential here, is that classes are not understood as entities existing apart from what is classified. 'Class' is just a word representing certain cognitive processes. Balzer thus comes to a similar conclusion as such cognitive semanticists as Eleanor Rosch and her colleagues, who hold that the most cognitively economical code for a category is a concrete image of an average member of the category. People do not recognize different kinds of objects by classifying them under some particular concept, but by comparing them to prototypes serving as concrete exemplars for things of the relevant category. (Rosch 1975; Rosch 1978; Rosch & Mervis 1975. See Rollins 1989: 51-53; Bickerton 1990: 87-94.)

In substituting the prototype approach for the Fregean idea of sufficient and necessary features on the basis of which it is decided to which category or class an object belongs, prototype theorists have attempted to show that membership in a category is not always a yes or no question. Categories have no clear boundaries, and an animal, for example, can be classified as more or less a bird, a robin being very close to the prototype but an ostrich much less. (Rosch 1975; Rosch 1978; Rosch & Mervis 1975. See Boyer 1994: 61-63; Bickerton 1990: 33-35.) Thus, prototype theory has to lean on the theory of "fuzzy sets", instead of classical set theory, which leads into trouble, however. A 'striped apple', for example, can be more prototypically 'striped' than 'apple' (or the other way around), which makes the conjuctive concept 'striped apple' contradictory. (Osherson & Smith 1981).

The weakness of the prototype theory lies in that two different questions have been fused in it, namely those of what holds specific categories together (their cohesiveness, the nature of their core), and how people identify particular objects as members in particular categories (e.g. immediately or only after hesitation as a bird). It seems that the prototypicality effects reveal more about the latter question than of the first. The classical theory can better account for the first. The category of odd numbers, for instance, can be clearly defined with reference to sufficient and necessary conditions by saying that it consists of numbers that are not multiples of 2. Yet people tend to judge certain numbers as more prototypically odd than others, as shown by Sharon Armstrong and her colleagues. (Osherson & Smith 1981; Armstrong & Gleitman & Gleitman 1983.)

Although in my opinion some categories may be formed in an analytic process in which

it is decided what is what in the objective world, categories may also reflect the categorizations of earlier, prelinguistic creatures as Derek Bickerton remarks. Such categories are not the outcome of abstract analysis, but have grown out of interaction with environment in trying to live and survive. These categories of a creature's non-linguistic primary representational system are determined by the evolutionary requirements of that species. (Bickerton 1990: 90-91.)

This study concerns the domain of religious doctrine as expressed in formal conceptual systems. Paul Griffiths has recently introduced the Christian notion of doctrine (as an abstract category, not Christian doctrine, of course) in Buddhist studies, arguing both that a strictly doctrinal study of doctrine can be fruitful, and that also non-doctrinal studies of doctrine can benefit from a preliminary intra-doctrinal analysis. (Griffiths 1994: 1-25.)

By doctrines he means "sentences of the relevant kind found in the textual artefacts produced by the community's virtuoso intellectuals", with 'community' often meaning only the community of the virtuoso intellectuals whose existence is evidenced solely by its texts. There are three necessary, but not sufficient (which are often impossible to give), criteria for a sentence to express a doctrine: 1) It must have a property that its known competitors lack, or a greater degree than any of its known competitors of a property that the community regards as making doctrines acceptable as doctrines; 2) It must be "taken by its community to be of significance for its religious life"; 3) it must be "taken by its community to be binding upon its members". (Griffiths 1994: 5-6.)

The concept of intellectual virtuosos seems to be taken from Max Weber (Griffiths does not define the concept), who took individuals to differ according to their religious capacities, with only virtuosos having a special charisma. Weber, however, noted that as a religious movement is institutionalized, the institution's authority to save gets substituted for personal charisma. A good example is the distinction between explicit and implicit faith, developed by the scholastics. For ordinary laymen, it was enough to believe implicitly, without understanding, and only theologians were bound to have explicit faith based on knowledge and understanding (but not on personal charisma). (Weber 1966: 162-195.)

Weber's distinction has previously been applied in Buddhist studies by Steven Collins, who has attempted to understand the Buddhist distinction between "conventional" and "ultimate" truth (see below p. 122) as a corollary of Weber's distinction between intellectual virtuosos and ordinary believers. Collins also considers these distinctions as parallel to Robert Redfield's distinction between the "Great Tradition" supported by the literate elites of urban

areas, and the "Little Tradition" of the peasant culture in an urbanized society. Elements of Little Tradition are then assimilated in the Great Tradition, and, when adopted back to village culture, again reinterpreted in terms of the Little Tradition. (Collins 1982; Redfield 1962.)

Thus, I would like to argue that there exists a "hermeneutical circle" of sorts between folk tradition and religious doctrine as coded in holy books and theological treatises. This is also suggested by Anttonen's analysis of the concept of the sacred. "Theology" (of whatever religion; therefore the quotation marks) always builds on categories and principles of categorization already present in the existing tradition (folk or otherwise). Thus, for example, the Latin *sacer/sanctus* was rendered into Finnish as *'pyhä'*, a word that had been borrowed into early Finnic from the Germanic during the late Bronze Age, as Jorma Koivulehto has shown. When adopted into Finnic, it functioned as a marker of bodily and territorial boundaries, with no theological connotations, which, however now are prevalent. (Anttonen 1993a, 1996a, 1996b. See also below.)

But, "theology" also affects folk tradition by supplying it with themes and motives, which then take a new form in the folk tradition. Thus, Jesus appears in Karelian folk tradition as involved in typical Finnish/Karelian activities, including even skiing, for example (see Järvinen 1995).

The prototype approach to categorization may be relevant in determining how people identify particular religious objects as members of particular categories. But it may not be the best approach in explaining what holds specific categories together (their cohesiveness), what, for instance, makes a phenomenon a member of the so-called net of mutual dependencies (Skr. *pratîtyasamutpâda*) in Buddhism. Ignorance (Skr. *avidyâ*), for example, is a member of this net because it is listed in all versions of the net in Buddhist texts. This is a sufficient and necessary criterion for it to be counted as a member of the net. But it is a totally different issue on what grounds an average Buddhist would recognize his or her particular state of mind as a member of the net of mutual dependencies.

1.4. The Concept of The Sacred

In the following, I attempt to show on the basis of Anttonen's work how 'sacred' could be understood as a key concept in the logical structure of religious doctrinal systems. As such,

it also seems to offer much better possibilities for intercultural comparison than such second order concepts as 'god', for example (see Anttonen 1993a: 53-55; Anttonen 1996b; Lutzky 1993: 283). Bearing in mind J.L. Austin's remark that words hardly ever shake off their etymology and formation, despite all extensions and additions to meaning (Austin 1966: 149), I shall set out with an investigation to the etymology of the Indo-European vocabulary of the sacred.

The Indo-European concept of the sacred involves four problems, however. First, an underlying meaning of the different Indo-European terms for 'sacred' has not as yet been discovered. Second, no single Proto-Indo-European term for the concept 'sacred' has been posited. Third, a number of Indo-European languages have two terms for 'sacred', referring to the positive and negative aspects of the notion. Fourth, no covering model for this duality has hitherto been presented. (Lutzky 1993: 283-284.)

According to Harriet Lutzky, the Latin word for 'sacred', 'sacer', derives from the bipolar root *sak- which is a variant of *sek-, 'to cut'. As such, *sak- has the meanings of 'set apart' and 'make a contract'. Sacred is that which, though *set apart* from the ordinary life of the community, paradoxically serves to *bind it together*. (Lutzky 1993: 285-288. Cf. Anttonen 1993a: 57.) On the other hand, we also have the word 'augustus' (< auges-, 'filled with mystical force') which refers to the 'integration, totality or wholeness' aspect of the sacred. Thus, the 'separation-binding' polarity is also expressed by the polarity 'sacer-augustus'. (Lutzky 1993: 295-296. See also Haudry & Pennaod 1993-1994: 136-137, 157.)

Some other Indo-European words for 'sacred' seem to stem from bipolar roots (a typical feature in Indo-European [York 1993: 238]) meaning 'separation-binding', too. The Gothic 'weihs' ('sacred') is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *ueik-, 'to separate', which has an alternative meaning 'to bend'. Thus, 'weihs' has basically the same meaning as 'sacer': 'sacred of separation'. Moreover, the respective roots are also similar to the bipolar meaning 'separation-binding'. (Lutzky 1993: 289-290. Cf. Anttonen 1993a: 57-58.)

The German 'heilig' ('sacred'), for its part, stems from *kailo-, meaning 'whole'. *kailo- is derived from *kai- which has the two meanings of 'alone' and 'and'. If *kai- does not represent two separate homonyms, it may be a bipolar root, with the meanings of 'joining' ('and') and 'separating' ('alone'). Likewise, the Avestan word 'yaoždāta' ('purification') is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *ieu, 'to bind' and 'separate'. (Lutzky 1993: 291.)

The second Avestan word for 'sacred', 'spǝnta' ('filled with power'), has as its root *keu-,

'to swell, to be full'. Lutzky, referring to Edward Sapir, interprets 'full' as an aspect of 'integration, totality or wholeness'. Thus, it seems that Avestan vocabulary lays stress more on the other of the two aspects of the sacred: integrity and wholeness. (Lutzky 1993: 291.) This aspect is represented by the Germanic *Hailagaz- which yields the German 'heilig' and Swedish 'helig', as well as the English health/whole/holy, for example (Buck 1949: 1475-1476; Colpe 1987: 516-518; Anttonen 1993a: 57).

As to Sanskrit, Lutzky (1993: 292) only mentions 'yajati' which refers to the ritual of sacrifice or to worship by means of sacrifice, without a link to the idea of 'separation-binding'. However, we do have the derivation 'śvântáh' ('swollen') which appears a few times in the Rgveda as an epithet of Agni (See Mayrhofer 1973: III 404; Anttonen 1993a: 57-58). In the background is the Vedic verbal root śû śvâ-, 'to swell, to grow', from which is derived also the Buddhist term 'śûnya', 'empty'. (Benveniste 1973: 446-449; Mayrhofer 1976: III 399, 400, 404; Colpe 1987: 516.) The idea is that that which looks swollen outside, is hollow inside (Conze 1975: 130-131). Thus, 'śvântáh' and 'śûnya' represent the bipolarity of inflation and emptiness.

Anttonen (Anttonen 1993a: 57; Anttonen 1996a: 103), following Walter Baetke, mentions also the Sanskrit words 'vinákti' and 'vivekti', 'sifts, separates', to which we could also add the Pâli word 'viveceti', 'to separate'. 'Vinákti' is related to the Avestan ava-vaêk-, 'pick, separate', and presumably testifies to a semantic development toward 'to set apart' in the same sense as the German 'weihen' (< *ueik-, 'to separate'). (Mayrhofer 1976: III 212-213.) To the same family belongs also the Latin 'victima' which refers to an animal sacrificed to gods, the formation of the word being obscure, however (Benveniste 1973: 450).

Thus, we do have the word for sacred separation in Sanskrit (and Pâli) vocabulary, too. Besides, the idea of *binding* appears in the Buddhist term 'prâtimoksa' (Pâli: pâtimokkha[2]) which refers to the code of monastic rules as well as to its ritual recitation. The etymology of this word has been much debated. Among the most interesting interpretations are E.J. Thomas' view that the root *muc-* (> *moksa*) means 'that which binds, obligatory', and Sukumar Dutt's way of deriving the word from 'prati' ('against') and 'moksa' ('scattering'). Thus, *prâtimoksa* binds the group together to keep it from scattering. (See Prebish 1974: 168-169.) It was the *prâtimoksa* rite that united the Buddhist monks to a separate religious

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[2] In Burmese manuscripts the 't' is cerebral.

order (Prebish 1974: 171-172; Gothóni 1985: 25).

There may, thus, be a certain affinity between the meaning of *'prâtimoksa'* and the Latin *'ius'* ('law') the religious meaning of which reflects the Indo-European concept of conformity to a ritual rule. *'Ius'* is derived from **ieuos-* (< **ieu-*, 'to bind') meaning 'rule, binding force'. From this root comes also the Avestan *'yaoždāta'* mentioned earlier. (Lutzky 1993: 290-291.)

Thus, Sanskrit and Pâli materials seem to support Lutzky's idea of the sacred as 'separation-binding', and the idea that it is the underlying polarity of the notion which determines the duality of terms for 'sacred' (Lutzky 1993: 293). Such polarity of perception, as reflected in various homophonic antinomies, seems to be typical of Indo-European in general (York 1993: 238).

Lutzky is well aware of the fact that we do not simply find lexical equivalents for the Latin *sacer/sanctus* in various languages. It is always some explicit or implicit theoretical understanding of the notion of the sacred that guides us to accept certain words as equivalents of 'sacred'. Benveniste, for example, was a student of Antoine Meillet who had collaborated with Émile Durkheim. We have therefore some reason to believe that Benveniste had an implicitly Durkheimian idea of the sacred, and that it guided him to look for dualities in the vocabulary of the sacred (Lutzky 1993: 293.)

In Durkheim's interpretation, religion and the sacred unite humans into a moral community with a shared set of fundamental beliefs (Durkheim 1971; see Cladis 1992). Sacrality is grounded in the collective force of the totemic principle with which it is not identical, however (see Paden 1994: 207; Anttonen 1993a: 54). Durkheim used 'sacred' as an adjective — not as a noun — referring to things that were set apart and forbidden. Thus, the sacred is not a mystical force that shines *through* an object, but a value that the society places *on* an object. It refers to a systematical rooting out of attachment to the profane world, and thus is a pragmatic concept, not an ontological one. The Universe is not statically divided into two and only two parts. (Paden 1994: 202-203, 206.)

Lutzky herself consciously applies Durkheim's sociological theory to explain the bipolar nature of the sacred. According to her, the 'separation-binding' thesis is also in the background of Durkheim's conception of the sacred. The sacred is something set apart from the ordinary life of the community, yet it serves to bind the community together. What mediates between these opposites is ritual. A community is bound together through ritualized behavior in relation to that which is set apart. Ritual connects the isolated individual back to

the community. (Lutzky 1993: 284, 294.)

Thus, those words for 'sacred' that do not refer to 'set apart' or 'whole, full', do refer to rituals of sacrifice and purification. Among such words are the Latin *'sanctus'* ('made inviolable') which refers to explicit sacredness, to the "wall" enclosing that which is *sacer*; the Avestan *'yaoždāta'* which, though derived from the concept of binding, refers to the ritual activity of purification (see Duchesne-Guillemin 1970); the Greek *'hagnos'* meaning 'cultic purity'; and the Sanskrit *'yajati'* ('sacrifice'). (Lutzky 1993: 295-299; Benveniste 1973: 454-455.) To this, we must add the *prâtimoksa* as the ritual that bound the Buddhist monks together. At some point in time, the Buddhist ritual acquired also the aspect of purification, as it offered to the monks an opportunity to confess their offenses (Prebish 1974: 169-170).

We can conclude that 'sacred' expresses those vital distinctions that enable a community of people to define themselves as a separate entity. In the following chapter, I shall present some ethnographical examples of making vital distinctions by declaring something sacred.

1.5. Religion and the Sacred in Ethnographical Perspective

Edmund Leach's understanding of the sacred is similar to Lutzky's as he writes that it is in the nature of all markers of boundaries that they are ambiguous in the sense that they both connect and separate, like, for instance, a fence between two neighboring gardens. It is always ambiguous when exactly an A turns into a non-A, and thus there always remains a liminal border zone which represents both A and non-A. The border zone between this world and the other world is the area of the *sacred* and an area of ritual activity whose sacredness is due precisely to its anxiety-provoking ambiguity. (Leach 1979: 33-35, 72, 82.) Thus, Leach differs in his thinking from Mary Douglas who categorically denied the symbolic equivalence of impurity and the sacred (Douglas 1989: 159).

Also Anttonen's theory is essentially based on the dual nature of the notion of the sacred, as it is manifested both in the vocabulary and the related social practice. He has highlighted this latter aspect using the findings and interpretations of Robert Hertz, Marcel Mauss, Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois. Especially Bataille has emphasized that the domain of the sacred includes both impure things that are set apart from the community as dangerous, and those things that are regarded as pure and holy in the sense of being of value to the

community. Human societies are thus bound together not only by what is commonly considered valuable, but also by what is commonly regarded as repulsive and dangerous, i.e. by both positive and negative valuations. (Anttonen 1996a: 76-79.)

On the basis of this, Anttonen has shown how the notion of the sacred is essentially a concept by which people define and mark the boundaries between themselves as individuals (the body and its boundaries) and as a community (ethnicity and territorial boundaries), between auspicious and dangerous days and times, as well as between what is human and part of culture and what is outside of it (nature and transcendence as "the other"). Here, 'sacred' is used as a scholarly concept generalized in meaning from various ethnic discourses. According to Anttonen, combining ethnographic data and etymologies of various words for 'sacred' shows that the notion of the sacred derives from ideas of marking something off, separating, as well as of growth and power. (Anttonen 1993a; Anttonen 1996a; Anttonen 1996b.)

As ethnographical examples of how the idea of the sacred works, I would like to present Anttonen's interpretations of the Khanty and Mansi (Ob-Ugrian peoples) attitudes toward the human body, and the role of the forest in Finnish culture. Anttonen focuses on transformations that take place through bodily openings which we may regard as border zones in Leach's sense: we are both cut off from and joined to the external world through our bodily boundaries and their openings. We exhale and inhale, eat, drink and emit liquids and excrement through bodily openings. We also see, hear and speak using bodily openings. Very often such transgression of the boundaries is ritualized and made subject to various prohibitions and obligations.

In societies where the male body is the model for order and stability, women's menstruation and pregnancy are examples *par excellence* of this. The Khanty and Mansi women have been forbidden to participate in various daily routines during the periods of childbirth and menstruation. During pregnancy and childbirth, they were secluded for two or three months in a little hut, especially constructed for this purpose. After the delivery, they had to go through several purifications. Similarly, menstruating women have been considered dangerous to men and their weapons and tools for hunting, fishing and reindeer breeding. In the northern Khanty settlements, menstruating women were not supposed to tread over nets, weapons, or over the lead runs of sleds. They were also forbidden to climb upon the roof of a house, and to sit, lie or place their clothes in that part of the house in which other people slept. During the periods of women's impurity, men had to take care of cooking food, for

example. (Anttonen 1993a: 70-71; Anttonen 1996a: 142-147; Anttonen 1996b.)

During the periods of impurity, women were categorized as sacred (Khanty: *jémen*, Mansi: *jelpin*), because they were in a process of transformation, thus transcending boundaries. In this way, the boundaries of the female body represent those social and cosmological boundaries that protect the community and direct cultural life. When a woman is in a process of transformation, her state is, from the male point of view, a representation of the fact that the important human means of producing value (hunting etc.) involve danger. Nature is the source of value, but also a threat to culture. (*Ibid.*)

As another example I would like to take up Anttonen's analysis of the symbolical meanings of the forest in Finnish culture. The forest has been regarded as a symbol of interiority and primeval undifferentiation (see Menninghaus 1988: 313), and Anttonen takes the Finnish attitude toward the forest symbolically to express the inward mentality of the Finnish people. In the forest, a Finn finds an opportunity to turn inwards and meet his or her own inner reality. (Anttonen 1993b: 26.) The forest corresponds to the mental "inner space" in the sense that both the forest and one's own inner world are set apart from the public domain (Anttonen 1996a: 94).

The Finnish word *'metsä'* ('forest') originally meant 'edge' or 'side', and referred to the border zone between the shoreline and inland (see Anttonen 1993b: 27-29; Anttonen 1996a: 117). Similarly, the Old Norse words for 'forest' derive from roots meaning 'separate' and 'borderland', and the Gothic *'marka'* derives from the Latin *'margo'*, 'edge, border'. (Buck 1949: 47-48). The word *'metsä'* thus refers to that liminal border zone that at once separates and connects waters and earth. These, in turn, can be said to symbolize nature and culture, dry land being the territory of humans, and water traditionally representing the primal chaos in various myths of creation. Thus, the forest is sacred in the sense of 'separation-binding'.

This is supported by Anttonen's analysis of how the sacredness of the forest is due to the fact that it was in the forest that people drew the boundary between the social/cultural and the natural, between "our land" and the common land. The Finnish word for 'sacred', *'pyhä'*, is probably a very old Germanic loan ultimately deriving from the root *vik-*, as shown by Koivulehto, and thus originally meant sacred in the sense of being marked off and separated. *'Pyhä'* was the first name given to a newly occupied place. The sacred area in the forest was that place which separated the common land and the area which was used by a particular society for hunting and swidden culture. As a liminal zone, the sacred area bore double meanings and was considered forbidden, impure and dangerous. (Anttonen 1993a: 57-

58, 67; Anttonen 1993b: 27-30; Anttonen 1996b.)

'*Pyhä*' appears in over one hundred prehistoric Finnish place names, most of which relate to exceptional natural places, such as lakes, rivers, hills and bays that separate different areas. Here the word '*pyhä*' has obviously been utilized to categorize certain natural places as breaking the natural continuity. (Anttonen 1993a: 62-69; Anttonen 1993b: 26-27; Anttonen 1996a: 113-114; Anttonen 1996b.)

If Anttonen is right, the idea of the sacred is originally related to both bodily and territorial boundaries through which people identify themselves as individuals and as a group and a species, and to those transgressions of the boundaries that take place in processes of change and transformation. Such change and transformation is necessary for producing value (birth, growth, domestication of land, hunting etc.), but also involves danger by temporarily obscuring the vital boundaries and distinctions on which a sociocultural system is based. (Anttonen 1993a: 72; Anttonen 1996a; Anttonen 1996b.)

But, according to Leach, 'sacred' meant the border zone between the world and the "other world". No doubt this is so in literary religions with an asbstract "theology", but how can we then explain this shift of emphasis from the natural to the supernatural? Moreover, are there not gods and other celestial beings in every ethnic tradition as well? I would suggest that the difference between ethnic traditions and "theologies" is that in the former gods and other supernatural beings are understood rather concretely in relation to various natural phenomena, whereas in "theologies" gods and their heavenly realm, as well as various forms of the Absolute, are set apart from the world in a metaphysical sense, i.e. they are supposed to be ontologically different from the natural world. Thus, the sacred border zone is between this world and "the wholly other", and religious doctrinal schemes are developed to explain the crucial distinction between the world and the "other world" and its implications for humans. In other words, the "theological" system of categorization first creates a distinction between world and the "other world", and then provides means for transcending this ultimate boundary ("revelation", "faith", mysticism, etc.). In the following chapters 1.6 — 1.8. I shall discuss the way humans set themselves apart both from nature and from the supernature, with the border zone between the world and supernature being what modern man usually understands by 'sacred'.

1.6. Nature, Culture and the Sacred

In this chapter, I wish to explore the sacred boundary between nature and culture. First I shall examine human attitudes toward nature, earth and animals, and then how culture and consciousness set humans apart from nature. Then follows two chapters in which the evolution of the notion of culture and its use in anthropology are discussed.

1.6.1. Humanity and Nature

According to Bataille, animals are in the world "like water in water." They do not experience themselves as subjects and others as objects. There is never anything between them except for the quantitative difference that one is capable of eating up the other. As animals are in this way incapable of transcending themselves, their existence is "immediacy or immanence." (Bataille 1992: 17-19, 23-24.) "Nothing is tragic for the animal, which doesn't fall into the trap of the *self* (Bataille 1988: 73)."

The first humans may have distinguished themselves from animals, but "not without a feeling of doubt mixed with terror and longing (Bataille 1992: 35)." Modern man, however, is "opposite to archaic man in that there is no longer any intimacy between him and this world." Humans have lost and even rejected their primal intimacy, and their religion is the quest for that lost intimacy. (Bataille 1992: 56-57, 74.)

Despite being separated from nature by consciousness, cultured humans, nevertheless, still experience a connection to *earth*. This is testified by the etymologies of certain Indo-European words for '(hu)man', for example. Such words are derived not only from words referring to death — like the Sanskrit '*martah/martyah*' ('mortal, man') and the Old Persian '*martiya-*' — but also from words referring to earth. One example is the Latin '*homo*' which is related to '*humus*'. Some words are even related to both death and earth, like the Sanskrit '*martah/martyah*' which ultimately derives from the root '*mr-*' ('to die'), a root which also yields '*mrd-*', ('soil, earth, clay'). (See Buck 1949: 80-81; Mayrhofer 1963: II 594, 674-675, 696-697; Benveniste 1973: 446; Toporov 1976: 166-167.)

To this semantic domain covered by the vocabulary of earth and death, also belong the concepts of night, sleep and darkness, the usual location for various kinds of hells being underground where it is dark, and sleep being an image of death (see Buck 1949: 287, 992, 1484; Toporov 1976: 166-167). Congruent to this, the white/black dichotomy appears to

convey a positive/negative valuation in all cultures regardless of skin-color (Steiner 1975: 103). According to Jean Haudry and Goulven Pennaod (1993-1994), the Indo-European world view is typified by the polarity of light and darkness, which has then assumed also other forms, as shown in the following chart:

1. Light — Darkness

2. Waking — Sleep

3. Rapidity — Sluggishness
Vigor — Debility
Courage — Cowardice

4. Victory, Growth — Defeat, Death

The return of solar light leads to activity, and activity to growth. This scheme applies also to human life: we come from darkness, live in light, and return to darkness at death. (Haudry & Pennaod 1993-1994: 133, 162. Cf. Roubiczek 1952: 10.)

Earth, however, means not only soil but territory as well. Indo-European words for 'people' in the sense of 'populace of a region', are usually derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *pel(ə)-, *plē- ('to fill') like the Greek 'plethos', Old English 'folc' and Old Norse & Swedish/Danish 'folk'. Some are connected with words for 'crowd', 'many', etc., or relate to words for 'birth' or 'race'. (Buck 1949: 1313-1316.)

Some words for 'people' are connected with words for 'district' or 'world'. Thus, the Greek 'demos' meant 'district', 'land' and 'people'. In modern Greek, however, 'people' are denoted by 'kósmos' which also means 'world'. Likewise, the English 'world' derives from the compound of Germanic *weraz, 'man' and 'ald', 'age, life-span'. World is identical to a man's life in the sense that it his subjective world, the context for his life. Also the Sanskrit 'loka' means both 'people' and 'world'. Other Sanskrit words for 'people' are 'vrnda' ('crowd, herd, swarm'), and 'jana' (< 'jan-', 'to beget, to bear'). Words for 'people' in the sense of a nation are related to ideas of strength and power, birth (like Latin 'natio'), customs or language. In some cases, words for 'country' also refer to its people as a nation. (Buck 1949: 1313-1316.)

Thus, it seems fairly safe to conclude that people have felt a close tie between themselves and the region, territory, land or country in which they have been born as individuals and which they have filled as a group that exercises power over that region. Territories (< 'terra', 'dry land') provide that concrete space into which people connect themselves, both as individuals and as a group, when answering the question 'Who am I?' We cannot ground our identity merely on our psychological processes or on ideologies we believe in; these have to be connected to something material because we have physical bodies and we live in concrete space and time (see Anttonen 1993a: 75; Anttonen 1994: 101). Understanding requires distinctions and forms, and there are no forms in our internal reality as such (Roubiczek 1952: 46, 57).

Thus, the category of space ultimately depends on the fact that we are bodily beings, as emphasized by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1992: 102). According to him, the word 'exist' is used in two senses: either one exists as a thing or as a consciousness. The experience of one's body, however, reveals an ambiguous mode of existing, as "my" body is not an object to me and my awareness of it is not a thought. On the contrary, in the human body the two modes of existing appear in an implicit and vague unity. One's body is the pivot of one's world; we never say: "My hand is beside the ash-tray," but: "The ash-tray is beside my hand." You can turn away from all conceivable objects but not from your body which is "the unperceived term in the centre of the world towards which all objects turn their face." Thus, body image is not only an experience of the body, but an experience of my body-in-the-world. (Merleau-Ponty 1992: xi, 82, 90, 98, 141, 198, 267. See also Fischer 1986: 6, 10, 16.) In the words of Paul Roubiczek: "the material world is accessible to us only through our minds, and the spiritual world only through our bodies (Roubiczek 1952: 24)."

This is the basis for Christopher Tilley's phenomenology of landscape. He writes in a Merleau-Pontyan tone of voice that it is the human body that provides the fundamental mediation point between world and cognition, the world and the subject reflecting and flowing into each other through the body that forms the living bond with the world. Subject and object, consciousness and nature are related elements of a totality which is constituted through the being of the body in the world. Subjectivity and objectivity dialectically produce a "place" for "Being" in which the topography and physiography of the land and thought remain distinct and yet together form an "intelligible landscape", a spatialization of Being. (Tilley, C. 1994: 14.)

That the body provides the natural point of view to the world is further confirmed by the

fact that many Indo-European words for the cardinal points are derived from one's orientation facing the sunrise. Thus:

'East' = 'in front'
'West' = 'behind'
'North' = 'left'
'South' = 'right'

In Sanskrit, for example, *'pûrvâ-'* means 'in front, former, eastern', *'paścimâ-'* means 'hindermost, west', *'daksinâ-'* means 'right, southern', and *'uttarâ-'* means 'upper, higher, left, northern' (Buck 1949: 870-873).

In this sense, there is a continuum between the human body and physical space[3]. As we move around "with" our bodies, we identify ourselves with places we have become accustomed to, in an ever growing circle: home/house, quarter, city, country, continent, world. We feel ourselves to be inhabitants of regions of various sizes, and ultimately, of the world or even of the universe. (See Eliade 1959: 172-179; Anttonen 1993a: 69-70.)

Thus, earth has a double meaning for man: on the one hand man lives on the fruits of the earth, grounds his or her identity to it, and on the other goes underground when dead. Earth is the place of both growth/life and death. According to Lewis Mumford, early human groups showed the same territorial behavior apparent in many species: "a tendency associated with mating and the nurture of offspring to establish a delimited habitat, a home base, defended against the intrusion of outsiders, particularly outsiders of their own species." In archaic tradition, the land ceases to be mere territory and becomes a repository of sentiment, "swarming with memories and projects: the place where one's ancestors are buried ..." (Mumford 1957: 24, 32. See Tilley, C. 1994: 67.)

Human "earthness" comes to the fore in many mythologies. In the Bible, God creates Adam "of the dust of the ground"; the Shilluks of Africa, a Nilotic tribe, have a myth of the creation of humankind explaining that the creator god moulded all humans from earth, white men from white sand, brown men from the mud of Nile, and black men from black earth (Eliade 1977: 137-138); and Plato wrote that after death, heavy, earthlike corporeality can

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[3] Cf. M I 190: "Just as a space (*âkâsa*) that is enclosed by stakes and creepers and grass and clay is known as a dwelling, so a space that is enclosed by bones and sinews and flesh and skin is known as a body (*rûpa*)."

draw a soul back to the visible world to hover in graveyards (Phaedo 81b-d). Due to the equivalence of the body and earth (both in the sense of soil and territory), the grave provides a "body" for the one who no longer has a body, as noted by Anttonen (private communication).

The theme is known also in the Buddhist "parable of origins" (Collins 1993: 302) found in the Aggaññasutta, the Mahâvastu, the Abhidharmakośa and the Mûlasarvâstivâdavinaya. According to this parable, the first men (after the destruction of a previous world) had bodies formed of mind (*mano*). But after they had tasted the earth-essence (*rasapathavî/prthivîrasa*)[4], they became thirsty (*tanhâ/trsnâ*) and soon acquired corporeal bodies (D III 84-85 [Collins 1993: 341-342]; Mahâvastu: I 285-286; Abhidharmakośa: III:98; Rockhill 1884: 1-7.)

It may be of interest to note that the Pâli and Sanskrit words for 'thirst' share a common etymology with the Latin word for 'land', '*terra*': the Proto-Indo-European root is **tersâ-*, meaning 'to dry up, to parch'. In Latin the verb is '*torrere*', in Greek '*tersomai*', and in Sanskrit '*trs-*' ('be thirsty'). (Buck 1949: 17.) The idea is that land has been formed out of the primal waters by a process of drying up. Similarly, when somebody is parched with thirst his or her mouth is dry.

In Buddhism, this thirsting has come to be a symbol of longing for earthly things. Land or earth in gerneral mean humanity and culture, water means pre-human (or prenatal) nature, as we know from many creation myths (see Eliade 1977: 83-118). Cultured humans are earthly beings: they receive their identity-giving boundaries from earth in the sense that their bodies are conceived of as "earthly" and that they ground their existence in places and territories. All kinds of wanderers, be they pilgrims or hobos and vagabonds, are as exceptional as ascetics who torture their bodies like the Indian *tâpasas*.

As inhabited territories thus represent culture and humanity or cosmos, uninhabited territories of necessity represent that what humanity is not: chaotic pure nature or the realm of the supranormal, the "other world" (Eliade 1959: 29; Anttonen 1994: 105). In being civilized and mortal, man is distinct both from animals and gods respectively. It is in this sense that the ideas of pure nature and transcendence are intertwined. Realizing this helps to

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Steven Collins points out that 'earth-essence' is here the best translation as what spreads out from the waters, in the step-by-step move from immaterial to material, is the ethereal 'essence', thus discarding the misleading rendering 'savoury earth' of the Rhys Davidses (Collins 1993, 357-358).

understand why gods are occasionally represented in animal form, and why, according to Bataille, the first humans regarded the animal world as sacred.[5]

It is to be noted that those who from an objective point of view can be termed as men, have in many instances, nevertheless, represented not-men in the form of either nature or supernature: children, women, saints, members of other tribes, nations, "races", etc. Perhaps most clearly the aspects of nature and supernature become mixed in the notion of the sacred fool, representing at once the state of nature and the divine reality. The classes of children etc. serve as that "other" against which the "us" is defined. In the "other", we see not that what it is in itself, but what we think we are *not*. (See O'Flaherty 1988: 2-3.)

Things that have commonly been listed as separating humans from other animals (nature) include self-consciousness, conceptual language, religion, the use of tools and the domestication of fire. Rudiments of all these, except for the making of fire may be found among other animals as well, and consequently the difference between humans and other animals is in certain respects more or less a matter of degree. All these separating things together, however, can be grouped under the heading of 'culture'. It is culture that separates humans from the rest of nature. In the following chapter I attempt to show that culture is based on the specific kind of language and consciousness that typifies only humans.

1.6.2. Culture, Language and Consciousness

A) An evolutionary perspective
According to Bataille, the positing of an object, which is not given in animality, first appeared in the human use of *tools*:

> Insofar as tools are developed with their end in view, consciousness posits them as objects, as interruptions in the distinct continuity. The developed tool is the nascent form of the non-I. (Bataille 1992: 27.)

The tool establishes the transcendence of the object, the distinction between ends and means,

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[5] Thus, when Luis Gómez (1976: 163 n.67) says that the praises of eremitical life often hide a yearning for an escape from the multitudes and affairs of the city into the 'peace of nature', he may be missing an important point.

and breaks the undifferentiated continuity (Bataille 1992: 28-29, 95). As a result, the continuity of the animal world derived new significance from the contrast it formed to the world of discontinuous things. This continuity offered humans all the fascination of the sacred world in the presence of which they feel an "impotent horror." (Bataille 1992: 35-36.)

George Steiner writes in similar vein:

> The decisive step from ostensive nomination and tautology — if I say that the water-hole is where it is I am, in a sense, stating a tautology — to invention and, 'alternity' may also relate to the discovery of tools and to the formation of social modes which that discovery entails." (Steiner 1975: 223-224. See also 281, 293-294.)

In this scheme, language is the main instrument by which self-conscious man can refuse to accept the world as it is. According to Steiner, it is rather language that has created man than man the language. Language posits 'otherness' and makes false representation possible, which, according to Jonathan Swift, is the critical difference between man and animals. With the stick of mis-construction, illusion and play man "has reached out of the cage of instinct to touch the boundaries of the universe and of time." (Steiner 1975: 128, 216-224.) In short: "Man is the only being that refuses to be what he is (Camus 1951: 22)."

A much more detailed and up to date, although controversial, account of the uniqueness of human language, consciousness and self-consciousness has recently been provided by Bickerton. He distinguishes between protolanguage that lacks a syntax, and language in the proper sense of the word; between what he calls on-line thinking about immediately present things and situations, and off-line thinking that allows all kinds of fantasy etc.; and between consciousness-1 that is related to on-line thinking, and consciousness-2 that is consciousness of consciousness-1 and together with language allows self-consciousness.

Protolanguage consists of concepts put together without any formal structure or syntax, showing "a total absence of complex sentences, a lack of correlation between function and word order, frequent omission of subcategorized constituents, absence of any mechanism for automatically recovering the reference of phonetically null arguments, and complete or all-but-complete absence of grammatical items." Such protolanguage is exemplified by the "language" of children under two, Pidgins, "ape language", and, by inference, the "language" of the early hominids ascribed by Bickerton to the *homo erectus* some 1,5 million

years ago. Thus, lexicon precedes syntax, and the emergence of lexicon is based on the capacity to sort objects into categories[6] and the power to form associations between stimuli. (Bickerton 1995/1996: 50-51, 62, 104.)

In all other species, the brain structure at which the creature processes and analyzes *all* its sensory input hooks up directly with output systems so that when a species member utters a certain type of call, other members will react in a predictable way. A sign call indicating the presence of a leopard, for example, immediately triggers an escape reaction. It cannot be combined with other calls to form longer utterances whose meaning would differ from the sum of their parts. But if *you* were to hear the word 'leopard', you would probably not know how to react. You may stop, think things over, and maybe do something, maybe not. You can take the concept of 'leopard', turn it around and look it from a variety of angles without feeling inclined to spear one, run away, or do any other thing. Of course also human language *can* be used to give warnings; the difference is only in that animal call systems cannot be used in any other way. (Bickerton 1990: 10, 27; Bickerton 1995/1996: 54-56.)

The way animals think Bickerton refers to as "on-line thinking" in the sense that its subject matter is always taken from what immediately confronts the animal. Only humans can work on problems that do not immediately confront them, assemble fragments of information to form a pattern that they can later act upon, in other words: think "off-line". Off-line thinking became possible only after the development of areas of the brain where new information could be processed without needing to be triggered by environmental input and without invoking immediate behavioral consequences. This development was made possible by protolanguage, although mere protolanguage was not enough for exploiting the possibilities of off-line thinking to the full. (Bickerton 1990: 216; Bickerton 1995/1996: 58-59, 64.)

With no realiable syntax, there was no way of constructing complex propositions, and therefore the *erectus* stagnated for so long despite protolanguage. It is syntax, a special feature of our species, that makes the difference between thought as we know it, and more primitive ways of thought. Mental processes reflect the structure of language, and information has to reach the language centers of the brain in order for it to become registered in consciousness. Syntax has allowed the random stringing toghether of words to be replaced by their arrangement into hierarchical tree structures as well as the use of such abstract

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Even pigeons, like all "higher" species, can sort things into categories, but this does not mean that their "conceptual structure" would contain representations of abstract categories as such in thought (Bickerton 1990: 156-157; Bickerton 1995/1996: 61-62).

markers as 'the', 'that', 'to', 'because', etc. (Bickerton 1990: 156-163, 208, 216, 220, 227; Bickerton 1995/1996: 65-66.)

This can only have been made possible by a change in the internal structure of the brain, not by the increased size of the brain (e.g. Neandertals had bigger brains than us). There seems no viable alternative to concluding that syntax has a specific neural substrate laid down at some stage prior to the last fifty millenia, most probably at the time when anatomically modern humans emerged as a separate species. (Bickerton 1995/1996: 66-70.)

According Bickerton, there is a unified syntactic network in the neocerebellum[7] of the brain, which can explain how the onset of syntax can have been so sudden a few tens of thousands of years ago. He does not, however, accept Jerry Fodor's idea of a special "language of thought", a "mentalese" in which thinking would be carried out only later to be represented in a specific spoken language (see e.g. Fodor 1975; Gardner 1987: 81-86). For Bickerton, thinking is a computational process and is performed "in electrochemical impulses, which at some (very late, perhaps even postfinal) stage of the thinking process may be converted into words or images at will." But it is language in the sense of syntax that is "the only thing which could have provided us with the means to free our thoughts from the exigencies of the moment and to structure them into complex wholes." "... what we think with is language, period." (Bickerton 1990: 200; Bickerton 1995/1996: 74-85, 100-101, 106-116.)

Bickerton's consciousness-1 is related to on-line thinking in the sense that responding to a stimulus necessarily involves awareness of the stimulus. It is this awareness that is consciousness-1. It is not limited to things in the external world, however. All creatures above a fairly low level of neural sophistication have circuits that provide them with information about their own movements, and to this extent, if no further, they are conscious of themselves. But this probably does not involve a generalized "looking-before-and-after kind of consciousness" that characterizes the human reality. (Bickerton 1995/1996: 126-128.)

This consciousness of being conscious, consciousness-2, most strikingly embodies what it is like to be human. It can appear only in species with such brains that some part of the brain is to some extent detached from that part in which consciousness-1 mediates between the central nervous system and environment. Language, Bickerton argues, is necessary for such

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[7] By neocerebellum is meant the cerebellar hemispheres of the posterior cerebellum (the larger part of cerebellum). They are called such because they represent a phylogenetically new portion of the cerebellum. (Guyton 1972: 194.)

exempt areas to develop. (Bickerton 1995/1996: 129-132.)

Bickerton then raises the question of whether we must further distinguish between consciousness-2 and consciousness-3 which is specifically linguistic. In such case, consciousness-2 would involve, for example, consciousness that I have pains in my stomach, and only consciousness-3 could enable me to say: "I have pains in my stomach." In this way, there could, in principle, be creatures aware of themselves as conscious but with no means of telling this to anyone. In practice, this sounds doubtful, however, because Bickerton's theory requires language for the exempt areas necessary for consciousness-2 to develop in the brain. Consciousness-2 without the linguistic consciousness-3 also seems to have no adaptive value in evolution. But, as far as I can tell, an individual can lose his or her linguistic abilities without losing self-consciousness, as in certain types of brain injury for example, although Bickerton says that no such creature exists on our planet. With this possible exception in mind, the difference between consciousness-2 and consciousness-3 can be said to be only a theoretical one, at least as far as phylogeny is concerned. There is only one consciousness with three aspects. (Bickerton 1995/1996: 132-133.)

Yet the linguistic aspect is essential in the formation of the self in a developing infant. Daniel Stern has recently provided a rather plausible account of this process. He wants to "question the entire notion of phases of development devoted to specific clinical issues such as orality, attachment, autonomy, independence, and trust." Instead of phases or stages of development that would replace one another, he speaks of four domains of relatedness that, when once formed, remain as distinct forms of experiencing social life and self. None gets lost to adult experience, each simply getting more elaborated. (Stern 1985: 10-11, 32.)

The domains are as follows (age in months):

Sense of an emergent self:	0 - 2
Sense of a core self:	2 - 6
Sense of a subjective self:	7 - 15
Sense of a verbal self:	15 -

Previously, babies were thought to occupy some kind of presocial, precognitive and preorganized phase before the crucial age of two months. Stern, however, has investigated how an infant actively forms a sense of an emergent self during the first two months. By 'emergent self' he means the experience and the result of emerging organization. It has two

components: the products of forming relations between isolated experiences and the process. (Stern 1985: 37-38, 45-47.)

Between the ages of 2 to 7 months a child's most important task, in creating an interpersonal world, is to form the sense of a core self and core others. This requires experiences of 1) self-agency in the sense of authorship of one's own actions and nonauthorship of the actions of others; 2) self-coherence or having a sense of being a non-fragmented, physical whole with boundaries and a locus of integrated action; 3) self-affectivity or experiencing patterned inner feelings belonging together with other experiences of self; 4) self-history, in other words: experiencing continuity with one's own past. (Stern 1985: 70-71.)

The next major change takes place as the infant discovers that he or she has a mind and that others have as well. Consequently, the infant can now make a match between the feeling state as experienced within and as seen "on" or "in" another. Intersubjectivity is thus born. During the second year of the infant's life, language emerges and permits the creation of mutual experiences of meaning with others. It also permits the child to begin to construct a narrative of his or her own life. However, language also makes some parts of one's experience less shareable with others. Namely, it gives birth to the distinction between *experience* and its verbal report always containing *interpretation*, besides mere expression. (Stern 1985: 124, 132-138, 162.)

But as events in the domain of verbal relatedness are, nevertheless, often held to be what is real, experiences in the domains of emergent, core-, and subjective self-awareness are easily discarded as something irrational and unreal. This may be because these experiences can be only partially grasped in the verbal domain, despite its dominating role. (See Stern 1985: 162-163.) According to Stern, language is for a child a "transitional phenomenon" in the sense that D.W. Winnicott and other object relations theorists understand this concept (see Winnicott 1953). It is at the same time discovered and created by the infant in the sense that the thought is already in mind, ready to be linked up with the word. Language truly belongs neither to the self nor to the (m)other, but lives in the transitional zone between subjective (self) and objective (mother and others). (Stern 1985: 172-173. See also Fry, 1978: 107-115.)[8]

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Already Jean Piaget and L.S. Vygotsky had agreed that thinking did not originate in language, Piaget holding that the origins of thinking were in the sensori-motor interactions of the baby with the physical environment. Sensori-motor development then culminates in the acquisition

As to Bickerton's view of language and thinking, it does not rest on eliminative materialism, or strong artificial intelligence (AI), although one might at the first sight be inclined to think so. It is not simply some particular electrochemical events that make us do all kinds of things, human minds not being computers. It is rather that certain particular neurons firing evoke certain kinds of representations, and these representations interact with other representations, thus causing certain kind of behavior. In other words, we can vary our behavior according to our beliefs, dispositions, emotional states, etc., whereas an animal can vary its behavior only according to such objective parameters as presence vs. absence of young or close kin, etc. (Bickerton 1990: 219-220; Bickerton 1995/1996: 148-155.)

This our liberty to choose derives from the fact that language has enabled us to build up a store of internal representations exempt from immediate physical consequences. We can create words (like 'unicorn') and expressions (like 'golden mountain') whose referents do not exist, language being not constrained by actual properties of the external world. For instance the sentence 'this sentence is false' does not refer to anything in the external world and therefore cannot really be true or false. Creatures without protolanguage operate by certain categories of which they are not aware in the manner we are aware of concepts. These "protoconcepts" then became verbally labelled in protolanguage which first was only a means by which conceptualization could be manipulated. Language with a syntax then enabled the development of new concepts which did not necessarily have any basis in the primary representation system, such as 'unicorn', for example. (Bickerton 1990: 20, 27-28, 91-92, 210, 226; Bickerton 1995/1996: 148-155. See Putnam 1990: 11-18.)

Thus, language may be the answer to Michael Barker's question why consciousness (here, consciousness-2) of classifying and categorizing activities causes the "unbinding" of the bound unconscious processess (here, consciousness-1 [see Bickerton 1995/1996: 98-99]). Barker thus turns around the so-called binding problem of consciousness research: how minds tie together outputs from different assemblies, or how disparate psychological units are hooked together (see Hardcastle 1994). According to him, we should rather ask how awareness causes us to see those elements as separate. (Barker 1996.) The answer here is that it is language that does the unbinding.

Also Steiner has noted how language posits "otherness" and enables false presentation.

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of knowledge that objects are independent of us, permanent, etc. According to Vygotsky, all functions of cultural development in the child first take place between people as an inter-psychological category, and then within the child as an intra-psychological category. (See Butterworth & Grover 1991: 5-9; Boyer 1994: 103-105, 135-140).

Words as symbols do not have a necessary relationship to their referents, and thus enable all kinds of play with words: lying, nonsense poetry, glossolalia, magic spells, riddles, puns etc. (See Steiner 1975: 187-197, 221-227; Rappaport 1979: 223-243; Csordas 1990: 23-31; Scharfstein 1993: 184-186). Lies are made possible by freeing signals from material significata, and their antidote, the ultimate sacred postulates, by freeing significata from material embodiment altogether (Rappaport 1979: 229).

Bickerton has also drawn attention to the fact that the pronoun 'I' is simply a device for regulating discourse, although it easily comes to be taken as naming some innermost quality of the one who utters it. Thus, an individual gets divided into to this 'I', and everything this I supposedly possesses (pains, arms, opinions, etc.) or does. But, we are only what we do, a web made up of stunningly different types of property that are somehow held together to yield the illusion of a single self-conscious self. (Bickerton 1990: 208-209; Bickerton 1995/1996: 135-138. Cf. also Sartre 1978.)

Moreover, the notion of I involves a paradox in the sense that if it is oneself that one knows and reasons about, what or who is it that does the knowing and reasoning? This problem of self-reference is the same as in the case of Baron von Münchhausen lifting himself out of the marsh by pulling himself from his own pigtail. "You can't look at the spot you're standing on now if there is nowhere else you can stand," to use Bickerton's simile. Bickerton thinks that this violation of Gödel's incompleteness theorem (see Nagel & Newman 1964) in the notion of self-consciousness must be based on some dividing line in the structure of the human brain. (Bickerton 1990: 209; Bickerton 1995/1996: 134.)[9]

Yet self-consciousness is of logical necessity tied to the very nature of consciousness-2. Such philosophers as Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty have emphasized that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something, of some object or content. (Sartre 1943: *passim*; Sartre 1978: 13, 30-37, 43-44, 77). According to Heidegger, "The 'I' am not just 'I think', but an 'I think something'", and one can only understand one's own being as a being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1987: 367). Merleau-Ponty was even more explicit:

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Similarly, Roubiczek thinks that in order to be able to grasp the reality as a whole, we have had to develop the conceptual division of reality into internal and external ones (Roubiczek 1952: 24).

> Perception is not a science of the world, it is not even an act, a deliberate
> taking up of a position; it is the background from which all acts stand out, and
> is presupposed by them. The world is not an object such that I have in my
> possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting of, and field for, all
> my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions. Truth does not 'inhabit' only the
> 'inner man', or more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world,
> and only in the world does he know himself. (Merleau-Ponty 1992: xi.)

But, conversely, there can be an object only if there is a subject, and thus the concept of 'one-self' receives meaning only in relation to the other. This is a basic distinction, and no language has been found, for example, that lacks a first- and second-person singular pronoun (Steiner 1975: 97). Although "consciousness separates humans from each other, each in solitude behind his own eyes, each imprisoned by his own skin, each enclosed alone between the dates of birth and death", humans still are not self-sufficient, but always parts of larger systems (Rappaport 1979: 236). The dialectics of separation-binding works here as well: one can feel truly integrated with other people and the world in general only after having grown to an autonomous individual (Csikszentmihalyi 1991: 41-42; see also Munz 1964: 27-28). Albert Camus has given a very touching expression to this experience in his *Jonas ou l'artiste au travail*, where the painter, just before his death, produces his masterpiece: a tiny word on the canvas, of which you could not be sure whether it was *solidaire* or *solitaire* (Camus 1957). Self-consciousness thus is a necessary concomitant of consciousness-2 and vice versa.

As to the very word 'consciousness', it comes from the Latin compound '*con-scio*', where '*con*' means 'together with' and '*scio*' 'to know, to be aware' etc. '*Conscio*' ('to have a crime on one's consciousness') yields '*conscientia*', 'consciousness'. '*Scio*', however, may be related to the Sanskrit '*chayati*', 'cuts off, divides', and derives from the Proto-Indo-European root **sek-*, 'to cut, to divide into two'. Thus, knowing is based on differentiation and separation just like sacredness (**sek-* also yields '*sacer*', 'sacred' as we have seen!). (Buck 1949: 1210; Mayrhofer 1956: I 410; Oxford Latin Dictionary 1968: 411, 1704-1706.)

Camus has expressed well the bipolar nature of consciousness:

> If I were a tree among trees, a cat among the animals, this life would have meaning, or rather this problem would have no point as I would be a part of this world. I *would be* that world against which I now oppose myself by the whole of my consciousness and the whole of my exigency of familiarity. It is this ridiculous reason that opposes me to the whole of creation. (Camus 1942: 76.)

It is consciousness that enables distinctions. According to Edward Muzika:

> The reflexivity of consciousness that creates the dualities of inner—outer, subjective—objective, body—not-body, and self versus not-self itself creates a tension by maintaining boundaries that divide the primal, undifferentiated experience. In addition, more pain will be found when the self, previously defended against pain, will enter awareness and begin to introspect its own subjective self experience. (Muzika 1990b: 67. See also Muzika 1990a: 98-99.)[10]

Thus we can say the Herbstian primary state — or Roubiczek's (1952: 20) "primary reality", reality apart from our apprehension of it — to be broken when consciousness emerges. It is consciousness that sets humans apart from pure nature which is of indeterminate form. As Allen Carlson says, a natural object has no form; where it stops is putatively ambiguous. (See Carroll 1993: 247). It is only through consciousness and culture that natural continuity breaks as it becomes conceptually categorized. Although, according to Noël Carroll, "(c)ertain natural expanses have natural frames or what I prefer to call natural closure: caves, copses, grottoes, clearings, arbors, valleys, etc." (Carroll 1993: 251), these are such only to the human mind which thinks in culturally determined categories. A valley is a valley only as distinguished from, for example, mountains in the human consciousness.

In Alwyn Scott's Popperian terminology "… World 2 is the level of consciousness, World 1 is everything below, and World 3 is everything above." Consciousness is between human culture and the brain, and mental dynamics "involve interactions with human culture, and

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[10] According to Roubiczek, the distinction between internal and external reality emerges as soon as we become conscious of this reality and begin to think (Roubiczek 1952: 65).

consciousness emerges out of these interactions as both the apex of the most complex dynamic object in the universe (the human brain) and an atom of human culture." I think this hierarchical, or emergent dualism, the view that consciousness arises from physical systems but in a nonreductive manner, is in line with Bickerton's theory of consciousness. (Scott 1995: 145-157, 162, 169, 174.)

In Bickerton's scheme, human culture grew exponentially after the brains had ceased to grow, and syntax had evolved, with language and its power in thinking most radically changing technology and culture. In his view, "only some reorganization of existing brain structure could have caused the explosion of human culture that began a few tens of thousands of years ago and that (for better or worse) is far from over." (Bickerton 1995/1996: 65, 69, 85.)

B) "Culture and personality" in anthropology

The emphasis of anthropologists has very much been on how the human mind works and manifests itself in specific cultures. The hesitation to explore universal properties of human consciousness and culture may partly be due to the fact that the birth of anthropology was intertwined with the discovery that western values and ideas were, after all, not universal and of divine origin and thus could be explained by referring to historical and socio-cultural circumstances. Consequently, anthropologists became trained to detect and emphasize cultural differences, not similarities (Boyer 1994: 6). Thus, cultures have been conceived of as autonomous systems that should be understood in their own terms (whatever that might be) in order to do justice to their inherent rationality (see Wilson 1979: esp. 1-17, 78-111, 172-213; Sandbacka 1987: esp. 47-100). In the study of religion, the tendency to take all religious experience as culturally constructed has partly been a response to the universalistic claims of the Judeo-Christian tradition now often associated with imperialistic tendencies, as emphasized by Anne Klein (Klein 1992: 299).

Thus the relationship between human consciousness and culture came to be discussed in cultural anthropology around 1920 as the problem of "culture and personality". Between 1920 and 1935 the discussion was focused on the relationship between culture and human nature, whereas from 1935 to 1950 research concentrated on the relation of culture to typical personality. (Singer 1961: 9, 16, 22.)

Robert LeVine has divided the solutions of the culture and personality problem into five groups (LeVine 1982: 87):

1) Personality is reduced to culture

2) Culture is reduced to personality

3) Personality as an aspect of culture

4) Personality as a mediator between aspects of culture

5) Modal personality and sociocultural institutions as interacting systems

1) The cultural determinism of the first solution is represented by the so-called sociological symbolic interactionists. In this category we can also count the early works of Boas' pupil A.L. Kroeber who borrowed from Herbert Spencer the expression 'superorganic' to describe the fact that "the social" was a leap to an altogether new level. In his later writings, however, he rejected the idea of the superorganic as superpsychic. (Bidney 1970: 136, 327-330; Voget 1975: 364-365; Silverman 1981: 41.)

2) The second alternative is the reverse in that it takes culture as a product of personality factors, as in the psychoanalytic studies of Géza Róheim, for example (LeVine 1982: 87; Singer 1961: 18).

3) Personality as an aspect of culture is a view sustained by Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead, among others. Benedict developed the idea of a "configurational personality" in her *Patterns of Culture*. According to her, there is a wide range of individual temperament types recurring universally. Every culture, however, restricts the number of accepted temperament types to those that fit into its specific configuration. Thus, the configurations of cultures determine the boundaries between normal and abnormal personality types. (Singer 1961: 23-26; Honigman 1976: 207-208; Silverman 1981: 142.)

4) During the years 1936-1940, the psychiatrist Abraham Kardiner arranged seminars for psychiatrists and anthropologists in the New York Psychoanalytic Institute. Among the participants were Benedict and Ralph Linton. In 1939 Kardiner published his *The Individual and his Society* in which the idea of a "basic personality structure" was presented. It was further elaborated in *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (1945) and in Linton's *The Cultural Background of Personality* of the same year. (Singer 1961: 13-14, 29; Bidney 1970: 336; Voget 1975, 442-445; Honigman 1976: 294-295.)

Kardiner's aim was to give psychological characterizations of cultures "in terms of the

characteristic unconscious constellations produced in individuals by the child-rearing practices and other 'primary institutions'." The aspects of culture in which these constellations found expression Kardiner called 'secondary institutions'. Basic personality structure was thus "a diagnostic summary of the psychological constellations presumably generated by a culture's distinctive primary institutions and generating in turn its secondary institutions." (Singer 1961: 29.)

A number of other studies were also made but, as Milton Singer concludes, "(t)he introduction of psychological data about individual personalities has not led to demonstrations that 'a vast majority' or 'the bulk' of individuals in a culture conform to a dominant personality type." (Singer 1961: 40.)

5) Later, sociocultural systems have been seen as an individual's environment guiding his or her experience by providing alternative ways to interpret it, without determining it causally (see Voget 1975: 540). This is the frame of reference of Melford E. Spiro and Talcott Parsons who see personality and sociocultural institutions as interacting systems (LeVine 1982: 87). Spiro analyzes society into groups characterized by corresponding institutions, and groups into statuses that are positions in the group. Each status can then be associated with one (Linton) or more (Merton) sets of activities or roles. As playing a role is motivated by personality, it is in the concept of role that personality and social systems intersect. There is "feed-back between social system and personality such that the social system creates those personality needs which, in turn, are satisfied by and motivate the operation of the social system." However, only part of the personality is relevant to and is expressed through the social system. (Spiro 1961: 97-100, 108, 115, 121. See Parsons 1961: 193-194.)

1.6.3. The Notion of Culture Emerges in Europe

'Culture' comes from the Latin '*colo/colere*' which has a wide range of meanings. It is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *$k^w el$- meaning 'to turn' and, later, 'to be busy with'. The same root has also yielded the Proto-Indo-European word for 'wheel', *$k^w elo$-s. (Buck 1949: 494, 724.) The Latin verb has the following meanings:

- 'To live in, inhabit', 'to live, dwell' (of gods worshipped in a particular place);
- 'To till, cultivate' (land);
- 'To look after, keep going, tend' (things);
- 'To decorate, adorn, embellish';
- 'To worship';
- 'To pay constant attention to' (persons) and 'to cultivate friendship';
- 'To practice religion';
- 'To maintain, foster' (laws etc.);
- 'To promote the growth or advancement of, develop' (Oxford Latin Dictionary 1968: 354-355).

It is especially notable in the present context that 'cult' and 'culture' have the same root, and that for the Church Fathers, for example, 'culture' meant about the same as 'cult' now does for us. Thus, the word 'culture' may be said to contain the idea that cultivation, in the sense of agriculture, is a paradigm for all specifically human aspirations, including religion (see also Gudeman 1986: esp. 129-139). We cultivate not only land, but spiritual values as well. A cultivated man has "weeded out the wild from his nature (Snyder 1983: 9)." Consequently, we speak of mental *growth* made possible by an economic surplus that guarantees for certain people the opportunity to dedicate themselves to mental cultivation. In this way, cultivating land has served as a primary picture or model of how something happens or is done, and when this picture has been applied to other actions and events very remote in nature from the original act, we scarcely realize the original model any more, as remarked by Austin (Austin 1966: 150).

An economic surplus, achieved through agriculture, contributes to the rise of cities, and it is from the Latin *'civitas'* ('city') that 'civilization', a word that used to be a synonym for 'culture', has been derived. Thus, city-life is seen as an expression or representation of a shift from growing crops to mental growth. The word 'civilization', however, came into use only during the first third of the 18th century (Hilckmann 1967: 319). 'Culture', for its part, seems to have been first used in its present significance by Francis Bacon who wrote in 1605: "... so the culture and manurance of minds in youth hath such a forcible (though unseen) operation .... (Bacon 1963: second book, XIX.2., p. 184)."

The idea of humanity as based on specifically *human* culture or civilization is the child of

the Age of Enlightenment. In the background is a long development beginning with the birth of the idea of nation states after the agricultural revolution (1150-1250) and break-down of feudalism, and the consequent dissatisfaction with the authority of the Pope culminating in the Reformation. In 1555, religion was clearly associated with territoriality as the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* was formed in the Peace of Augsburg (the actual phrase being later). After hundreds of years of Catholic unity, the word 'religion' now came to be used in the plural. Such widening of horizons received impetus also from the voyages of discovery and the Catholic missions, especially those to China.

In Portugal, for example, the voyages of discovery gave birth to historiography based on the idea of change, in contrast to medieval chronicles that were typified by a relatively static view of history. In medieval times, the well-known stereotypical descriptions of the authors of Antiquity concerning strange peoples had been considered much more reliable than any personal eyewitness testimonies — like that of Marco Polo. Now this attitude was gradually changing. (Ruohonen 1993: 117, 133, 144, 206-207; Karttunen 1987; Karttunen 1992: *passim.*)

Previously, it had been easy to equate humankind to Christendom and history to Biblical mythology. There had been no such notion as 'universal history or time', except for the fact that the Biblical *Heilsgeschichte* had been considered such. The world had been created by the Lord, people had fallen in sin, Christ had redeemed them and after the world would have come to an end, the last judgment would take place. Depending on whether the Kingdom of God was considered to come independently of the world's development or be its result, history was seen either as continuous degeneration, or melioristically, as evolution toward an ideal (especially by the Franciscans). This, however, was not considered mythology as separate from history, but history with a sacred meaning.

To provide only one example, Emanuel Le Roy Ladurie has demonstrated that the people of the French village of Montaillou (between 1294-1324) had no idea of history. Although the 12 months were known, the year was mainly conceived of as the Christian year with its numerous days of the Saints and the like. Events were dated not in precise years, but by saying "When the heretics ruled in Montaillou", or "Before the arrest by the Inquisition of Carcassonne." And the more remote an event was, the vaguer its dating. The Catholic era was usually believed to have begun with the birth of Jesus, the events described in the Old Testament remaining largely unknown. (Le Roy Ladurie 1975: 422-427.)

During the 16th and 17th centuries, radical changes in the *Weltbild* contributed to the

popularity of the degenerationist thesis: every change was for the worst. Combined with the monogenetic theory, it became about as popular as the belief in progress has been in our century. It was considered the only rational explanation for the multiplicity of languages and religions, and for all changes after creation. In the words of Robert Brerewood, "The general rust of the world weareth, eateth, consumed, and perforateth all things", reducing man to barbary. (Hodgen 1964: 264-265.) John Donne (1572-1631) interestingly combined the idea of degeneration with man's territoriality when writing:

> *This is Nature's nest of Boxes*: The Heavens containe the *Earth*, the *Earth, Cities, Men.* And all these are *Concentrique*; the common *center* to them all is *decay, ruine.* (Quoted in Hodgen 1964: 264.)

An exception to this view was the cyclical philosophy of history of Niccolò Macchiavelli (1469-1527), Louis Le Roy (c. 1510-1577), and Jean Bodin (1530-1596), who all shared an empiricist, secularist and optimistic way of thinking (Hodgen 1964: 270-272 [but Bodin being a defender of the witch-hunting mania, however]). This, then, came to be the attitude of the Enlightenment.

The formation of human societies was discussed in the 17th century by such philosophers as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Baruch Spinoza, who propounded their theories (or, "theories") of a social contract by which civilization had been substituted for the state of nature. In 1762 Jean-Jacques Rousseau presented his influential ideas on the subject. According to him, the passing from the state of nature to civilization is a double-edged sword. On the one hand man loses his "natural liberty" to do anything that he is capable of, on the other he gains "civil liberty" limited by the general will. He also gains moral freedom because obedience to a law one prescribes to oneself is freedom, as opposed to being governed by natural appetite only, which means slavery. (Rousseau 1980: 64-65.)

The basis of the whole social system is that the social pact does not destroy natural equality but substitutes a moral and lawful equality for whatever physical inequality nature may have imposed on humankind. In the social contract, humans became equal "by covenant and by right." (Rousseau 1980: 68.)

Rousseau writes:

> And although in civil society man surrenders some of the advantages that belong to the state of nature, he gains in return far greater ones; his faculties are so exercised and developed, his mind so enlarged, his sentiments so ennobled, and his whole spirit so elevated that, if the abuse of his new condition did not in many cases lower him to something worse than what he had left, he should constantly bless the happy hour that lifted him forever from the state of nature and from a narrow, stupid animal made a creature of intelligence and a man. (Rousseau 1980: 64-65.)

So, civilization (or, culture) furthers both people's good and bad. As Jacques Derrida has shown, for Rousseau cultural phenomena *supplement* nature in two ways: they not only *add* something to it but also *replace* (Derrida 1976: 145-146). In Derrida's interpretation, this supplementing is something treacherous and negative in that there is, in fact, nothing to be added to nature. Nature is self-contained "full presence", and culture as its supplement means falling away from presence, to representation. Culture tries to supplement something that is in need of supplementing only because of culture. Thus, culture is, in a way, a medication for a disease it has itself caused. (Derrida 1976: 167, 178-179, 197.)

This is evident in such concepts that try to say something about that which is not culture, yet — as concepts — are themselves part of culture. As such concepts, Derrida mentions precisely the concepts of childhood, madness, divinity, animality and nature. Humans identify themselves as humans by separating themselves from these classes of "otherness". In this way, the "other" is on the one hand necessary for humans to be humans and on the other a threat to humanity. But, very importantly, otherness also is a promise of an existence free from the chains of culture ([Rousseau 1980: 49]: "Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains."). Thus, Derrida can write: "The approach to these limits is at once feared as a threat of death, and desired as access to a life without differ[e]nce." (Derrida 1976: 244-245.)

In Rousseau's time, the variety of cultures and religions was no longer understood to derive from the degeneration of God's creation. '(Hu)mankind' could no longer be equated with 'Christendom', or history with *Heilsgeschichte*. This had been anticipated by Lord Herbert of Cherbury in his *De veritate*, written in 1625:

Religion is a common notion, for there has never been a century nor any nation without religion. We must therefore see what universal consent has brought to light in religion, and compare all that we find on this subject, so as to receive as common notions all the things which are recognisably present and constant in the true religion. (Quoted in Willey 1946: 125-126.)

1.6.4. The Anthropological Concept of Culture

Thanks to the missionary efforts of the Jesuits in China in the 17th and 18th centuries, Europe gained a great deal of fairly accurate knowledge concerning China and Confucianism through such publications as Athanasius Kircher's *China illustrata* (1667) and others, based on the reports of the Jesuits. This produced in the Europe of the Enlightenment a boom for things Chinese, a "Chinoiserie" and sinophily. China was seen as the ideal state governed by an enlightened despot and by a natural religion of reason à la Deism (see Pinot 1932; Wright 1960; Honour 1961; Hilckman 1967; Sharpe 1975: 16-17).

In the 18th century, the practical needs of the British East Indian Company led to the study of Sanskrit which subsequently turned out to be of importance for the new science of comparative linguistics that had been established by the studies of Rasmus Rask and Franz Bopp, showing the existence of the Indo-European language group. (See Windisch 1917: 1-73; Schwab 1984: 51-80, 178-181; Mallory 1991: 9-21.) After advances not only in philology but in geology and paleontology as well, serious study of foreign cultures culminated in the birth of the new science of anthropology which, however, still lacked a method. (See Voget 1975: 41, 111; Sharpe 1975: 27.)

This was provided in 1859 by Charles Darwin whose idea of evolution was extended to concern such cultural phenomena as religion. This was done especially by Spencer who — following August Comte — termed social as "superorganic" (Sharpe 1975: 32-35; Voget 1975: 139-140). In 1911, R.R. Marett could write:

> Anthropology is the whole history of man as fired and pervaded by the idea of evolution ... Anthropology is the child of Darwin. Darwinism makes it possible. Reject the Darwinian point of view and you must reject anthropology also. (Quoted in Sharpe 1975: 48.)

A real landmark in evolutionist anthropology was E.B. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871, in which the history of humankind was divided in the successive stages of savagery, barbarism and civilization. According to Tylor, the study of past cultures was possible through "survivals", customs, opinions etc. which had resisted the stream of evolution and survived to the present "by the force of habit." (Sharpe 1975: 53-58; Voget 1975: 136-137.)

One of Tylor's most important disciples was Andrew Lang who defended the anthropological idea of unilinear evolution against the philologists and nature-mythologists led by Friedrich Max Müller. Müller did not accept the evolutionist thesis, and considered man "noble and pure from the very beginning." Later however, "linguistic aberration" of the "Mythopoeic Age" had produced all kinds of myths that Müller regarded as a "disease of language". Lang, for his part, saw mythology as the product of an evolution of ideas. As to the origins of religion (as distinct from mythology), Lang was rather reticent. In his opinion, the roots of religion lay in an "unanalysable *sensus numinis*" which then had developed into organized religions with their mythologies. With this, Müller did not so much disagree. (Dorson 1955; Sharpe 1975: 40-46, 58-65.) Thus, we have here in another form the medieval and early modern juxtaposition of degenerationism vs. a kind of meliorism.

The concept of culture, as now used in cultural anthropology, derives from Franz Boas who immigrated to the United States in 1887. He mostly used the expression 'social tradition' which his disciples then changed to 'culture'. For Boas, unlike for Tylor and his successors, 'culture' was not the same as 'civilization'. However, it was A.R. Radcliffe-Brown who finally, in the 1930's, made a clear distinction between cultural and social. For Boas, humanity consisted of an inner core remaining relatively stable in the face of altered conditions producing diverse cultures. Cultures, for their part, were formed above all around the particular technical, social and ideological ways people related to their environment. (Voget 1975: 320-329; Silverman 1981: 1-27.)

Later, anthropologists have tried to define the word 'culture' so that it includes less but reveals more. Four focal areas of interest can be discerned: Cultures as adaptive systems, ideational theories of culture, cultures and sociocultural systems, and cultures as ideational systems. (Keesing 1974.)

1) Applying an evolutionary model of natural selection has led certain anthropologists to view culture as completing and modifying the human biological design in order to make human life viable in particular ecological settings (cf. Rousseau). Although the so-called cultural adaptationists do not agree in how cultures are best conceptualized or how and why

they develop and change, they share in their evolutionist/ecological thinking certain assumptions (Keesing 1974: 74-77):

a) Cultures are systems of socially transmitted behavior patterns that serve to relate human communities to their ecological settings.

b) Cultural change is primarily a process of adaptation and, thus, change is always toward equilibrium within ecosystems.

c) A crucial role in the adaptation is played by technology, subsistence economy, and elements of social organization directly tied to production. It is in these realms that adaptive changes usually begin. Differences in views of how this process operates exist between cultural materialists à la Marvin Harris, the Marxists, the cultural ecologists following Julian Steward, and such human ecologists as Roy Rappaport. Most of the representatives of these schools, however, seem to agree that economy is somehow primary and ideational systems, like religion, secondary.

d) The ideational components of cultural systems may have adaptive consequences, however.

A particular strand within this perspective is the ecology of religion that was discussed at the study conference of the International Association for the History of Religions in Turku, Finland in 1973 (see Honko 1979: 221-298). Ecology of religion, represented with differing emphases by Rappaport and Åke Hultkrantz, aims to view the integration of religion and environment, and, according to Hultkrantz, to establish a taxonomy of types of religion based on ecological factors. (Hultkrantz 1985; Rappaport 1979.)

2) The ideational theories of culture include three different approaches: cultures as cognitive systems, cultures as structural systems, and cultures as symbolic systems (Keesing 1974: 77-81. See Lawson & McCauley 1993: 33-43).

Those regarding culture as cognition understand it to be — in the words of Ward Goodenough — "the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them." Culture is an inferred ideational code behind

observable events, and language (Saussure's *langue*) is its subsystem. Consequently, linguistic methods were expected to contribute to our understanding of both unique cultural systems and of universal cultural patterns.

Cultures have been interpreted as shared structural systems, especially by Claude Lévi-Strauss. For him, cultures are cumulative creations of the human mind, and the task of anthropology is to discover those principles that generate such cultural elaborations as myth, kinship etc. The physical world humans live in provides the raw materials that universal processes of mind then elaborate into substantively diverse but formally similar patterns. It is the mind that imposes culturally patterned order on the world. Thus, the dichotomy of culture and nature is the ultimate source of various symbolic polarities. (E.g. Lévi-Strauss 1964.)

Louis Dumont and Clifford Geertz are perhaps the foremost representatives of the cultures as symbolic systems approach. Geertz endorses a theory of meaning similar to later Wittgenstein: cultural meanings are not "in people's head's" but in shared communication. Cultural patterns are not metaphysical matters but "things of this world." Cultures are webs of significance the meanings of which the anthropologist has to interpret. (Geertz 1973. See Lawson & McCauley 1993: 16-17.)

3) Roger Keesing reserves the word 'culture' for the ideational realm only, and uses the combination 'sociocultural system' to refer to social realizations or enactments of ideational "designs-for-living" in particular environments. Thus, what the cultural adaptionists are talking about are "sociocultural systems-in-environments". (Keesing 1974: 81-83.)

4) Goodenough, Lévi-Strauss and Geertz share the premise that cultural and social realms are distinct though interrelated. Neither is a mere reflection of the other. This is a basic distinction in the refinements of theory and narrowings of the concept of culture. Disagreements between the above-mentioned scholars concern the way cultural meanings relate to individual minds. (see Keesing 1974: 83-88.)

Culture is not all that an individual knows, thinks and feels, but rather what he or she presupposes other members of his or her culture to know, believe and mean. Such presuppositions are to a large part unconscious, but may become partly conscious in confrontation with those who are not members of the subject's culture and thus do not share the same systems of classification. (Keesing 1974: 89.)

That people's behavior is governed by cultural rules not necessarily apparent to themselves (see Winch 1958: 24-33, 45-52, 111) means that culture is an abstracted composite, a

creation of the scholar. Different individuals in a particular culture have differing knowledge of their culture, and it is the scholar that makes the culture by combining, analyzing and abstracting on the basis of this knowledge. (Keesing 1974: 89).

I use here the concept of 'culture' in a very broad sense, meaning by it the totality of the features distinguishing man from other animals. We could tentatively define culture in this sense as nature understood, conceptualized, manipulated and domesticated by self-conscious, tool-using humans, as well as the continuous process of domestication itself. Thus, all four of Keesing's focal areas are covered: culture has adaptive functions, an ideational element that can be understood either cognitively, structurally or symbolically, and it also includes the social realizations of the ideational. The general phenomenon of culture is dependent on the phenomenon of human consciousness, but the functioning of consciousness is structured by the conditions specific cultures.

1.7. The Sacred as Transcendent

1.7.1. Religion and the Sacred in Theological and Comparative Perspective

With the coming of Christianity, the Finnish word '*pyhä*' was adopted as a translation for the Latin '*sacer/sanctus*' and in due course received the new connotations of purity and holiness in the sense of being related to God (Anttonen 1993a: 56). This has, I believe, been the more common way to conceive the sacred in the study of religion. Its roots are in Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige* in which the author adopted the German '*heilig*' to refer to a terrifying and repulsive but also fascinating experience of encounter with a "wholly other" (*ganz andere*), transcendent reality. (Otto 1969. See Macquarrie 1988: 215; Ludwig 1987: 139; Anttonen 1993a: 54.)

It is especially interesting that now the idea of an "other" takes the form of "*wholly* other". The "other" is no longer beyond some geographical or a specific cultural boundary, but beyond all conceivable boundaries. We have the idea of transcendence. Otto writes:

> The truly 'mysterious' object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently 'wholly other', whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb. (Otto 1969: 28.)

In its highest modes of manifestation, the "wholly other" is something that opposes not only nature but the world itself:

> And while, following this main line of development, this element in the numinous consciousness, the feeling of the 'wholly other', is heightened and clarified, its higher modes of manifestation come into being, which set the numinous object in contrast not only to everything wonted and familiar (i.e. in the end, to nature in general), thereby turning it into the 'super-natural', but finally to the world itself, and thereby exalt it to the 'supramundane', that which is above the whole world-order. (Otto 1969: 29.)

With this in mind, Otto explained that 'holy' had lost its religious meaning and come to designate ethical and moral self-righteousness, i.e. something "this-worldly". For this reason, he coined the Latinism *'numinous'* to refer to the holy minus its moral factor and without a rational aspect. The Latin word *'numen'* has the same kind of semantic range as Codrington's and Marett's *'mana'* which, for Marett, expressed the fact that in "pre-animistic" religion feeling and acting predominated over thought. (Otto 1969:1-24. See Wach 1958: 38, 46-49; Macquarrie 1988: 212-214; Ludwig 1987: 140.)

Otto did not want to deny the rational element in religion, but thought that it had overshadowed the non-rational core of religion. 'Holy', or the 'numinous', pointed to this inconceivable core. Although we are unable to give a precise conceptual account of this core, we can grasp it by the *sensus numinis*. (Otto 1969: 1-7. See Macquarrie 1988: 214-215; Ludwig 1987: 140.)

Thus, Otto's analysis contains both the aspects of religion mentioned by Schilling in connection with Roman religion. Lutzky takes Otto's analysis to include the 'separation-binding' polarity in the sense that dread increases distance while fascination draws together (Lutzky 1993: 284-285). She, however, misses the point in not paying attention to the

difference between "other" and "wholly other".

Otto was influenced by Luther, whose view of the Holy Spirit was the subject of Otto's doctoral dissertation. Luther's voluntarism, his stress on religious intuition and the inward presence of God can be seen as the culmination of the individualistic tendencies of the 14th century Europe that greatly contributed to the rise of mysticism. But Otto was also heir to the theological tendencies in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. He was especially interested in Friedrich Schleiermacher whose idea of the feeling of absolute dependence has clearly shaped Otto's notion of the numinous experience, although Otto stressed the *qualitative* difference between natural feelings and the *sensus numinis*. (Macquarrie 1988: 215; Ludwig 1987: 139; Davies 1988: 194.)

Thus, Otto has a clearly theological emphasis, and John Macquarrie (1988: 216) can praise him for having "led us into the innermost sanctuary of religion." In mystical experience of the holy, we encounter another, transcendent reality. Consequently, Otto can be said to be "the first to apply a phenomenological method to link the subjective experience of the holy with the objective phenomena of religion (Beasley-Murray 1982: 5; see also 6-29)." Theology is the science of the transcendent, of the "wholly other" that is named as 'God'. There are, of course, many theological versions of God's otherness. Let it suffice here only to cite Paul Tillich's conception of God as that which is the really real in everything that claims reality. Thus, the Ultimate is not the Plotinian One beyond time and change (see chapter 3.), but God that manifests Himself in the midst of history, being the depth of 'is' in everything that is, being-itself. (See Annala 1982: 66-67, 81.)

Postulating a principle that is "wholly other" is inherently paradoxical, however, because if we can name it, it is not beyond naming and thus not wholly other. It is paradoxical in the sense of a contradiction that follows as a correct inference from coherent premises (see Quine 1966: 7). Aware of this, Tillich wanted to posit a "God above God":

> 'Transcend the symbols; they themselves want you to do so. That is what they demand. With your doubt and your uneasiness you witness to that of which the term "God above God" is a paradoxical expression: The Ultimate, the holy itself.' (Tillich 1992: 421.)

This, of course, does not really solve the problem, because we would have to transcend also the "God above God" and posit a "God above God above God", and so on *ad infinitum*. This

paradoxical relationship between the "wholly other" and theology representing it has received perhaps its clearest expression from Karl Barth who wanted to repudiate religion in order to guarantee God's otherness. In his opinion, religion had to die; and, in God "we are rid of it." "(R)eligion and grace confront one another as death and life." Constructing a religion out of the Gospel, as Schleiermacher attempted, was "the betrayal of Christ." (Barth 1980: 225-238).

Yet Barth was a Christian and a theologian. Aware of the inherent tension, he wrote that as theologians, we have to talk about God, but because we are humans we are not able to do this. We have to know both that we must and that we cannot, "and by so doing give glory to God. This is our distress. The rest is children's play." (Anfänge der Dialektischen Theologie 1974: 199.) The formulation is clearly paradoxical which, however, did not prevent Barth from drawing clear practical conclusions of what to do in the situation.

Theology has a long tradition to back the view that we are at least capable of knowing that God exists, although we cannot intellectually know his essence. Philo Judeus (c. 30 BC - AD 45) held that God was infinite in his incomprehensibility precisely in the sense that we can only know his existence but not his essence. Yet Philo was of the opinion that God was infinite also in his goodness and omnipotence. (See Wolfson 1965: 6-9.) This was later accepted also by St. Thomas of Aquinas, for example.

The roots of Christian monotheism, however, are in Hellenistic theology. Plato solved the problem of the world's intelligibility by postulating a god (the Demiurge) who had made the world conform to the eternal and intelligible ideas that were transcendent to the sensible world. Platonists before Plotinus disagreed on whether the ideas existed in the Demiurgic intellect, or were independent of it, the first alternative becoming the dominant one during the first century AD at the latest. (Kenney 1991: xxx, 3-32. See also Wolfson 1965: 32-42.)

The immediate origins of philosophical monotheism lie among the Neopythagoreans of the first centuries BC and AD. Its definitive statement is the construct of Plotinus (205-270). Plato's view that the ideas are more real, contain more being, than the sensible world forms the background to the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic idea that the reality consists of hierarchically ordered principles that are causally related to their subordinates. The whole reality is ordered on this "ladder of nature" (*scala naturae*) with God being at the top, then angels, demons, humans, animals, plants, minerals, and pure matter. (Lovejoy 1964: 39-50, 58-63, 89-90; Louth 1985 1-3, 36-51; Kenney 1991: xvii, 3-10, 32-43.)

To establish closure to the cosmological regress, the Neopythagoreans postulated on the

ladder a highest principle beyond perfect intelligible representation, resulting in apophatic, or negative theology. This highest principle came to be the first god in the triadic system of Numenius of Apamea (c. 150-200 AD), which consisted of 1) the first god, who was simple, indivisible and self-directed; 2) a second god, who was initially unified but who divided in the process of coming into contact with preexisting matter, resulting in 3) the third god, equivalent to the rational world soul. The first god dwelled in self-focused contemplation, the intellection of the second being directed both toward the first god and toward the lower elements to which it gave order. (Kenney 1991: 42, 60-61.)

It is easy see how the idea of Christ as mediating between God and humans parallels this scheme. We even find the 'separation-binding' polarity in the sense that God and humans are set apart but drawn back together in the person of Christ, and in the ritual of the Holy Communion. It is because of Christ that we are supposed to be capable of knowing the "wholly other" ultimate reality. Otto, however, did not restrict the human ability to know the ultimate reality in Christianity, but applied his theory to various religions, especially to Hinduism. (See Ludwig 1987: 140-141; Otto 1987.)

In the study of religion, Joachim Wach has continued on Otto's lines: religion is experience of the holy, the human aspect of communication with God, or man's response to that which is experienced as the ultimate reality. (Wach 1951: 32-33; Wach 1958: 28, 30-36, 41, 46.) The Study of religion consists of empirical phenomenology of the objective expressions of religious experience. Such a study includes three phases which Wach had adopted from Max Scheler: inquiry into the nature of the divine (*Wesensontik des göttlichen*), forming a theory of revelation, and the study of religious acts. (Wach 1946: 15-34; Wach 1958: 24, 59-143.) Thus, Wach takes religion to reflect the fact that there is another, divine or transcendent reality. Consequently, religion can only be understood from inside, through participation in the religious experience (see Wach 1958: 11-14).

In 1945, Wach was appointed head of a newly organized History of Religions field in Chicago in which the Ph.D. was offered through what was then the Federated Theological Faculty. Wach died in 1955, and Mircea Eliade was named his successor two years later. (Dudley 1977: 12-13.) Eliade continued on the same lines, adopting the term 'sacred' to refer to what is absolutely authentic: the sacred reality is a qualitatively different, absolute reality, whereas the profane condition is characterized by relativity, unreality, powerlessness and futility. Yet, the sacred appears amid the profane as "hierophanies" (< Gr. *'hieros'*, 'sacred' and *'phainein'*, 'to show'), manifestations of the sacred in a profane object or act.

As a hierophany, an object becomes ontically something else, although it continues to remain itself. It is the task of the historian of religions to find "patterns" in these manifestations of the sacred, and not to reduce the religious to anything else, like the social etc. (Eliade 1974; Eliade 1959; Eliade 1976.) Thus, the sacred is for Eliade a quality that shines through an object, not something the society puts onto an object, contrary to Durkheim. In this way, the works of Eliade also contain the triadic structure of 'separation-binding': the profane world, the sacred, and a third mediating category, the hierophanies.

Eliade has been severely criticized by anthropologists and historians of religion for "bad history", "bad ethnology", "bad psychology", and confusion of terms, as Leach put it in an especially sharp attack. For Leach, Eliade was "a shaman in scholar's clothing." (See Dudley 1977: 37-42.) Wayne Elzey has stressed, however, that social scientists have not been particularly interested in criticizing Eliade; it is rather Eliade who has time and again protested against the supposed shortcomings of social-scientific approaches to the study of religions (Elzey: 1994: 93).

In the *Quest* (pp. 132-133), Eliade wrote that "our documents ... constitute ... so many creations of the human mind ... We do not have the right to reduce them to something other than what they are, namely spiritual creations." (Quoted in Strenski 1994: 101.) Strenski (1994: 101) rightly remarks that Eliade here begs the question, because the disagreement between him and the "reductionists" concerns precisely the identity of religious phenomena. Moreover, speaking of what we have the *right* to do obviously shifts the emphasis from the study of religion to ethical or even juridical matters.

Recently, Robert Segal has taken Eliade as a prime example of a "non-reductionist", or religionist, approach to religion, based on the unwarranted view that the true meaning of religion is its conscious meaning for believers (see Segal 1992; Segal 1994). If this were so, we, as scholars, could just as well go home and let the believers do their own "history of religions". I think, however, that Thomas Idinopulos (1994: 75-76) is right in saying that although Eliade wanted to understand religion in its own terms, this did not mean "in the terms of believers themselves." On the contrary, to understand religion in its own terms meant for Eliade understanding it in terms of Eliade. Thus, ironically, Eliade can also be accused of not taking the particular believers' point of view seriously and forcing his material in the Procrustean bed of his own idea of what religion really is about.

This puts the whole issue of "reductionism", discussed at length in Idinopulos & Yonan (1994), in a new perspective. If looking at something in terms of something else is

"reductionism", then all scholarly effort to explore religion is and must be "reductionist". A more refined account of reductionism in the study of religion still waits to be offered before the problem of cross-cultural comparison can be settled to any extent.

1.7.2. Philosophy of Religion

In philosophy of religion, the existence of transcendence, especially as represented by God, has roused a seemingly endless debate. The logical empiricists challenged religion with their verification thesis according to which the meaning of a sentence is the means of its verification. Synthetic statements should be verified empirically and analytic statements were true of logical necessity. A.J. Ayer then declared religious statements nonsensical, empty of all cognitive content, because they did not meet either of these criteria. If, for example, 'God is creator' is an analytic statement, it only expresses the supposed fact that the concepts of God and creator belong together of logical necessity, but nothing about the reality. If it is a synthetic statement, we should have some means of verifying it, which obviously is not the case. (Ayer 1962: 115-120. See Macquarrie 1988: 303-308.)

The project of logical empiricism, however, ended in a blind alley, as such statements as "all ravens are black", or formulations of natural laws, could not be conclusively verified by sense experience. A death blow for logical empiricism came in 1951 as Willard Quine's essay *The Two Dogmas of Empiricism* was published. In it, the author showed that the distinction between synthetic and analytic truths was ill-conceived because we cannot make a clear distinction between perceptual and theoretical elements in a statement. Thus, it is misleading to speak of the empirical content of an individual statement, apart from the man-made conceptual web that impinges on experience only "along the edges." The basic unit of meaning is not a sentence, but the total theory or language through which that sentence relates to reality. (Quine 1980.)

Antony Flew subsequently formulated the falsification thesis, starting his presentation with John Wisdom's parable, in which two men walk in a jungle and find flowers growing in a clearing. The one of them says he believes that a gardener tends the place, the other one is sceptical about that. They do their best to find the gardener, but that proves all the more difficult as they proceed. The believer little by little modifies his belief, saying that the gardener is invisible, intangible, etc., until the sceptic asks him how does an invisible and

eternally elusive gardener differ from an imaginary or non-existent gardener. (Flew 1972a.)

With this, Flew attempted to show that such statements as "God loves the world" are nonsensical because they are true for the believer in all possible worlds. No empirical fact could even in principle falsify them for the believer. Thus, they convey no information, because we cannot say what difference does it make that God loves the world, as all possible states of affairs are compatible with the belief. If there is nothing an assertion denies then there is nothing it asserts either. (Flew 1972a.)

It is not possible here to review all the counterarguments Flew received. Instead, I proceed by using R.M. Hare's reply as a springboard to a more modern discussion. Hare used a parable, too. He created a story about a lunatic believing that all dons at the college wanted to murder him. No matter how hard others tried to convince him that this was not the case, he persisted in his belief. Now, the situation is comparable to the gardener parable: nothing counts against the lunatic's belief, and, therefore, his assertion asserts nothing, if Flew is right. But, clearly, this is not the case as there is a world of a difference between what the lunatic thinks about the dons and what others think. He is, after all, regarded as crazy and others as sane. (Hare 1972.)

Hare invented the word '*blik*' to refer to such basic outlooks according to which we orient ourselves in the world, and which are not scientific-like explanations but themselves form a basis for all explanation. By *bliks* we decide what counts as explanation, and, thus, it is not possible to settle differences between various *bliks* by observing what happens in the world. Suppose we had a *blik* that everything that happened happened by pure chance. That would not be an assertion, because it is compatible with anything happening. But that *blik* would prevent us from explaining or predicting anything and, consequently, there would be a great difference between those with the "by chance" *blik* and others, although the former are not asserting anything. (Hare 1972.)

Hare's *bliks* can be compared to myths or what Rappaport (1979: 223-243) calls "ultimate sacred postulates". They express such basic convictions that are not felt to be in need of proof, as they themselves set the horizon for proving. Rappaport even says that if a proposition is to be taken to be unquestionably true, it is necessary that no one understands it (Rappaport 1979: 233). In this sense, we could use '*blik*' for the self-evident core beliefs of a given culture, often expressed in myths. Such *bliks* are also reminiscent of Ludwig Wittgenstein's certainties that are presupposed, not proved. I can be sure, for instance, that I have ten fingers without counting them each time the question comes to my mind, because

it is presupposed that their amount neither increases or decreases without me being aware of it. (Wittgenstein 1974.) '*Bliks*' are an example of the fact, revealed by Quine, that the distinction between synthetic and analytic truths is a misconstruction, as any statement — not only those usually regarded as "analytical" — can be held true come what may, as long as we make enough adjustments elsewhere in the system (Quine 1980: 43).

It is precisely Wittgenstein's later philosophy that has inspired certain philosophers, such as D.Z. Phillips, to defend religious discourse as an autonomous "language game" based on a peculiar "form of life". According to Phillips, religious language forms an autonomous system anchored to a social community; and members of the community use it without it being necessary that they have any non-religious beliefs concerning God's existence and the like. Flew and others did not understand that the "religious grammar" (in the Wittgensteinian sense) of words like 'existence' and 'love' is different from the ordinary one. Consequently, "to know how to use this language is to know God." Religious images are not images of anything other than of themselves. (Phillips 1965: 8, 36, 50-51; Phillips 1976: 148-149. See also Munz 1959; Kliever 1981.)

One may, however, wonder why believers themselves seem not to be aware of this, as many of them frequently enter into debates with non-believers concerning God's existence, the origin of the world, etc. A theist has to take seriously Ayer's remark that when one claims to have seen God, one does not only mean that one has some vague religious feeling, but that there is a God who is the object of one's perception (Ayer 1962: 119; see Flew 1972b). In other words, knowing God is, for an orthodox Christian, knowing how the word is used *as referring to real object*, i.e. the personal God who exists.

One way of meeting this challenge has been to accept that religious discourse has both cognitive and other, such as emotive, functions. Thus, religious discourse provides us with some kind of organizing images that, however, function only to the extent they are not regarded as pure fiction. (Barbour 1974: 7, 58.) In Frederick Ferré's quasicognitive theory, the most central element in religion is its "ultimate imagery" which undergoes no changes, although theories concerning it and the related world view change (Ferré 1962: *passim*; Ferré 1967: 360-366; Ferré 1972).

More recently, Richard Swinburne has presented the completely different view that God-talk involves claims of how things are in the world, and that claims for God's existence thus are like scientific hypotheses the truth of which can be tested. According to him, the claims for God's existence are coherent, we can develop the traditional proofs for God's existence

into one strong argument, and the idea of divine revelation can be defended. (Swinburne 1977; Swinburne 1987; Swinburne 1992.)

William Alston, for his part, takes Ayer's remark about perceiving God very seriously, although he does not primarily want to refute scepticism, but purports to show that "Christian Mystical Practice" warrants belief in God's existence. The point is that if a Christian experiences God's presence, he or she is justified in believing that God exists, without it being necessary that he or she has any beliefs about that belief. In other words, we have to make a distinction between the epistemic status of particular beliefs and the epistemic status of claims for the doxastic practice giving rise to those beliefs. If we want to prove beliefs about beliefs we immediately face a *reductio ad infinitum*: we would then need beliefs about beliefs about beliefs etc. (Alston 1991; Alston 1994. See Gale 1994; Tilley, T. 1994; Schellenberg 1994.) We could, perhaps, say that the beliefs about beliefs concerning God form a *blik*.

In the background of Alston's thesis is his view that perception (both sensory and non-sensory) does not involve conceptual mediation. In perception, something simply presents itself to the subject in question. (Alston 1991: 36-38.) This is, however, somewhat extraordinary in contemporary philosophy (Woudenberg 1994: 119). Jaakko Hintikka, for example, has criticized the (Husserlian) idea that sense-data enter our consciousness as an unstructured mass which is then given a form by the mind's nonperceptual activity. According to Hintikka, all sense-experience is already experience *of* certain objects. The particular structure of our sense impressions is built right into the data of sensation, and is not superimposed on sensory raw-materials afterwards. Such intentionality of perception implies its conceptuality. (Hintikka 1975: 200-203.)

This view can be backed also by arguments from *gestalt* psychology emphasizing that our perceptions are not constituted of isolated elements, but of organized units or wholes. When looking at a building, for example, we do not see only bricks, lumber and glass, but a house. (See Shaw & Costanzo 1970: 117.)

But, for Alston, even minimal conceptualism is "a baseless prejudice" (Alston 1991: 38). It seems to me that the case of a subject perceiving an object can be seen from either of the following points of view: for Alston the object presents itself as something, whereas others may be willing to say that it is the subject that experiences the object as something. The latter alternative does not necessarily lead to idealism or solipsism, and René van Woudenberg (1994) has shown that even Alston has, unknowingly, subscribed to minimal

conceptualism in writing that a mystic *identifies* the object of his or her experience as God.

I, however, think that we can never perceive or experience the world as it really is. Although, there *is* something that presents itself to us, we can only experience and talk about it as filtered through human consciousness and conceptualization. Particular acts of perception and the related cognitive categories, for their part, are culturally and cognitively constructed. Consequently, we can never formulate in language what it is that we *really* are talking about when we talk about something. It would be absurd to ask, for example, whether somebody's mental image of a table is the same length as the table itself. The mental image of an object is not a copy of a mind-independent thing. Nothing we say about any object describes the object as it is in itself, independent of its effect on us. There can be similarity only between mental images or sensations. Hilary Putnam calls this an "internal realist" view of truth: knowledge consists of statements that a rational being would accept on sufficient experience of the kind that it is actually possible for beings with our nature to have. Truth is ideal coherence of our beliefs with each other and with our experiences as they are represented in our belief system. Although there are experiential inputs to knowledge, they are already shaped by our concepts, and there can be no one priviledged description of that input. (Putnam 1981: 49-64; Putnam 1990: 26-42, 113-115; Putnam 1995: 29. See also Bickerton 1990: 233.)

Putnam's stand is reminiscent of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology which also is based on the idea that the external world is not copied but composed by our sensory apparatus. Our perception does not begin with objects as its cause, but ends in them as the end of perception. (Merleau-Ponty 1992: esp. pp. 9, 31, 67.) Putnam, however, remarks that "perhaps we can't help thinking that there is *somehow* a mind-independent 'ground' for our experience even if attempts to talk about it lead at once to nonsense." He indeed has, according to his own words, recently moved from internal realism to a position that is increasingly realist. He now insists that our words and thoughts have determinate reference to (external) objects, although there is no one fixed sense of 'reference' involved. Truth depends on the behavior of external objects, but the nature of the dependence varies between different language games. (Putnam 1981: 61-62; Putnam 1994: 306-309.)

Also Barth's "we have to and we cannot" can, thus, be put in a "deconstructionist" perspective in the sense that no discourse can be grounded in a metaphysical origin, or ground. Such axiomatical points, or *archai*, into which thought systems are anchored have been posited not only by theologians but by philosophers as well: for Aristotle it was '*ousia*',

for Descartes 'clear and distinct ideas', for Hume 'sense impressions', for Russell 'logical simples', for Heidegger 'Being' and so on. (Hart 1989: 32, 39, 83.)

The willingness (or should we call it obsession?) of western thought to posit an absolute ground behind every discourse is dealt with by Derrida as testifying to the differentiation between presence and representation. A discourse is metaphysical when it claims that presence absolutely precedes representation, when it uses signs that are meant to represent a concept which is pure presence. This distinction, then, can be understood in the light of Plato's distinction between the intelligible world of ideas and the sensible world of phenomena. The intelligible world has been construed as pure presence while the sensible world is a representation of that (absent) presence. According to Derrida, all western metaphysics can be reduced to distinctions that ultimately merge with the distinction between presence and representation. In the case of mysticism, for example, presence and representation appear as immediate knowledge and mediated knowledge. (Hart 1989: 11-12, 91-92.)

With regard to God, deconstruction means that the concept 'God' cannot be legitimately used as the ground of all meaning, and neither does the claim 'there is no God'. There is no pure presence of God that would precede God's representation in theology. Presence is always already representation and, for this reason, the Fall does not distinguish between presence and representation. Therefore, the interpreter of the Bible should not turn "toward the lost or impossible presence of the absent origin." (Hart 1989: 5-8, 27-28, 37-39, 117, 185.)

It is, thus, not some particular representation Derrida wants to put epistemologically into question but the idea of representation as such. He wants to show how every ground of a metaphysical discourse is systematically linked to something which is not a ground, and how, thus, presence is derived from representation, not the other way around. There is no clear boundary between meaning and reference, or intension and extension. Deconstructing a discourse means to show, on the basis of its own assumptions, that it depends upon prior differentiations which prevent that discourse from being totalized by reference to a ground. Every discourse contains the means to call its own metaphysical claims into question. (Hart 1989: xi, 14, 20, 67, 103, 114, 185.)

Thus, we can say that the difference between an invisible etc. gardener and a non-existent gardener is one between different kinds of discourses. What, from our point of view, is essential in the speculation about a sacred transcendence is that the idea of 'separation-

binding' has received a new dimension. That which is set apart is no longer the chaotic "other" in contrast to which a culture receives its boundaries, but a "wholly other" transcendent reality. Consequently, it is now humanity and culture that are considered impure when compared to that which is set apart. Writes Barth: "When men stretch out their hands and touch the link which binds them to God, when they touch the tree *in the midst of the garden*, which ought not to be touched, they are by this presumptuous contact separated from Him (Barth 1980: 247-248)."

1.8. From Nature to Supernature

As mentioned, gods are usually located in the heavens either in a quite concrete sense, or more metaphorically. Whereas humans are related to earth, and thus to darkness and death, gods belong to eternal light. Many Indo-European words for 'god', 'sky' and 'day' have as their Proto-Indo-European root *dei-, meaning 'bright, visible', testifying to the fact that gods are representations of life-giving light. (Buck 1949; 991, 1464; Toporov 1976: 166-167; York 1993: 236-237, 241.)

As we have already seen, certain Indo-European words for people refer at the same time both to world and people. In some cases, however, the etymological backround is related to the idea of life and seeing light (see Buck 1949: 15). Thus, humans are not only tied to earth, but also orient themselves toward boundless light. They are not only set apart from nature, but also from the "wholly other" supernature represented, for instance, by the sun and other heavenly bodies. I am not sure whether Bataille (1988: 79) had something like this in mind when he wrote: "By opposing itself to Nature, human life had become transcendent and had sent off to the void everything which it is not ... "

Religious symbolism of the sun is well-known. The Sanskrit word for 'sun', *'sûra'*, is derived from the root *sû- svâ-* 'to swell, to grow' (see Benveniste 1973: 448). In this case it is difficult, however, to accept Lutzky's explanation that the idea of swelling is related to fullness and thus to integrity and wholeness. Benveniste (1973: 449) stresses effectiveness and power of authority as the basis of sacredness, but there may be more to this. We should note that the sun is represented on earth by fire which is a double-edged sword in the sense that on the one hand human culture is based on the domestication of fire, but on the other fire can also destroy everything that culture has created. (See Bayard 1958: 80-103, 213-224;

Eliade 1959: 157-158; Findly 1987: 133; Goudsblom 1989.) Certain South-American tribes divide fire (and water) into two so that celestial fire is destructive, and earthly, domesticated fire is constructive (Lévi-Strauss 1964: 195).

The important thing here is that fire is sacred in the sense that it has the capacity to transform elements and thus violates categorial boundaries. Anttonen provides an interesting example from a Finnish context: the Finnish words '*palvoa*' ('to worship') and '*palvata*' ('to fry meat') have a common etymology, as argued by Lauri Kettunen. This suggests that worship may have included ritualized frying of meat. (Anttonen 1993: 59-62, 72.) This is well in line Lévi-Strauss' idea that the difference between the raw and the cooked is a representation *par excellence* of the polarity of nature and culture (Lévi-Strauss 1964).

From the religious point of view, the destructive capacity of fire is positively valued as a means of release from the human condition, and of establishing a contact with the "wholly other", with the reality beyond categorization. In Indian religion for example, the cremation fire was believed to reconstitute the old self into a new one (Findly 1987: 134). Perhaps for this reason, Brâhmanic ascetics, who were considered completely released, were always buried, not cremated (see Bareau 1979: 71-72). They were once and for all outside the sociocultural system and the related categorial change through death (Penner 1983: 107-108).

The Indian fire god, *Agni*, who in the Rgveda has as his epithet 'swollen' (*śvântah*), is a good example of the sacredness of sun and fire. In a Hittite text, found at Boğhazköy (Hattušaš) and dated to about 1,380 BC, '*Agni*' appears in the form *Ak/gniš*, referring to a god of devastation and annihilation (Findly 1978: 12 n.1; Findly 1987: 133). In the Veda, *Agni* is a mediator between the heavenly, divine world and the earthly, human world. He is not only a god, but as the ritual fire of the three hearths, he also is the means of worship, and as the fire in the household hearth, he also is the source and sustainer of human culture. Moreover, he is the prototype of the priest, as well. (Findly 1978: 1-3; Findly 1987: 134.)

One of *Agni*'s many epithets is '*Vaiśvânara*', 'having power over all men'. Fire has power over all men, both as the fire that is ritually transformed into sun at dawn, and as the ritual fire symbolizing Aryan superiority and protecting it against enemies. In the former function, *Agni* was also associated with the year. As '*Vaiśvânara*', *Agni* is a civilizing agent representing human control over light, warmth, and the demarcation of time (as sun) as well as his concern over national boundaries. (Findly 1978: 15-86; Findly 1987: 134.)

During the Brâhmana period in Indian history, emphasis gradually shifted from the sacrifice to the sacrificer, and the fire's heat (*tapas*) became interiorized so that the heat of

the flame, of *Soma*, of the priests sweat, and of the cooked food formed part of an internal sacrifice within the human body (Gonda 1960: 31, 109, 184-185; Findly 1987: 135). In the Upanisads, we find passages promising the ascetic, who sacrifices himself, a liberation beyond the sky:

> The sun does not shine there nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightnings, much less this fire. After Him, when He shines, everything shines, by His light all this is illumined. (Śvetâśvatara Upanisad VI. 14.)

> The sun shines not there, nor the moon and the stars, these lightnings shine not, where could this fire be? (Katha Upanisad II.2.15.)

Thus, the transcendent reality, formerly represented by the sun, has with the interiorization of the sacrifice taken a more abstract form. The same happened also to the 'self', and speculations concerning *âtman* and its macrocosmic counterpart, *Brahman* go hand in hand (see Trigg 1988: 285, 288). Contact to the transcendent reality is now believed to be possible in personal mystical experience.

The development of individualism in ancient India will be discussed in more detail in the second part of this work. Similar development, however, has taken place elsewhere as well. This has led Karl Jaspers to speculations on a universal "Axial Period" between 800-200 BC, during which, according to Mumford, personality and the self were detached from corporeality and social institutions, and religions from territory and a particular society. This, in turn, made possible the emergence of new religious communities based on subjective religious experiences. (Mumford 1957: 57-80.)

In other words, cultivation turns to mental cultivation, and humans no longer experience themselves as "mindful bodies" (cf. Merleau-Ponty) but separate consciousness into a spiritual entity, a soul that is considered to be in the chains of the body (see, e.g., Plato's Phaedo 79a-81d). Consequently, two ways of liberating the soul lie open: death, and ascetic or mystical efforts to attain an unmediated contact with the transcendent reality, the macrocosmic counterpart of the soul.

As to death, we should make a distinction between death as dying and death as death. Death as dying is something that terminates life, whereas death as death is that unknown condition which one then enters. (See Jankélévitch 1977: esp. 219-226, 265-269, 362-363.)

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, death means permanent contact with the sacred transcendent, but in Indian context the conception of rebirth reverses the position: life is eternal, not death. As death thus is merely dying and life and death are not set apart, a transcendence that is set apart from both life and death is needed, and contact to this reality has to be established in mystical experience. Of course, similar mystical trends appear also in Christian and secular Western traditions, as simply waiting for one's death is not a very adaptive strategy.

The three alternatives of unending life, eternal death, and a goal transcending both life and death roughly correspond to Peter Munz's way of dividing the notions of eternity into three: 1) eternity as unending duration of life; 2) eternity as the timelessness of the basic ideas and truths concerning Being, and the related idea of two realities: the phenomenal and the noumenal; and 3) eternity as timelessness here and now.

According to Munz, the first alternative, eternity as boundless duration of life, is not a real solution to the problem of transcience, as proved by the ideas of *samsâra* and nirvâna, and such legends as that of the Wandering Jew; unending life is a miserable condition. (Munz 1959: 190-191, 201.)

The second alternative gives us two types of theologies: radical and weak dualism. Radical dualism takes eternity as something "wholly other", and is apparent in, for instance, Tertullianus' statement: *Credo quia absurdum est* (or, actually, *Certum est, quia impossibile est*. Cf. also Barth). It lays stress on asceticism through which it tries gradually to eliminate the phenomenal reality in favor of the noumenal world. Weak dualism, for its part, takes the phenomenal reality as somehow reflecting the eternal reality and thus sees religious rituals as a bridge through which the noumenal can be reached ('separation-binding'). It is represented by Anselm's motto *credo ut intelligam*, for example. (Munz 1959: 202-208.) This distinction is similar to Max Weber's distinction between active "world-rejecting asceticism" and mystical "flight from the world", with early Buddhism representing the latter one (Weber 1958: 205-214 and 1966: 169-171).

The third alternative presented by Munz, theology of transfiguration, takes the notion of eternity as a representation of the experience that the lapse of time has somehow ceased. Munz quotes Wittgenstein's Tractatus (erroneously, 6.4317 pro 6.4311) to illustrate his point: "*Wenn Man unter Ewigkeit nicht unendliche Zeitdauer, sondern Unzeitlichkeit versteht, dann lebt der ewig, der in der Gegenwart lebt.*" To achieve this beatific experience one has to deconstruct one's ego, because only then one does not have to worry about the world's transitoriness any more, there being no distinction between 'me' and the things I yearn for.

(Munz 1959: 212-215.)

The distinction between dualistic theologies and transfiguration theology is problematic, however. The *raison d'être* of dualistic ideas and practices can be said to lie precisely in their capacity to lift us beyond time here and now (as in Eliade 1974). Consequently, transfiguration theology is, at least to some extent, dependent on dualistic imagery.

This is in line with my ethnographically oriented interpretation of transcendence. In societies emphasizing the collective nature of human existence, the sacred which is set apart, is located outside the community and its territory, whereas in societies with an individualistic trend the sacred assumes a spiritual nature: It is the "wholly other" set apart from the whole of the phenomenal reality, and can be reached only in spiritual experience. According to Otto, contact to the "wholly other" sacred could take place here and now in mystical experience which was divided into two basic types, the "inward way" and the "way of unity". The inward way meant withdrawal from the external world "into the ground of one's own soul" where one was supposed to find "the infinite, or God, or Brahman." Thus, there was only one form of this interior mystical experience, despite the differences in its outward manifestations (see Almond 1982, 92-122). The way of unity was antithetical to the inward way in that it knew nothing of inwardness, but culminated in a vision of the external world as a great unity. (Otto 1987: 44-47.)

However, because of the physical nature of man's existence, spiritual values must be conceptualized using physical imagery. Thus, various material objects and acts become symbols of the "wholly other" sacred reality (cf. Eliade's hierophanies), which as such gets located concretely in heaven. Heaven is, of course, the traditional residence of gods, even without an elaborate metaphysics. From heaven comes the light and warmth necessary for life and growth, and growth is always up, toward heaven. Heaven is also the most obvious opposite of material things: open and undifferentiated, seemingly infinite, of boundless light, and is set apart from earth. (See also Haudry & Pennaod 1993-1994; Anttonen 1996a: 95.) That which is beyond categorization, is set apart, obviously fascinates people. It is the mystic who wants to see what lies behind the veil of categorization. To understand this, we now have turn to the idea of mysticism.

2. RELIGION AND MYSTICISM

2.1. The Concept of Mysticism

The word 'mysticism' derives from the ancient mystery cults, such as the Eleusian mysteries and the cult of Demeter. The word *'mysterion'* ('initiation cult' and 'secret') is derived from *'myo'* meaning 'to close' (the eyes or lips). The word *'myeo'* ('to initiate to the mysteries') was created on the basis of the religious meaning of *'myeo'*: to remain silent about the secret rites of initiation. (Chantraine 1968: 728; Pakkanen 1996: 65-66.) Thus, closing the lips serves here to *bind* the group together and to *separate* it from outsiders. Etymologically, *'myo'* is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *mu*-, referring to silence. It has yielded also the Sanskrit and Pâli word *'muni'* ('silent one') — if it is related to *'mûka'* — referring to the ancient seers or sages that had made the vow of silence (*mauna*). In Buddhism, the word is applied to all those who have attained perfection and insight, as in the epithet Śâkyamuni. (See PED: 534, 538; Mayrhofer 1963: II 654-655.)

Later, in the West, especially in Neoplatonism, mystical silence came to mean wordless contemplation of the Eternal (see Dupré 1987: 245). According to Plutarch (c. 46-119 AD):

> ... those who have passed beyond these conjectural, confused and widely varied matters spring up by force of reason to that primal, simple and immaterial element; and having directly grasped the pure truth attached to it, they believe that they hold the ultimate end of philosophy in the manner of a mystic revelation. (De Iside et Osiride 382 D-E.)

It was especially Plotinus (c. 204-270) who saw man's ultimate goal in an unmediated and undifferentiated contemplation of The One at the top of the ladder of nature, of the transcendent ground of all things, completely beyond conceptual thought. The higher, however, was not the more remote because ascending to the One the soul penetrated more deeply into itself. To find the One, was to find himself. (Louth 1985: 40.) Writes Plotinus:

> Generative of all, The Unity is none of all; neither thing nor quantity nor quality nor intellect nor soul; not in motion, not at rest, not in place, not in time: it is the self-defined, unique in form or, better, formless, existing before

Form was, or Movement or Rest, all of which are attachments of Being and make Being the manifold it is. (Enneads VI:9.3.)

Thus, The One is an intellectual construct, a metaphysical first principle in both logical and temporal sense: because multiplicity always consists of multiple ones, oneness is primary to multiplicity (Enneads V:1.5). (See Louth 1985: 38-39; Kenney 1991: 101, 141-145.)

Sometime between the fourth and the fifth centuries the new, Christian meaning of 'mysticism' began to absorb the earlier connotations of silence and secrecy. For the early Christians, 'mystical' referred to the special meaning of the Scriptures they detected under the literal meaning. (Bouyer 1981: 45-47; Dupré 1987: 245-246.)

In the 5th century, Pseudo-Dionysius postulated in his "Mystical Theology" in a very similar manner a "Cause of everything" that was beyond all perception and intellection, an inexistent, lifeless, speechless and mindless something that was not in any place and could not be seen or touched. That something he, however, implicitly identified with the Judeo-Christian God "who has made the shadows his hiding place" (Ps 18:11), urging the reader to strive for union with the Cause of everything, yet warning that those who are uninformed and "caught up with the things of the world" should not hear anything about this. In this way, Dionysius restricted mystical knowledge to the Christian community. (De Mystica Theologia.)

After the general stagnation of the early Middle Ages and the subsequent agricultural revolution in c. 1150-1250, mysticism reappeared in Europe during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries when science, politics, literature and art had reached their zenith and a new kind of individualism was born, culminating in the Reformation[1]. Now the Christian God was understood to be that Absolute with which an individual's soul could unite (*unio mystica*) after an arduous spiritual journey.

In the study of religion, the notion of mysticism was introduced especially through the work of William James (besides Otto). For James, religion meant "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine." Such personal religious experience had its "root and center in mystical states of consciousness" which James himself, however,

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[1]

See Davies 1988: 194, and Underhill 1923, 541ff. for a bibliographical survey on the writings of the mystics.

could not attain because of his "constitution". There were four characteristics of a genuine mystical experience: ineffability, insight "into depths of truth", transciency, and passivity. (James 1971: 50, 366-368.)

Grace Jantzen has drawn attention to the fact that James, under the influence of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Romanticism, has thus shifted the emphasis from mystical doctrine to subjective states of consciousness (Jantzen 1989). Consequently, a whole branch of scholarship on the psychology of meditation and altered states of consciousness has been established during the post war period (see, e.g., Jarrell 1985). Western scholars now usually understand by mysticism special kinds of subjective experiences with various conceptual interpretations in various religious traditions. There is supposed to be nothing specifically European or Christian in mysticism as a *phenomenon* (Werner 1989: 15). By the same token, 'mysticism' has, despite its particular religious roots, become a scholarly concept widely used in historical, psychological and phenomenological studies of religion.

2.2. Mysticism — Cultural or Universal?

2.2.1. The "Contextualist" Critique of Mysticism

During the past decades sharp criticism has been directed against the view of mysticism as consisting of peculiar kinds of experiences that are everywhere the same, although they are given different conceptual interpretations in differing religious traditions. The so-called contextualist thesis of Steven Katz takes mystical experience to be intentional experience *of some object*, and as such, to be shaped and formed by the subject's culturally patterned beliefs, concepts, and expectations. Thus, there can be no universally selfsame mystical experience. (Katz 1978; Katz 1983; Katz 1985. Cf. Evans 1989; Forman 1990: 3, 9-25; Forman 1993: 705-710; Forman 1994b: 39-40; Rothberg 1990; Shear 1994.)

Similarly, Hans Penner declares 'mysticism' as a false category and an illusion because once we accept that there are no direct experiences of the world, which would be independent of the social relations "mediating" them, there is no sense in speaking of 'pure consciousness'. 'Mysticism' does not refer to any particular kind of system or experience,

and the study of mysticism, as it has been practised, has been "basically misconceived." Mystical languages cannot refer to the same Reality, because Reality is relative to a language system. (Penner 1983: 89, 94-96.)

In his manifesto, Penner follows the tradition of taking religious experience as conditioned by specific socio-cultural circumstances. Even "mystical relativism", the conception that there are many mysticisms, will not do, because if "mystical systems" were strictly autonomous, the only way to describe and interpret them (explanation would not be possible) would be to "adopt" each system at a time, as adopting two at once is impossible. But if there is no intersection, how, then, can we draw boundaries between different systems? To escape such absurdities, Penner drops the whole notion of mysticism. (Penner 1983: 92-94.)

As an example of studying mysticism without mysticism, Penner gives a brief analysis of Indian "mysticism" as something that can only be understood in relation to the caste system. "Once we place yoga back in its proper setting as an element in a system the mystic illusion disappears." Penner does not want to contest comparison but to emphasize that we should compare different religions as systems, not certain elements in each of them. (Penner 1983: 98-113.) I agree in some points in Penner's analysis of Indian materials, but disagree in the basic assumption of mystical illusion. Could we not just as well contest the notion of religion and say that people only do things in different cultures, but to abstract a religion out of them produces a "false category"? Or, how about 'culture'? 'Human being'?

Penner clearly thinks that a scholar has available a language in which he or she can interpret, explain and compare different cultures and religions. There is nothing impossible in cross-cultural comparison as such; it is only the alleged phenomenon of mysticism that does not lend itself to such investigation because it is an unwarranted abstraction from differing social systems, "a figment of our logical modes of classification (Penner 1983: 96)." But so is 'religion'. Penner has no argument to show that it is impossible in principle to find a common core in various phenomena traditionally termed as 'mystical'. To say that once we accept that there are no direct experiences of the world, it does not make sense to speak of 'pure consciousness', is not of much help because whether *all* experiences *are* mediated or not is precisely the question under debate.

Moreover, even though we can provide a meaningful account of Indian "mysticism" in relation to the caste system, this does not exclude the fact that both caste system and transcending it can be seen as particular manifestations of certain more general laws of social psychology. Thus, a more abstract analysis of yoga cannot be excluded *a priori*.

Robert Gimello, who also wants to reject mysticism as an autonomous and self-contained realm of human experience that is universally the same, is not willing, however, to discard the whole category of mysticism. Instead, he says that the study of mysticism can only advance if scholars undertake to provide "thick descriptions"[2] of "those social, political, economic, and legal contexts which have nurtured mystics in all cultures and at all times." (Gimello 1983: 61, 84.)

Mysticism cannot be reduced to any single "common core of pure, undifferentiated experience", because:

> Were one to substract from mystical experience the beliefs which mystics hold
> to be therein confirmed and instantiated, all that would be left would be mere
> hedonic tone, a pattern of psychosomatic or neural impulse signifying nothing.
> Surely such mindlessness is not what those who take the matter seriously mean
> by mystical experience. (Gimello 1983: 62.)

This brings to the fore the crucial point: what is the relationship between psychosomatic changes in one's consciousness and mystical doctrines? According to Gimello, mystical experience is simply the psychosomatic enhancement of religious beliefs and values. Buddhist mystics, for example, have the kinds of experiences they have partly because of the discourse they learn and use. (Gimello 1983: 77, 85.) Such formulations, however, are bound to obscure the issue.

The first statement can be taken to mean that Buddhists have a set of beliefs $a, b, c, \ldots$, and certain meditative techniques by which to adduce psychosomatic changes in their awareness. These changes then enhance the beliefs $a, b, c, \ldots$, obviously in the sense that they are considered personal proofs of the validity of the beliefs. But how can an adduced change x in one's awareness prove that a belief a is true? To use (and extend a bit) an example provided by Robert Forman (1994b: 41), if a person has the belief that Indian food is hot, and he then, for the first time in his life, tastes Indian food, he may think that he has proved to himself that Indian food really is hot. Tasting is a proof in the sense that the physiological response to tasting matches the persons preceding belief of what hot food would feel like. This belief is, in turn, dependent on the person's conceptual knowledge

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[2] The expression is borrowed from Geertz (1973: 3-30) who borrowed it from Gilbert Ryle, but Gimello does not refer to them.

concerning the meaning of the expression 'hot food'. In other words, the proof consists of a match between the person's experience and his conceptual system. But how is this "match" established and assessed? I shall return to this soon.

The other claim, that Buddhists have certain experiences partly because of the discourse they have learned, can be taken to mean that the discourse (or beliefs) *causes* experiences. This is problematic, however, and not only because of that mysterious word 'partly'. Indian food is not experienced as hot merely because we have a "discourse" of hot food and believe Indian food to be hot. Gimello seems to confuse experience and interpretation in saying that Buddhists have certain *experiences* because of the discourse they have learned and adopted. It is rather that they *name* their experiences with certain labels ('cessation', 'nirvâna', etc.) because they have the kind of conceptual system (discourse) they have, i.e. a conceptual system where those labels occupy a certain place.

Once we differentiate between experience and conceptualized experience, it becomes possible in principle to take mysticism as a universal phenomenon of psychosomatic changes. The ways these changes are labeled and interpreted vary, of course. But why not explore, like Pascal Boyer (1994: 12), how "micro-processes of cognition and interaction impose strong constraints on the diffusion and transmission of religious assumptions, thereby leading to the recurrence of ideas observed in the religious domain"? In other words, although mystical doctrines may form only a polythetic class of vague family resemblance similarities (see Southwold 1978, 369; Comstock 1984: 500, 512), they depend on certain cognitive functions that are universally the same (see Boyer 1994: 5, 13).

Gimello's statement that mere psychosomatic changes signify nothing is of course true, although "mindlessness" *has* been regarded as a goal in Buddhism (see Part B, ch. 1.3. below). Thus Jantzen, writing from a theological point of view, could remark that emphasis on subjective psychological states of consciousness has dimmed our understanding of the objective content of mystical experience which, however, is what is relevant to the mystic (Jantzen 1989). Robert Sharf presents the same criticism, although from a completely different scholarly tradition. Writing in the same vein as Penner and Gimello, he insists that the emphasis on personal experience reflects the willingness of western scholars to read prescriptive mystical satements as descriptions of personal experiences; and all this because of the modern ideal of freeing religion from authoritative doctrine and metaphysics. (Sharf 1995.) On the other hand, the tendency to take all religious experience as culturally constructed is partly a response to the universalistic claims of the Judeo-Christian tradition

now often associated with imperialistic tendencies, as noted by Klein (1992: 299).

2.2.2. "Decontextualist" Views of Mysticism

Otto's distinction between the inward way and the way of unity in mysticism has become a standard distinction in the study of mysticism. It is usually known as the dichotomy between introvertive and extrovertive experience. According to Walter Stace, the extrovertive experience is a spontaneous experience that looks "outward through the senses, while the introvertive look inward into the mind." As such, the extrovertive experience is an incomplete form of the introvertive. Both, however, "culminate in the perception of an ultimate Unity ... with which the perceiver realizes his own union or even identity." In the extrovertive experience, the external world is transfigured so that "the One" shines through. In the introvertive experience, one closes the senses and dives inwards into his or her own self and finds "the One" there. Yet, extrovertive mysticism is only an incomplete form of introvertive where space and time are finally transcended. (Stace 1961: 60-62, 131-132.)

According to Philip Almond, we first have "experiences in which the world of everyday experience is perceived as having an all-embracing unity or coherence or oneness about it." From this experience springs a belief that "what had previously seemed merely disparate, multiple, and unconnected is *really* a unified whole." Second, "we have experiences which do not involve public phenomena at all, where the world is, so to speak, 'bracketed out', and which takes place 'within' the individual." Such experiences arise as a result of following particular contemplative or meditative paths. (Almond 1982: 7-8.)

Walter Pahnke and William Richards, who studied mystical experiences induced by LSD, describe internal and external unity as follows (Pahnke & Richards 1969: 401-402):

> Internal unity reportedly occurs in the following manner: Awareness of all normal sense impressions ... c[e]ases, and the empirical ego (i.e. the usual sense of individuality) seems to die or fade away while pure consciousness of what is being experienced paradoxically remains and seems to expand as a vast inner world encountered. ... Internal unity occurs when consciousness merges with this 'ground of being', beyond all empirical distinctions. Although awareness of one's empirical ego has ceased, one does not become unconscious.

The external unity meant that:

> Awareness of one or more particular sense impressions grows in intensity until
> suddenly the object of perception and the empirical ego simultaneously seem to
> cease to exist as separate entities, while consciousness seems to transcend
> subject and object and become impregnated by a profound sense of unity,
> accompanied by the insight that ultimately 'all is One'.

The quest for pure internal mystical experience, independent of all cultural construction is
well exemplified by Bataille's idea of an "inner experience" which he defines as follows:

> By *inner experience* I understand that which one usually calls *mystical
> experience*: the states of ecstasy, of rapture, at least of mediated emotion. But
> I am thinking less of *confessional* experience, to which one has had to adhere
> up to now, than of an experience laid bare, free of ties, even of an origin, of
> any confession whatever. This is why I don't like the word *mystical*. (Bataille
> 1988: 3.)

This inner experience "reveals nothing and cannot found belief nor set out from it." In other
words, Bataille wants to substitute a pure meaningless experience for all philosophies and
religions. The inner experience must not have any other objectives than itself, not even in
science or in the pleasure of the rapture. It does not lead to any end point given in advance,
not to a harbor but to "a place of bewilderment, of nonsense." "Mystical knowledge" is not
based on any mystical revelation, but is pure fiction, like art. The supposed object of inner
experience is only a projection of the dramatic loss of self in that experience, an image of the
lost subject. (Bataille 1988: 3-4, 7-8, 73, 117-118.)

Bataille admits that we have to express our experiences somehow, but remarks that the
expression of an inner experience "cannot be a dry verbal tradition to be executed on
command" but should "respond to its movement." The mastery of our innermost movements
is traditionally known as *yoga*. But as *yoga* "is given in the form of coarse recipes,
embellished with pedantism and with bizarre statements" and is practiced for its own sake,
it "advances no further than an aesthetics or a hygiene, whereas I have recourse to the same

means (laid bare), *in despair.*" (Bataille 1988: 6, 15.)

Basically, inner experience can be defined as the opposite of action. Action, like discursive thinking, is dependent upon project, upon a "*putting off of existence to a later point.*" Thus, the objective of inner experience cannot be even salvation, salvation being the summit of all projects. But on the other hand, as salvation is also the negation of all projects including itself, inner experience may paradoxically be identified with salvation. One attains the experience contrary to the project one had of having it. (Bataille 1988: 46-47, 54.)

According to some scholars of mysticism, there indeed is a type of mystical experience that is characterized precisely by emptying one's consciousness of all conceptual and other content, including the specific path through which the experience is sought. Even Alston, for whom mystical experience means that God presents himself to someone, admits that a mystic can occasionally have also these experiences of undifferentiated unity (see Woudenberg 1994: 123). In religious contexts, such experiences are afterwards interpreted according to the prevailing conceptual scheme, however.

Such decontextualist or non-constructivist tradition in the study of mysticism is best represented by Stace and more recently by Robert Forman and his co-authors. According to Stace, the empty consciousness of the introvertive mystical experience does not mean unconsciousness but "pure consciousness — 'pure' in the sense that it is not consciousness *of* any empirical content." Its only content is consciousness itself, or an undifferentiated unity. (Stace 1961: 86, 110. See also Bucknell 1989: 3-7.)

The idea of a completely empty consciousness has been further elaborated by Robert Forman and Paul Griffiths. According to Griffiths, it is a mental event that has no phenomenological attributes[3] and no content[4] (Griffiths 1990: 75-76). Forman describes the pure consciousness event (PCE) to be a contentless state of consciousness in which no changes occur, and which is not constructed by the subject's beliefs, concepts and expectations. As "a vacuous state of emptiness, a nonresponsiveness to the external world", it is like "a massive forgetting". (Forman 1990.)

Although Forman seems to be implying that during a PCE one's consciousness is completely empty, he usually speaks of the consciousness as being especially empty of

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[3] Attributes that make it possible to classify a mental event as being a visual, an olfactory etc. presentation (Griffiths 1990: 72-73).

[4] Content which separates a mental event from other members of its class, like a vision of a tree from a vision of a car etc. (Griffiths 1990: 72-73).

concepts. In a PCE, one takes leave of the preceding verbal mode of experiencing, and abides empty of concepts. After the experience, one returns to the verbal mode of experiencing and may try to describe his or her experience in so many words, although all verbal accounts of the experience are contingent in the sense that they are afterwards imposed upon an experience of which they never were a part. (Forman 1994b: 38-49.)

It is to be noted that Forman seems to be equating concepts with words, which is misleading. I shall return to this later on. As to verbal language, if contingency here means that a given verbal description is not a necessary description of the experience in the sense that it was not part of the experience itself (the experience being empty of all words by definition) then *all* verbal descriptions of PCE's must be contingent. Only negative descriptions may have a necessary relationship to the experience in the sense that it is necessary that we do not say 'it was noisy there', for example. Forman calls these "limiting parameters". (Forman 1994b.)

Then, however, we are not describing what the experience is like, but what it is not like. Even the the expression 'pure consciousness event' itself is a negative description in the sense that 'purity' only signifies lack of something. Purity is a negative concept, comparable to emptiness. In the Buddhist context, for example, purity (*suddhi*) "does not involve doing certain things and being a certain way, but rather consists of not behaving in specific ways (Burford 1992: 40)." Moreover, the contingency only holds for descriptions regarding the phenomenological *content* of the experience, not its psycho-physiological basis.

What persists in a PCE when all phenomenological content has been "forgotten", is *consciousness itself*. Losing all intentional objects of consciousness does not mean becoming unconscious because consciousness is not inherently intentional and thus can persist even without any objects. Such pure consciousness is a cognitive state as in it consciousness knows itself merely by virtue of being itself. Forman calls this "knowledge by identity", thus adding a new type of knowing to Bertrand Russell's "knowledge by acquaintance" (directly perceiving something) and "knowledge about" (presupposing something by inference). Consciousness does not posit itself as an object to itself, but simply knows itself by being what it is. (Forman 1993; Russell 1905.)

Knowledge is in general constituted by **A** believing **x**, **x** being true, and **A** being somehow justified in his or her belief (see Goldman 1986: 19, 42-57). Now, if **A** were to know that he or she has just had a PCE, this would mean that **A** really had it, and that **A** is justified in his or her belief. But do we really want to insist that someone needs justification for his or

her beliefs concerning his or her own feelings and internal states? At least I don't. It does not make sense for me to doubt whether I really am glad (or, sad, etc.), and therefore the criterions of truth and justifiability are also meaningless, and I cannot have knowledge about my gladnes in the strict sense of the word. Being glad and being aware of one's gladness are one and the same thing, with gladness not being an object to a subject. Saying "I have glad feelings" seems to be grammatically analogous to saying "I have money in my wallet", but the analogy is more apparent than real. The word 'knowledge' has no meaning with regard to my internal states and processes of which I am simply aware. (See Työrinoja 1984: 144-146; Szasz 1959: 982-986.) Thus, in insisting that the mystic has knowledge concerning his or her own internal state, Forman is implicitly retaining the subject—object structure, although he wants to discard the object from the experience, as noted by Bruce Janz. Janz is right in saying that it is quite misleading to take mysticism in general as knowledge which is like sensation. (1995: 89.)

According to Forman, all verbal instructions for the mystic only serve as negative performatives (see Austin 1966: 220-239), taking the subject outside of the limits of his or her linguistic system. Although I cannot take all such instructions really as performatives, i.e. having a certain effect by merely being said (like the "I do" in a wedding ceremony), it is true that mysticism does include verbal instructions to forget and lay aside all verbal notions, to go beyond them. (Forman 1994b: 45-46.) Doctrinal conceptualization of the experience takes place after the experience, and may well be what Bataille called "a dry verbal tradition to be executed on command."

As to the so-called extrovertive experience, according to Roderick S. Bucknell it is characterized by sensory input with no thoughts, whereas in the introvertive experience both sensory input and thinking come to an end. Extrovertive experiences may result from three differing conditions: 1) They may be achieved unconsciously from favorable environmental circumstances; 2) they may be the result of mindfulness meditation in which one focuses on incoming sense impressions; or 3) they may take place at the moment one is returning from an introvertive experience back to normal state of consciousness, as awareness of outside stimuli returns but thoughts are still in abeyance. (Bucknell 1989: 13-19.) Thus, Bucknell seems to imply, like Stace, that the introvertive experience is a more advanced state in the sense that achieving it requires more thorough practice.

R. C. Zaehner's way of distinguishing between "nature mysticism" or "all-is-one-ism", and "monistic" experiences where one feels his or her soul to unite with the Absolute is in line

with this (Zaehner 1961: 28-29, 33, 41, 50, 168), as for Zaehner, unity with the natural world seems to be a somehow more modest goal than finding the Absolute in one's own soul. This becomes apparent when Zaehner makes a further a distinction between monistic and theistic mystical experience in the sense that the monistic unity with an impersonal Absolute is different from theistically uniting oneself with the Christian God. "Natural mystical experience" can be differentiated from the theistic one according to the mystic's "humility" and "the holiness of his life," says Zaehner. (Zaehner 1961: 29-32, 168, 172-175, 192-193.)

This theological excursus aside, I think that Arthur Deikman's description of what he calls the "receptive mode" of the human organism well corresponds to descpriptions of extrovertive mystical experience, although he does not mention the distinction between extrovertive and introvertive mystical experience. According to Deikman, the human being is an organization of components having at once biological and psychological dimensions. These dimensions are coordinated in two primary modes of organization: an action mode and a receptive mode. (Deikman 1971: 481.)

The *action mode* is a state organized to manipulate the environment, and develops in the individual in conjunction with the upright posture. It is characterized by striate muscle system activity with increased baseline muscle tension. The sympathetic nervous system is dominant, and the EEG shows beta waves. The principal psychological manifestations of this state are focal attention, object based logic, heightened boundary perception, and the dominance of formal characteristics over the sensory. (Deikman 1971: 481-482.)

Thinking (according to Piaget) develops in conjunction with the perception and manipulation of objects, and, because of this, object-oriented thought becomes intimately associated with the striate muscle effort of voluntary activity, particularly eye muscle activity. In perception, sharp boundaries become key features of the mode because sharp boundaries are important for the perception and manipulation of objects. Sharp perceptual boundaries are accompanied by sharp conceptual boundaries as successive acting in the world requires a clear sense of self-object difference. Congruent to this, language is the very essence of the action mode. Through language we discriminate, analyze, and divide up the world into separate objects which can, then, be grasped both concretely and psychologically, and acted upon. (Deikman 1971: 481-482.)

The *receptive mode*, which functions maximally in the infant state, is a state organized around intake of the environment rather than manipulation. The sensory-perception system

dominates over the muscle system and baseline muscle tension is decreased. Parasympathetic nervous system is the active one, and alpha waves dominate in the EEG. Other attributes of this mode include diffuse attending, paralogical thought processes, decreased boundary perception, and the dominance of the sensory over the formal. (Deikman 1971: 481.)

2.3. A Model of Mysticism

2.3.1. Mysticism and Consciousness

In what follows, I shall present a reinterpretation of the distinction between extrovertive and introvertive in mystical experience. As we saw in the first chapter, the notions of 'internal' and 'external' derive from the fact that our conceptual structures are greatly influenced by our nature as bodily beings. The bodily boundaries determine what becomes conceptualized as "external world" and what as the "inner world" behind one's skin. As Roubiczek said, the inner, "spiritual" world is only accessible to us through our bodies, and the material world only through our "minds" (Roubiczek 1952: 24). In order to develop a viable theory of mysticism, it is necessary to relate this rather vague extrovertive—introvertive distinction to facts about neurophysiology.

To start with, Deikman's "action mode" can be posited as a description of the ordinary state of consciousness which prevails when one is engaged in normal activities of the daily life and the sympathetic nervous system is the active one. All Bickerton's three aspects of consciousness are active, with logical thinking, formal operations, verbal language and categorization dominating one's cognition. If we now define the so-called external mystical experience with Bucknell as an experience with sensory input but with no thoughts, it corresponds rather well to Deikman's description of the receptive mode in which the sensory division of the nervous system dominates over the motor one as well as over formal operations, and logical thinking and categorization are reduced to a minimum, with the parasympathetic nervous system being the active one.

In Bickerton's terms, such experience would mean that syntax and the linguistic aspect of consciousness ("consciousness-3") as well as off-line thinking are turned off. Moreover, also

consciousness of one's own conscious nature (consciousness-2), on which (together with language) the experience of self is based, supposedly disappears. What remains, is the bound processing of consciousness-1 (see p. 36 above), on-line thinking, and an awareness of one's sensations. The external world does not disappear from one's consciousness, but is experienced as a here and now continuity with which oneself is coextensive. This also necessitates that the notion of a specific internal reality disappears from one's consciousness.

I think this extrovertive mystical experience of mere consciousness-1 closely resembles or is even identical with what Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi calls an "optimal experience" or "flow". It has eight dimensions (Csikszentmihalyi 1991: 49, 71; Csikszentmihalyi 1994: 178-179):

1. Clear goals for one's action together with immediate feedback
2. One's skills are well suited to given challenges
3. Action and awareness merge; one-pointedness of mind
4. Irrelevant stimuli disappear from consciousness
5. A sense of potential control
6. Loss of self-consciousness
7. Time seems to pass faster
8. The action in which one is engaged seems worth doing for it own sake

In other words, in optimal experience one is so totally engaged in what one is doing that one is no longer conscious of acting consciously (consciousness-2), and in a way forgets the self (consciousness-2&3) that is normally felt to be "observing" whatever one is doing. *What* one is engaged in does not matter as such; it can be dancing, playing tennis, writing letters, or yoga meditation, as long as there are goals and skills invloved that can match. According to Csikszentmihalyi, religion is the oldest and most ambitious attempt to create order in consciousness, i.e. to provide flow. Art, drama, music, dance, games, all have their origins in religious ritual. Thus, the various goals religion sets for action, such as culmination of meditation in some specific insight, should be understood instrumentally as only providing justification for the flow-producing activity, thus enhancing happiness, general well-being and order not only in individual consciousnesses but in society as well. (Csikszentmihalyi 1991: 76-77, 103-106.)

As to the role of verbal language and its loss in mystical experience, I think Stern strikes

home when he says that language is a mixed blessing for the developing child. He or she both loses much and gains much through learning language. The child achieves membership in a wider cultural community, but at the risk of losing the force of wholeness of original experience. If you are, for example, standing before a window on a beautiful summerday, and someone enters the room, saying: "Oh, *look* at the *yellow* sun*light*!" the words separate out precisely those properties of the experience that anchor it to one modality of sensation, namely to visual perception. In this way, language fractures the amodal flux of experience and introduces discontinuity in it. The linguistic version "yellow sunlight" tends to become the official version of the experience with the amodal version going underground and resurfacing only in contemplative (mystical) and certain emotional as well as aesthetic states. (Stern 1985: 176-177.)

Regarding such states as revealing ones' true self, behind all verbal flimflam, is not confined to religions in the traditional sense of the word. Psychotherapies, for example, claim to offer the chance to find one's true self, the infancy of the individual being the source of mythical explanations now that the mythical time of the primal paradise (Eliade 1974) has lost its prestige in the industrial society[5]. (Eliade 1967: 17; Lévi-Strauss 1979: 204.) According to Arthur Janov, the creator of primal therapy, for example, the difficulty with verbally produced memories is that in order really to revive an experience from infancy you have to turn off linguistic thought processes and feel the experience in terms of an infant's prelinguistic way to feel and experience. This is, in Janov's opinion, not possible within traditional psychoanalysis which he sees as mere play with words that only prevents us from encountering our natural feelings. Primal therapists refer to revived early experience in its most radical form as a "Primal". Primals, as described by Janov and his co-author E. Michael Holden, are similar to mystical experiences with a pattern of gradually increasing sympathetic arousal in the action mode that then suddenly turns into parasympathetic arousal in the reception mode[6]. Primals seem, however, to be more a myth than a matter of fact.

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[5]

Alexander Maven (1969: 52) even suggests that the experience of mystical union might be "a 'play-back' of a record of the mystic's biological conception as it might have been experienced, respectively, by the ovum, by the sperm, and by both together."

[6]

Fischer has presented a model for "ecstatic and meditative states", in which meditative experiences are produced by a gradual "trophotropic" arousal of the parasympathetic nervous system, and creative and ecstatic states by the "ergotropical" arousal of the sympathetic nervous system. At the peak of ergotropic ecstasy, however, a rebound to trophotropic enstasy can take

(See Pyysiäinen 1993a.)

There is one crucial difference between such extrovertive mystical experience, and consciousness-1, however. Extrovertive mystical experience is dominated by parasympathetic activity and passivity with regard to the external world, whereas consciousness-1 as such obviously can relate both to sympathetic and parasympathetic activity. Odd as it may now sound, Shear has, in fact, defined extrovertive mystical experience quite differently from Stace and Bucknell as a more advanced state than the introvertive in the sense that it is the combination of the introvertive experience and "the contents of our ordinary non-mystical experiences." According to Shear, "traditions such as Zen, Yoga, and Vedanta have long often held, in agreement with the current research literature, that what we have been calling the EME [= extrovertive] experience generally comes only after sufficient acquaintance with the simpler IME [= introvertive] experience." (Shear 1994: 330 n.14.)

In other words, Shear consideres the extrovertive experience not a momentary experience but the fusion of the introvertive mystical experience and ordinary consciousness. Forman has similarly presented a description of the case of the living American mystic Bernadette Roberts, writing that with her the PCE had turned into a permanent inner silence that continued even when she was cutting carrots, never leaving her. She had first had a strange feeling that something familiar was missing, only later to realize that what was missing was her self. In its place was only emptiness and silence. (Forman 1994a: 3-6.) According to Stace, mystical experience has only rarely become permanent and somehow fused with the normal state of consciousness. As two examples of this, he mentions the Buddha and John Ruysbroeck. (Stace 1961: 61.)

If this were true, then a mystical state of consciousness could co-exist with a normal state of consciousness, which may be difficult to explain in Bickerton's terms, because it is difficult even to imagine a person living permanently in a consciousness-1 state. This, of course, does not constitute a conclusive disproof of Shear's view. It would, however, seem more likely that a person can learn something from his or her mystical experiences and incorporate these insights into his or her daily life, without retaining the mystical state of consciousness as such (see also Whiteman 1986: 613; Batson & Ventis 1982: 87-89).

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place as a physiological protective mechanism. This oscillation between sympathetic and parasympathetic acitivity could be exemplified, besides Primals, by Zen Buddhist attempts at solving the *kôan* and the following *satori* experience. (Fischer 1971; Fischer 1986. See Pyysiäinen 1995: 155-156, and Rossi 1986: 125; Groth-Marnat 1992: 45. Cf. Sharf 1995, however.)

As to the so-called introvertive mystical experience as exemplified by the PCE, in Bickerton's terms it would require the turning off of also consciousness-1, yet without becoming unconscious. There is supposed to be no sensory input, and no thoughts in the internal mystical experience. Such experience (if we can call it 'experience') also presupposes a quite specific theory of consciousness as either an emergent phenomenon in the sense of Scott's emergent dualism or John Searle's biological naturalism (see Gardner 1987: 172-177; Scott 1995: 132, 169; Revonsuo 1995: 27-31), for example, or an idealistic view of matter as having evolved from consciousness which is the primal reality as in Amit Goswami's and Henry Swift's programme[7]. Fodor's physicalism or Daniel Dennett's functionalism would not do, as in such accounts consciousness is only the manipulation of material symbols in the brain; it is a function, not a separate phenomenon or entity (see Gardner 1987: 79-86; Scott 1995: 130-132; Revonsuo 1995: 13-16). Thus, there could be no pure consciousness.

It should be noted that although PCE's require a specific theory of consciousness, emergent dualism as such does not *necessitate* the possibility of PCE's. But if they do occur, we will have to postulate some kind of consciousness-0, which I find hard to distinguish from unconsciousness, though. In this sense, the notion of a PCE resembles the "wholly other": its existence is postulated but, by logical necessity, its nature cannot be described. This is not to argue about the existence of PCE's; I am only saying that we do not actually know what we are talking about, until personal experience by chance reveals the ineffable nature of the PCE to us.

It also seems to me, although this has not been spelled out by Forman, that the PCE thesis reflects the Vedântic teaching of pure awareness as one's true Self. As it is said in the Astâvakrasamhitâ:

> I have known for certain that the body and the universe are nothing and that the Self is only pure consciousness. (Astâvakrasamhitâ I, 19.)

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[7]

Goswami, who is a professor at The Institute of Theoretical Sciences at the University of Oregon, has published a book "The Self Aware Universe" and founded "The Center for Unified Science Within Consciousness" with the physicist Henry Swift as the editor of the newsletter of the center. "Science within consciousness" leaves previous science unchanged but provides insight into the "inner reality" of conscious beings, and regards consciousnes, in a Vedântic manner, as "the Ground of all Being". (Newsletter 1996: 1-6, 16.)

In other words, only consciousness exists, matter being illusory. The idealist overtones of the PCE thesis have been recently critically commented by Greg Nixon and Rick Prescott (Nixon 1996; Prescott 1996. Cf. Shear 1996). It is an important question whether the PCE thesis compels us to adopt Vedântic idealism à la Goswami, or whether it can be compatible with some kind emergent dualism.

2.3.2. Experience and Interpretation

According to the decontextualist reasoning, a PCE has no meaning until we, after the experience, ascribe meaning to it in culture-bound ways. PCE's are supposed to be everywhere the same whether the subject is a thirteenth-century Dominican or a twentieth-century Siddha Yogi. We can only differentiate between experiences by appealing to different sensory or conceptual content, and if these are the same in two experiences, the experiences must be the same. Likewise, if there is no content, there can be no difference. Thus, PCE's are differentiated only by interpretations ascribed to the experiences afterwards. (Barnes 1992: 17; Forman 1993: 727.)

'God' is of course the concept which is most often used to ascribe meaning to the internal mystical experience. Whether it is only an interpretative concept or directly refers to the experience itself, has been debated. Recently, Nelson Pike (1992) has argued that 'God' is a phenomenologically descriptive term and theistic experience thus is possible. Michael Stoeber, for his part, has insisted that there exists a third type of experience, the theo-monistic experience which means "realizations of a theistic nature that arise from transformative monistic unity." He defends his case by the fact that mystics like Meister Eckhart describe their experiences both monistically and theistically, which, according to Stoeber, makes it not likely that they are only theistically ramifying monistic experiences. (Stoeber 1993: 170, 174.)

Philip Barnes, for his part, has defended the interpretative thesis, arguing that as mystical experience takes place within the self it is impossible for the mystic to know, on the basis of the experience alone, that the experience has an object which is 'other' and personal, not to mention the more detailed attributes Christians ascribe to God. But Barnes is also well aware of the epistemological difficulties involved in making an absolute distinction between pure, indubitable experience and its interpretation which is always liable to be mistaken (or

between observables and theoretical terms). All meaningful experience is already conceptually interpreted, he argues. (Barnes 1992: 8-11.)

This is, as we have seen, also Hintikka's view on the question. Hintikka accepts, however, that we can occasionally have also "pure", unstructured experiences (Hintikka 1975: 203). Such pure experiences would, then, count as an exception to the rule that experience and interpretation are intertwined. Barnes tackles the issue by making a distinction between low-level and high-level interpretation. 'Union with God' would be a high-level interpretation in ascribing to the experience phenomenological content which the epistemic nature of the experience does not allow. It does not proceed from the experience, but from what the subject otherwise knows about the Christian creed. A low-level interpretation does not add to the experience anything extrinsic. The pure consciousness thesis is such, because it seems to catch precisely that which appears to be common in the reports of mystics of various traditions, differences being due to extrinsic high-level interpretations. (Barnes 1992: 10-13.)

As I see it, the difference rather lies in that 'pure consciousness' is not at all a description of the experience because it only says what the experience was *not*. What comes to 'God', I see it as one example of the fact that language is not constrained by actual properties of the objective world, and we can construct words and expressions that do not have referents in the real world. 'God' is not a proper name but a category, or description, and it is this that makes it logically possible to argue whether God exists or not, for example. Were 'God' really a proper name, no sane person would argue about his (or, her) existence no more than we argue about whether 'Peter' exists or not. For, if we knew about which Peter we are talking about, he would necessarily also exist (dead or alive), and if we did not, the whole question would naturally be absurd. (See Russell 1905.)

How the concept of 'God' is formed, can be explained within Boyer's "cognitive catalogue of the supernatural" (Boyer 1995; see also Boyer 1994: 91-124). According to Boyer, human minds are predisposed to build particular types of conceptual structures which, then, constrain the inferences produced on the basis of experience and cultural input. Also "religious ontologies" are produced in this way, as extraordinary combinations of ordinary ontological terms. Research on cognitive development has established the special salience of five ontological categories: *person, animal, plant, natural, object, and artefact*. People then generate inferences on these categories using three types of explanations: *physical behavior, biological properties, and intentionality*. Listing the intuitively natural types of explanation in each category yields the following scheme:

Person: physical behavior, biological properties, intentionality

Animal: physical behavior, biological properties, intentionality

Plant: physical behavior, biological properties

Natural object: physical behavior

Artefact: physical behavior

On this basis, we can produce counterintuitive religious assumptions by merely making extraordinary combinations in two different ways: *violation* means that the intuitive inference modules do not apply, and *transference* means that counterintuitive inference modules are used. Thus, the notion of a metaphysical God, for instance, requires that we presuppose the category of person, but violate the physical and biological explanation modules: we have the notion of a person without a body. Or, we may transfer, for example, the intentional inference module on some natural object and thus establish belief in benevolent rocks etc. It would not be correct to argue, for example, that in such and such culture it is considered normal for rocks to be benevolent etc., because *all* rocks are never treated as such. It is a universally counterintuitive expectation that natural objects would have intentions. If some are believed to have, that is an exceptional and "attention-demanding" characteristic of the object, making it religious.

Neither the five ontological categories nor the three inference modules form an exhaustive list of categories and types of explanation. They are, however, enough for building a catalogue of the most important types of religious/supernatural beings. If we now look at the various mystical Absolutes as mere logical inferences, they obviously are produced in like manner as naming the "category beyond all categories" which is generated by a sort of total violation. In Rappaport's words cited above, it is an "ultimate sacred postulate" created by freeing significata from material embodiment altogether (Rappaport 1979: 229).

The concept of a metaphysical god and various terms for an impersonal Absolute serve, as we have seen in the first chapter, as representations of the "wholly other". This "wholly other" can be understood as a "not-world" in the sense of that something which the co-genetic logic forces us to postulate as soon as we form an idea of the world as a form. Conceiving the world as a totality means making a distinction between the categories of 'world' and ...., yes, what? We have to assume a contradictory[8] category for 'world', but

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With the principle of the excluded middle accepted, two contradictory terms, such as 'white'

naming it would make it worldly and deprive it of its "not-worldly" status. This forms the logical basis for all the claims concerning the supposed ineffability of God or the Absolute. That which is beyond all distinctions and categorization, can only be reached by mystical experience of the unity of everything. This, of course, corresponds to the traditional idea of extrovertive mystical experience as well as to Zaehner's "nature mysticism". But also the idea of unification with God is characterized by disappearance of all multiplicity (categorial distinctions).

According to Meister Eckhart, it is distinctions, as exemplified by the notion of 'not' (see Taylor 1993), that are the cause of human suffering:

> Where there are two, there is lack. Why? Because one is not the other; this 'not' which creates differentiation is nothing other than bitterness — just as no peace is present there. (Sermon 50, 389 as quoted in App 1993: 44.)

Thus, one who wants to be perfect has to get free of the 'not' that all creatures carry in themselves, in the sense that being one means not being the other. Even sin is, according to Eckhart, a regress from oneness to the multiplicity induced by the 'not'. Being free from the 'not' means being free from impurity. (See App 1993: 43-46.) This implies that impurity equals multiplicity in the sense of conflicting categories. Dirt is essentially disorder of cultural categories: spit is not dirty in the mouth, but on your tie it is (see Douglas 1989: 2 and *passim*; Lopez 1992: 156). Purity, by implication, is identical to harmony or oneness in the sense that there is no dirt to be removed, as we have already seen.

* * *

We are now in a position to reevaluate the relationship between experience and interpretation along the lines of Stoeber's "experiental—constructivist" theory and Janz's view of mysticism as understanding, not as sensation (Stoeber 1992; Janz 1995: 89-94). Mystical experience must be explained in terms of both variety of experiences and variety interpretations, with interpretations changing over time "as mystics receive new insight and struggle with their

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and 'not-white', together comprise everything there is in that universe of discourse. Contradictory terms should be distinguished from contrary terms, such as 'white' and 'black'. (See Jespersen 1963: 322-323.)

own metaphors for expressing that insight." (Stoeber 1992: 113; Janz 1995: 94 [quotation]. See also Mangan 1994.) Looking from a neurophysiological point of view, the question is how changes in one's nervous system are related to their verbal expressions.

Take the example of hot Indian food, for example. Tasting hot food creates a reaction in the sensory nervous system, this gets conceptually interpreted in the brain, and as a result the subject may utter the words: "Indian food really is hot!" Forman made no distinction between concepts and words, but from the "Bickertonian" point of view we must distinguish between the concept of hot food and its verbalization. Thinking is performed in electrochemical impulses sending messages from where concepts are stored in the brain, routing them through specific parts of the brain, and assembling them according to the syntactic algorithm[9]. It is not necessary that words are used in this. (Bickerton 1996.) How, now, do we asses whether one verbalizes his or her experience of the hot food correctly or not?

I think the correctness of verbalizations regarding one's experiences is a purely sosiocultural matter. Being able to verbalize the experience of hot food correctly, means knowing how the expression 'hot food' is used in a particular culture. The experience of the taste of hot food is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the linguistic expression 'hot food' to exist, because all verbal expressions do not have an exact neural counterpart, as Bickerton has emphasized. It is not the firing of some particular nerve cells that causes particular verbalization. If, for instance, you want to visit your grandmother, it is not a particular "grandmother cell" sending the impulse "go and see grandma" to your consciousness. As we have seen, verbal language allows all kinds of constructions of its own, and particular words and expressions have meaning and reference only as parts of a larger

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9

According to Roger Penrose and Stuart Hameroff, consciousness can be explained as a macroscopic quantum state that has emerged from a critical level of coherence of quantum-level events in and around the cytoskeletal microtubules within neurons throughout the brain. By observing the external world, consciousness collapses wave functions and confers solidity, single-valueness and dependable constancy, thus accounting for our experience of an objective world "out there". Penrose has taken pains to show that we can prove by Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorem (see Nagel & Newman 1964) that as we humans both can be consistent in our thinking *and* know that we are consistent, we cannot be relying on any formal system for our knowledge. Thus, consciousness must be essentially non-algorithmic in nature, and explaining it requires new physics for one thing. (Penrose 1989; Penrose 1994; Hameroff 1994; Penrose & Hameroff 1995.) The theory has been much criticized, however (see Grush & Churchland 1995; Scott 1995: 113-115, 203-204; Bickerton 1995/1996: 106, 126 n.3., 151).

conceptual system. Language allows the "otherness", or "alternity" (as Steiner translates the French *altérité*) by which we "define the 'other than the case', the counter-factual propositions, images, shapes of will and evasion with which we charge our mental being and by means of which we build the changing, largely fictive milieu of our somatic and our social existence." (Steiner 1975: 222-223.)

Therefore, we can never have an exact and detailed account of how particular verbalizations made by the mystics relate to pure neurophysiological experience. How it is verbalized, is a purely sociocultural matter. Mysticism does include, in principle, an experiential aspect and a doctrinal aspect (i.e. how experience is categorized in the right manner), but neither is simply the cause of the other. There is rather a "hermeneutical circle" of sorts between experience and interpretation, and explanations can variously work to both directions.

Certain psycho-physiological basis is a necessary condition for an experience to be mystical in the sense I use the term. Should someone claim his or her experience to be mystical, but the specific psycho-physiological basis were absent, we might be dealing with mysticism but not with mystical *experience*. From this it follows, of course, that the specific psycho-physiological characteristics also form a sufficient condition for the experience to be mystical, although the subject would not describe it as such (the experience would be implicitly mystical).

Moreover, it is impossible to say at what point exactly an experience turns to mystical. There may be a grey zone of experiences hard to define either as mystical or non-mystical. But, the only way (laboratory experiments excluded) a scholar can know the experience to be mystical is to infer it from the verbal description of the experience. This, again, presupposes that there is some connection between the experience as such and its verbal report, certain similarities (oneness, ineffability, etc.) in descriptions being interpreted to speak of similarities in experiences. I think this really is so, because similar (or same) changes in the nervous system necessarily bring about similar ways of experiencing the reality. This, then, is reflected in the verbal accounts of the experience, unless the subject is only willing to present what Bataille called "a dry verbal tradition to be executed on command", instead of drawing from his or her own experience. This kind of holistic approach which takes experience and its biophysical "vehicle" to be different aspects of a web of mutually evolved organic relations, is perfectly compatible with the Buddhist idea of interdependency of all phenomena, material and mental (the *pratītyasamutpāda* [Pickering

1995, 31, 33).

It is, however, to be noted that one who has put forward a certain mystical description has not necessarily *himself* or *herself* had the experience. He or she may be merely repeating or even developing accounts of others. All we know for sure is that the way we perceive the world is affected by the workings of our nervous system, and that the nervous system is capable of radical changes which are known, in principle, to lead to certain kinds of experiences. We should also keep in mind that we are dealing with continua: changes in the nervous system are gradual, and thus an experience can be more or less mystical, not either mystical or something else.

I shall now present one possible way of explaining extrovertive and introvertive mystical experience in terms of neurophysiology, i.e. as pure experiences as such. Let me remind that one crucial physiological determinant on Deikman's action—reception continuum was the sympathetic/parasympathetic dominance[10]. Mere parasympathetic dominance, however, is not enough for a psycho-physiological state to form a basis for mystical experience. A shift toward either the external or internal dimension is also required. The extrovertive—introvertive distinction can be explained as based on whether one one acts as a relatively open system that uses information acquired from the external world, or as a relatively closed system operating according to inherited (biological) information. This distinction possibly can be operationalized by reference to the two divisions of the nervous system involved: the sensory receptors transmitting information from the sense organs to the central nervous system, and the motor division of the nervous system transmitting signals to the muscles and glands. Every change in the activity in the motor system triggers a change in the sensory system, and vice versa, a relationship Fischer has labeled as "sensory/motor (S/M) closure". Thus hallucinations, for example, can be explained as a prevalence of the sensory component of self-awareness at the expense of the objective motor component. (Fischer 1986: 5-7. See Guyton 1972: 6-7 *et passim*.)

In the case of the extrovertive mystical experience, muscle system activity decreases whereas the input of sensory data does not, which means that the S/M closure is not 1:1, but

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The sympathetic and parasympathetic systems ate the two major subdivisions within the autonomic nervous system controlling such visceral functions of the body as urinary output, body temperature, arterial pressure and gastrointestinal motility. Both sympathetic and parasympathetic stimulation cause excitatory effects in some organs and inhibitory in others, the two systems occasionally acting reciprocally to each other. (See Guyton 1972: 203-215.)

1/0 (sensory activity dominates over motor). Introvertive mystical experience, for its part, would be characterized by something like a 0:0 closure, at least in the case of a clear PCE. But, mere change in the S/M closure hardly is the only neurophysiological characteristic of mystical experience. The autonomic nervous system is also involved, and mystical experiences in my sense of the word, i.e. Fischer's "trophotropic" states of consciousness achieved through calming down (or, "enstasy"), are marked by increased parasympathetic activity. Increased sympathetic activity leads to ecstasy, which may assume the form of "visionary mysticism", but I have consciously confined my study only to "enstatic" mysticism (note that at the peak of ecstasy a rebound to enstasy may happen, thus alluding to a possible link between these two types of experience).

The hermeneutical circle between experience and interpretation now means that these neurophysiological changes can, from a certain point of view, be taken as the structural cause[11] of certain type of mystical doctrines (not of specific concepts, however), or, from another point of view, as the outcome of mystical doctrines inviting one to search for such changes. In the first case, the experience produced by neurophysiological changes may lead one to see that the religious doctrinal scheme professed by him or her does not correspond to an objective reality, and that therefore the "ultimate reality" is unspeakable and beyond human categorization. In the second case, one becomes intellectually convinced that the prevailing (or even all known) way(s) of categorizing reality is merely contingent, and therefore attempts to find a way of getting to know what lies behind human categorization. This, then, may eventually lead to a mystical experience. In this sense, religious doctrinal systems contain both a specific way of categorizing reality and a way of calling this system of categorization in question.

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[11]

The notion of structural explanation, as presented by Ernan McMullin, has been introduced into the study of religion by Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley. Structural explanations explain the properties or behavior of complex systems, alluding to the structure of the systems. Such explanations are causal in the sense that the structure invoked can be said to be the cause of the feature(s) being explained. Thus, for instance, the sun's emission of radiant energy can be taken as a feature to be explained, and the hydrogen fusion going on in the sun as the processual structure that explains the emission of radiant energy. Here, the structure is postulated to account for the observed properties, and the warrant for believing in the existence of this structure is the success of the explanation it yields. (Lawson, & McCauley, 1993: 177-180; McMullin, 1978: 139-147.)

B. UNCONDITIONED IN THE PÂLI NIKÂYAS

1. THE RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF THE UNCONDITIONED

1.1. Aspects of the Sociocultural Background of Buddhism

Dating the beginnings of Buddhism means dating the life of the Buddha, which has recently turned out to be much more difficult than previously thought. The traditional dating of the Buddha's death around 480 BC, so scrupulously argued for by André Bareau (1953), has been shown to be due to a Sinhalese attempt to harmonize the Buddha's death as simultaneous with the coming of Vijaya, the cultural hero of the Sinhalese people (Bechert 1982: 34-36; 1986: 19-24, 50-51; Bechert 1988: 24-26; Eggermont 1965-79: II 41-44, IV 77-120, V 69-70, VIII 55-57). Thus, there is no evidence, independent of the Sinhalese chronicles, for the so-called longer chronology of the Buddha, and Bareau's statement that all evidence for the shorter chronology is dependent on the *Aśokâvadâna* has been turned around (Bareau 1953: 40-43. Cf. Bechert 1986: 42).

However, the shorter chronology of the Sanskrit texts, placing the Buddha's death around 368 BC, cannot be accepted as such either (see Lamotte 1958: 14-15). Some scholars have agreed that the Buddha's death must have taken place roughly around 350 BC, with a thirty years margin (Eggermont 1965-79: VIII 57; Bechert 1986: 39; Hirakawa 1990: 22-23, 91-93); but in a recent symposium on the matter disagreement among the scholars was so great that J.W. de Jong, for example, has concluded it to be unwise to go beyond the vague statement that the Buddha lived in the state of Magadha in eastern India between 600 and 300 BC (Bechert 1991-1992; de Jong 1993: 14. See also Collins 1993: 306-307). In the symposium, Bareau was of the opinion that the Buddha must have died around 400, and Heinz Bechert preferred the estimation of 400-350 (Bechert 1991-1992: 211-236). Here, I hold to the hypothesis of the Buddha's death roughly around 350.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of fourth century BC northern India was that the villages of the Ganges valley had begun to develop into fortified cities in the sixth century BC, and the peak of urbanization was reached during the fourth century (Erdosi 1985: 96, 98). This development seems to have been made possible by the economic surplus reached through wet paddy cultivation and the use of iron plough shares and other new tools, as suggested by R. S. Sharma and D. D. Kosambi (see Gombrich 1988: 51-52; Chakravarti 1987: 18-19; Collins 1993: 306-309). It is interesting that also in the Buddhist Aggaññasutta organized society is pictured to have emerged when people invented paddy cultivation, which

then made it possible to store food, own it privately, and finally to steal (D III 84-93; Mahâvastu: I 285-301; Abhidharmakośa: III:98; Rockhill 1884: 1-13. See Chakravarti 1987: 23-24).

Steven Collins has recently shown how well the Aggaññasutta (D III 84-93; Collins 1993: 338-348) illustrates Ernest Gellner's deductive model of three stages in the development of human societies. In Gellner's vision, the main transformation in the shift from hunter-gatherer to agrarian mode of life is precisely the increased capacity to produce, accumulate and store food and wealth. The achieved economical surplus then leads to a situation where some kind of coercion is needed to keep the society from collapsing because of mutual rivalry (as our Sutta explicitly says). Thus is born a tripartite social structure of workers who produce value, and warriors and religious specialists who exercise control by using physical force (warriors/kings) or by creating and maintaining a certain ideological order (religious specialists). (Collins 1993: 303-305.)

The Aggaññasutta presents a kind of a social contract theory of kingship as based on human agreement, not on the divinity of the king, although there is little or no evidence that this theory has ever been used in practice to legitimate kingship. The story is a humorous parable mocking Brahmanical beliefs and propounding Buddhist ideals, especially that of the monastic mode of life as defined in the *Vinaya*. Thus, for instance, the story goes that storing rice for eight days made "powder and husk" cover the grain, thus reminding the reader of the seven day limit for storing medicine and food, given in the *Vinaya*. (Collins 1993: 314, 317, 326-331, 384, 387-389.)

The text presents the Buddhist monastic ideals as antidotes for the negative consequences of the new socioeconomic situation, characterized by urbanism, new division of labor, trade and monetary economy, all of which have been seen as contributing to the rise of individualism (Durkheim 1893: 385-395; Simmel 1923: 552-553; Wirth 1938: 10-13). According to Dumont, individualism has existed in India side by side with the idea of strict interdependence of individuals in society. It was the institution of world-renunciation that guaranteed an individual the possibility to devote himself to his own progress and destiny outside the constraints of the strictly hierachical society. Dumont further thinks that such individualism, based on the idea that individual existence can only be found outside of the society, has been typical not only for Hinduism but also for early Christianity. (Dumont 1980: esp. 267-286; Dumont 1985.)

Trevor Ling sees the roots of Buddhism to lie in the negative aspects of this individualism:

a loss of the sense of safety previously provided by the conformist community, a painful concern about the meaning of life, growing aloneness and spiritual malaise. (Ling 1974: 37-52, 59-62. Cf. Collins 1988: 101-105, 121.) This is well in line with Durkheim's notion of "anomia", a social condition where the traditional norms of behavior have been muddled, resulting in experiences of meaninglessness and anxiety, social rules can no longer giving order to consciousness. According to Durkheim (and Csikszentmihalyi), such disturbance of the social equilibrium always tends to raise suicide rates, for example, no matter whether the change has been for greater physical comfort or not. In India, the Dharmasûtras were composed in such anomic situation to lay down explicit codes of conduct to produce order both in the society and in the individual mind. (Durkheim 1970: 241-276; Csikszentmihalyi 1991: 86; Collins 1993: 307.)

Buddhism was "the product of the time of urban development, of urban kingship and the city nobles", as described by Max Weber (Weber 1958: 204). Its rise was contemporaneous with the introduction of monetary economy, division of labor into the 18 guilds of artisans, and the related way of experiencing one's being-in-the-world as painful (*duhkha*). (See Rhys Davids 1981: 90-96; Weber 1958: 205-206, 215-216, 225-229; Basham 1971: 143-144; Chakravarti 1987: 19-23; Gombrich 1988: 50-53; Karttunen 1989: 30-31, 145, 154, 229 n.263.) In other words, the birth of Buddhism and related movements testify to a shift in which growing crops has been supplemented by the idea of mental growth, civilization and culture.

We may also add the fact that simultaneously with urbanization, the East Indian indigenous oligarchies were gradually replaced by the new Aryan monarchies (Drekmeier 1962: 165; Ling 1974: 37-62; Basham 1971: 46-47, 97-98; Reynolds 1972: 8-9; Erdosi 1985: 100-101; Gombrich 1988: 49-59; Collins 1993: 307). In the person of the king, the whole of the society gets personified, and thus the idea of an autonomous individual receives its expression through the institution of kingship. Kingship is thus always somehow sacral; the king is the one individual who is set apart from the rest and thus serves to bind the society together. Congruent to this, in ancient India the king was considered divine in sofar as he acted righteously and could guarantee general well-being in his kingdom. (Gonda 1966: 1-10, 25-34, 68-69.)

Thus, we find in Indian sources similar ideas of a social contract as we did in Western sources (e.g. Rousseau). From the Aitareya Brâhmana, the Mahâbhârata and the Purânas we can delineate a picture of how men (or gods) in primal times lived according to the Dharma

and no king or restraint was needed. After the invention of rice cultivation and private ownership, evil came to the world, and a king was needed to rule over people. (Drekmeier 1962: 136-137, 245-248; Gonda 1966: 48.) In this way, the king was a mediator between nature and culture, and "Dharma roaming on earth in a visible form (Gonda 1966: 6, 68)." He, however, was not a priest-king, as priestly functions were the duty of the brâhmanas (Drekmeier 1962: 21-23, 176, 251, 257; Gonda 1966: 71).

It were the Buddhists, however, who gave to the idea of the social contract its most explicit form. According to the Aggaññasutta, after the first men had divided the rice-fields and set boundaries to them, the idea of stealing was invented, and soon people had to elect the best of them to be a king and to punish evil-doers and reward the good ones (D III 84-93). Later, in the Mahâvastu and the Mûlasarvâstivâdavinaya, the genealogy of the Buddha was derived from the first king referred to as the "Great Appointee" (*mahâsammata*) which now had become to a proper name (Mahâvastu I 292-301; Rockhill 1884: 8-13. See Collins 1993: 308, 316, 379-386).

The ideas of kingship and Buddhahood conjoin also in the story of how Vipassi Buddha was immediately after his birth predicted to become either a righteous wheel-turning king (*cakkavatti dhammika dhammarâja*) or a perfectly enlightened one (D II 16-19). In the Mahâvastu, the seer Asita immediately sees that the new-born Gautama will become a Buddha and not a king (Mahâvastu II 27-30), although the Lakkhanasuttanta states that the 32 marks of a Great Man (*mahâpurisa*) are the same in a *cakkavatti* king and a buddha (D III 142). In later texts, the double destiny is predicted for Gautama Buddha (e.g. Buddhacarita I 34-36), and in the Mahâparinibbânasuttanta the Buddha advises the monks to treat his remains after his death like those of a wheel-turning king (D II 141).

The idea of a wheel-turning king first appears in the Maitrî Upanisad, and later the Arthaśâstra speaks of the "field of a wheel-turning king" (*cakravartiksetra*). It was in Buddhist texts that the myth then acquired a special meaning (see Drekmeier 1962: 203; Gonda 1966: 123). The wheel (*cakka*, Skr. *cakra*) here is the sun, although it has also been associated with the wheels of the king's chariot (see Gonda 1966: 123-126). This is apparent in the Cakkavattisîhanâdasuttanta in which kingship is not derived from a social contract, but is part of the original condition of the world.

This Sutta tells about wheel-turning kings above whose palace the heavenly wheel appears and starts rolling toward the East. The king who follows the sun conquers the whole earth without violence, the conditions in his kingdom being paradisiac. As the heavenly wheel

starts to go down, the king renounces the world, and his son inherits the kingdom. After a few generations had passed, a king appeared who did not rule the kingdom with righteousness, with the consequence that the heavenly wheel disappeared and the kingdom was imperilled. (D III 58-79.)

As we know that Indian kings were believed to embody supernatural force, and that they had to be protected from the sun lest the sun neutralize their power (Gonda 1966: 24, 37), the *cakkavatti* myth can be interpreted as based on the homology of the king and the sun (and fire). Both have the transformative power to sustain life and culture, but also the capacity to destroy. In this perspective, the Buddha's double destiny theoretically combines the ideas of a sustainer of Brahmanical culture and its renouncer, the two aspects of the sacred. These have been said to have later been combined in practice in the person of King Aśoka, who favored Buddhism and has been regarded as a *cakkavatti par excellence* (see Drekmeier 1962: 176; Strong 1983: 50-56). Aśoka's Buddhism may be more apparent than real, however (see Lamotte 1962; Collins 1993: 384).

1.2. Symbolism of the Forest

Dating the birth of Buddhism to the 4th century BC means dating it to a period when the various ascetic movements already had a long history in Indian culture. The so-called *âśrama* system, dividing human life into four periods culminating into the ascetic life, is known in the old Upanisads and the Mahâbhârata and in such later sources as the Purânas. The high caste adolescent began as a student of the Vedas (*brahmacârin*), then married, becoming a householder (*grhastha*), and with the coming of wrinkles and with his hair turning white, became a *vânaprastha*, a forest-dweller. Finally, he assumed the role of a wandering ascetic (*samnyâsin*) with no permanent dwelling. (Basham 1971: 159-160; Gonda 1960: 287-288; Manu II 70-249; III 1 - V 169; VI 1-9; VI 23-52.)

By the end of the 6th century BC, asceticism was widespread in India. Buddhist sources know the term *samana-brâhmana*, referring at once to both Brâhmanic and "heterodox" ascetics living in the forests. They made their clothes of bark or dressed in a simple loincloth, had matted hair, gathered for common, often vegetarian meals, refrained from violence, lived in chastity, and strived toward freedom from lust and other negative states of mind. It may well be that Brahmanical asceticism was the result of urbanized brâhmanas

accomodating a trend toward asceticism within their own tradition. Collins sees it one of the most pressing but difficult tasks of Indology to explore how far the Brahmanical and heterodox traditions shared the same language and same discourse. (Gonda 1960: 283-284; Collins 1993: 307, 311-312.)

We should differentiate between *parivrâjakas* and *śramanas* who were wandering mendicants, and *tâpasas* or ascetics proper who studied Veda, performed sacrifices, and tortured their bodies by standing on one leg for months, staying still until birds nestled on their heads etc., and sometimes even finally fasted themselves to death[1] (see Gonda 1960: 284-286; Chakravarti 1987, 36-39; Bronkhorst 1995; D I 165-167; II 150-151). Other common means of suicide were dashing into a river, throwing oneself down from a mountain, and self-immolation on a pyre (see Bühler's note on Manu VI 32).

Torturing the body can be interpreted as an attempt to free one's innermost essence, the soul, from the chains of the body, in order to establish contact with the transcendent reality. In other words, the "wholly other" was sought by demolishing the bodily boundaries once and for all[2]. Because of the homology of the human body and the society, the attempts to get free from the boundaries of the body go hand in hand with the tendency to reject the society. This is evident in the way renouncing the world is described with the idiom "to go from home into homelessness" (*agârasmâ anagâriyan pabbajati*, see PED: 3), household life being "the nest of desires" (Sn III.1.2.). Desire is based on the body, body and house are symbolically equivalent, and both represent the society. Society, in the sense of the inhabited territory, is cosmos, and outside of it is the undifferentiated chaotic space, the 'other world' (Eliade 1959: 29).

In ancient India, it was the forests between the villages and cities that represented the other world and interiority. The Sanskrit word '*vana-*' ('wood, tree, woods') is related to the Avestan '*vanâ-*' ('tree') but its etymology is unclear. The other word for forest, '*aranya*' ('wilderness, forest') comes from '*arana-*' ('distant'), and the third, '*atavî-*' ('forest')

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[1]

Durkheim did not consider the voluntary suicides of ancient Indian ascetics as testifying to anomia, but, on the contrary, to a too rigid social structure where an individual had no meaning as an independent individual. Thus the characterisation "obligatory altruistic suicides". (Durkheim 1970, 217-221.)

[2]

In Jainism, torturing the body was considered to fasten the "ripening" of *karma* so that the ascetic could detach himself from *samsâra* sooner than his *karma* would require in ordinary circumstances (see Bronkhorst 1995).

probably comes from *'at-'*, 'to wander about, roam' (Buck 1949: 46-48.) Of these, only *'arana'* could be taken to belong to the family of words depicting the forest as that which is not within the confines of culture. Yet the social practice of withdrawing to forest to practice meditation follows Anttonen's model of the forest as equivalent to the "inner space" of humans.

Thus, according to the *Cûlasuññatasutta*, a monk who has no mental representation of the village (*gâmasaññam*) and other people, etc. abides in the oneness dependent on the mental representation of the forest (*araññasaññam paticca ekattan* [see CPD II 593-594]). He then understands this mental representation to be empty (*suñña*) of the mental representation of the village etc. The only content of his mind is the oneness (or uniqueness, *ekatta*) of the forest. After this realization, other mental contents than the forest arise as follows: earth (*pathavî*), infinity of space, infinity of consciousness, the stage of nothingness, the stage of neither mental representations nor no no-mental representations, and the *samâdhi* beyond all characteristics (*animitta cetosamâdhi*). (M III 104-108. See Bronkhorst 1986: 77-78.)

Because we are bodily beings, abstract things are conceptualized using spatial imagery, although the spatial origins of such imagery often gets forgotten. The German word *'sinnen'*, ('to reflect, think'), for example, derives from the Old High German *'sinnan'*, 'to go, travel, wander' which in 9th century Middle High German became *'sinnen'* ('to travel, go, perceive, understand'). In the background is the Indo-German root **sent-* , 'to take a direction, go'. (Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen 1989: 1636-1637.) Also the Finnish word *'tietää'* ('to know') derives from *'tie'* ('way').

Heidegger says on this basis that thinking is a sort of "waying", of being on the way. He, moreover, stresses that understanding is like "being on a woodpath" (*aus dem Holzwege zu sein*), a phrase that in ordinary German means being on the wrong track, on a path that does not lead anywhere, going astray. Heidegger gives it the special meaning of being on a way with no predetermined destination, emphasizing that thinking and understanding are essentially questioning that cannot calculate in advance the direction they will lead to. (See Stambaugh 1990: 80-85.)

"Tracks — the signs of the past presence of another — become a path only in retrospect," as Donald Lopez puts it in a Derridean vein. "A path is an intrusion into the forest, a violent rupture of the natural, and its marks are the broken branch and gouged earth, the absence of the pristine state." (Lopez 1992: 147-148.) Thus, we can oppose way and woods in the sense that way represents linear or digital thought with a predetermined object, whereas woods

represent bewilderment (cf. 'wilderness') or non-discursive thought. The idea of knowing seems to derive from knowing the way, the idea of not-knowing from being physically lost. The idea of way, in turn, may derive from the hunter's activity of tracing game by following the tracks and thus finding his way[3]. The Sanskrit word for 'way', *'mârga'*, derives precisely from *mrg-*, 'to track, trace', and is, especially in Buddhism, the central symbol of religious life aiming at knowledge and "purification" (see Buswell & Gimello 1992).

In this perspective, the retiring to the forest of the ancient Indian *śramanas* means penetrating to unknown regions not only physically but also mentally. The forest is a symbolical representation of the unknown domains and capacities of one's mind. The method (Gr. *'methodos'*, 'along the way') of getting to know these was meditation. This is apparent in the Bhayabheravasutta where it is explained that "woodland wildernesses" (*araññevanapatthâni*) distract the mind of a monk who lacks *samâdhi*, and that the *śramanas* and *brâhmanas* who are not pure in bodily actions, speech, thought, mode of living, and who are endowed with all kinds of negative states of mind experience fear and dread in the forest (M I 17-20). In other words, he who does not know the demons of his own mind, projects them on the inscrutable forest and gets frightened. The uncategorized space of the forest is a suitable ground for this, unlike the cultural space in which the unknown has been made known through categorization.

The Buddha, while still a bodhisattva, is reported to have expelled the fear and dread by simply deciding to drive it out in the very posture it came upon him, and subsequently doing so. This, then, led him to the four successive states of meditation (*jhâna*) culminating in enlightenment. (M I 21-23.)

1.3. Buddhist Meditation

Buddhist meditation has three aspects: mindfulness (*sati*) with regard to one's activities and experiences as a body-self (see King 1980: 55-81; Bucknell 1989: 11-12), the more deeply altered states of consciousness or the *jhânas* (Skr. *dhyânas*), and insight into the ultimate nature of reality (*vipassanâ*).

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[3] According to Carlo Ginzburg (1990: 103), the idea of narration may have originated in a hunting society from the hunters' stories of deciphering tracks.

1.3.1. The First Four *Jhânas*

The Sanskrit and Pâli *'dhyâna/jhâna'* has been rendered as 'trance', 'meditation', and 'absorbtion', for example (see Cousins 1973: 115-116). The Buddhist tradition knows a variety of *jhânic* techniques which sometimes appear as mutually contradictory, like those that purport to eliminate the contents of consciousness and those that aim at the enhancement of intellectual understanding. Later Buddhist scholastics have then attempted to reconcile these discrepancies. (Griffiths 1983: 55.)

In the Pâli Nikâyas, we have 86 occurrences of the following traditional formula, describing the first four *jhânas* (the *rûpajhânas*):

> (The meditator), separated from desires and negative states of mind, attains to and remains in the first *jhâna* which is born from separation and accompanied by initial cognition, reasoned examination, joy and happiness. Upon suppressing both initial cognition and reasoned examination he attains to and remains in the second *jhâna* which is born from concentration, consists in inner tranquillity and one-pointedness of mind, and is accompanied by joy and happiness. Upon detaching himself from joy he possesses equanimity; mindful and aware, he possesses that physical well-being of which wise men say: 'The mindful possesser of equanimity remains happy'. So he attains to and remains in the third *jhâna*. Upon abandoning pleasure and pain, as well as former elation and depression, he attains to and remains in the fourth *jhâna* which is without pleasure and pain and is characterized by that purity of mindfulness which is equanimity. (Griffiths 1983: 57, 59.)

Thus, the following scheme emerges:

> 1) initial cognition (*vitakka*)
>   reasoned examination (*vicâra*)
>   joy (*pîti*)
>   happiness (*sukha*)

2) inner tranquillity (*ajjhattama sampasâdanam*)

one-pointedness of mind (*cetaso ekodibhâvam*)

joy

happiness

3) equanimity (*upekhâ*)

mindful and aware (*sato ca sampajâno*)

physical well-being (*kâyika sukkha*)

4) equanimity

In the first *jhâna*, '*vitakkavicâra*' referes to the mind's verbally based activity in appropriating, classifying and thinking about sense-data. Historically, the two words have been almost synonyms for 'thinking', but in the Buddhist tradition, as well as in the *Yogasûtra*, the first of them denotes the directing of the mind to a real or imagined object ('thinking of) and the second to the activity of sustaining one's mind in its object ('thinking about'). (Cousins 1973: 122; Griffiths 1983: 59-60; Cousins 1992.)

'*Pîtisukkha*', for its part, may be said to refer to a general well-being with occasional more intense joyful reaction. Later, the commentarial literature distinguishes several kinds of '*pîti*' ('joy', 'love' etc.) in ascending order from a mildly pleasurable interest to an ecstatic transport of delight. (Cousins 1973: 120-122; Griffiths 1983: 60.)

In the second *jhâna*, the mind's intellectual activities are left behind, but the joyful well-being remains. It is, however, modified by the inner tranquillity (*ajjhattama sampasâdanam*) and one-pointedness of mind (*cetaso ekodibhâvam*). One-pointedness means that in *jhâna* meditation one concentrates his or her attention on a single object, called *nimitta* in Pâli, and divided into various classes in later commentarial literature. A "one-pointed" mind is such that it stays fixed to the chosen object, without wavering or wandering. (Cousins 1973: 119, 122; Griffiths 1983: 60. Cf. above p. 80.)

In the third *jhâna*, joy is left behind and happiness transformed into physical well-being (*kâyika sukkha*). The meditator has equanimity (*upekhâ*), being free from extreme emotional reactions be they pleaseant or unpleasant in nature. He or she is also mindful and aware (*sato ca sampajâno*) without putting sense-data under intellectual analysis and verbally based classification. (Griffiths 1983: 61.)

In the fourth *jhâna*, the equanimity attained in the third continues with no emotion, as happiness, unhappiness and physical well-being have disappeared from one's consciousness. Also mindfulness and awareness are left behind, and thus there is little reason to ascribe any cognitive functions to the fourth *jhâna*. (Griffiths 1983: 61-62.)

Griffiths (1983: 56-58) has very convincingly argued that the above quoted description of the four *jhânas*, appearing in the same form in different contexts, is a traditional formula that has received its fixed form for didactic purposes. Thus, there is no reason to suppose that it contains a complete list of all the important factors related to the *jhânas*, as also noted by Lance Cousins (1973: 124). It is therefore difficult to estimate the precise psycho-physiological nature of the fourth *jhâna*. On the basis of this description alone, we cannot even exclude the possibility of a pure consciousness event, although we cannot prove it either (see also Griffiths 1983: 67 n.18). The various contexts in which this formula occurs may be of help, however.

1.3.2. The First Four *Jhânas* in their Contexts

Griffiths (1983: 62-65) has found from the Nikâyas four contexts for the four *jhânas*, briefly characterized as follows:

> 1) the four *jhânas* as preparation for insight (*vipassanâ*)
> 2) the four *jhânas* as preparation for the four or five *arûpajhânas*
> 3) the four *jhânas* as preparation for the "ways of living like Brahma" (*brahmavihâras*)
> 4) the four *jhânas* as an independent way to nirvâna

The first alternative is represented, for instance, by the *Sâmaññaphalasutta* (D I 47-86), one of the earliest attempts at constructing a coherent soteriological path, which is then repeated throughout the D and M. The path begins by morality and abandonment of the five hindrances (see Cousins 1973: 117-118), then come the four *jhânas* and then insight (*vipassanâ*) practice. Although this is the most common context of the four *jhânas*, Griffiths regards it as slightly artificial and of secondary importance. (Griffiths 1983: 62-63.) Griffiths considers the two paths of *jhânas* and of *vipassanâ* to be completely different, and only the

latter to lead to nirvâna (Griffiths 1986: 11, 29. See Boisvert 1993: 97-98).

Vipassanâ consists of insight into the ultimate nature of reality, especially into selflessness (*anattâ*), impermanence (*anicca*) and painfulness (*dukkha*) of all phenomena. As such, it is a specifically Buddhist practice for reaching nirvâna, which I hesitate to call 'meditation' because during it one's state of consciousness usually does not alter. Calm concentration is said to be a necessary preceding condition, however. (King 1980: 82-102.)

The role of *vipassanâ* with regard to meditation has been dealt with at some length by Bucknell, who sees it as developing insight into the mechanism and constitution of the meditative states. When one has experienced the oneness of the external world due to the absence of thoughts and categorization, or/and the empty consciousness of the internal mystical experience, he or she realizes that what had previously seemed to be objective reality is, in fact, his or her own construct. It is the role of *vipassanâ* then to provide a more detailed account of this construction and how it is reversed in mystical experience. (Bucknell 1989: 14-17. See also King 1980: 49.) In terms of the binding problem (p. 35 above), this means insight into how language and discursive thinking "unbind" the bound unity of unconscious (consciousness-1) processes.

The second context for the *jhâna* formula is formed by the formless *jhânas*, or "successive stages" (*anupûrvavihâras*, see MPPS k. 21, p. 216 c), which, according to Griffiths, lead to a sort of cataleptic trance (Griffiths 1983: 63-64; Griffiths 1986: 9-11; Griffiths 1990: 80). The stages are as follows:

> 1) The stage of infinity of space (*âkâśânantyâyatana*)
> 2) The stage of infinity of consciousness (*vijñânantyâyatana*)
> 3) The stage of nothingness (*âkiñcanyâyatana*)
> 4) The stage of neither mental representations nor no no-mental representations (*naivasamjñânâsamjñâyatana*)
> 5) the cessation of mental representations and feeling (*samjñâvedayitanirodha*)

As I see it, taking the formless *jhânas* as originally belonging together with the first four *jhânas* is not a very convincing solution, although the two paths have later been melded together. This tension is apparent in, for example, the fact that the Buddha is reported to have both rejected and accepted the formless *jhânas*. Friedrich Heiler solved the problem by supposing that the Yogic formless *jhânas* were added to the four Buddhist *jhânas* which

constituted a psychotechnique like Yoga but were, in addition, also mystical meditation on the holy. (M I 163-167; M II 211-212; D II 156. Heiler 1918: 47-51; de la Vallée Poussin 1937: 189-192; Bareau 1963: 16-17; King 1980: 6-15.) Similarly, Johannes Bronkhorst thinks that the first four *jhânas* were a personal invention by the Buddha, as there is no indication of their existence in Indian literature before Buddhism, and as introducing novelties is the priviledge of founders of traditions. (Bronkhorst 1986: XII, 16, 116-117. See also Vetter 1988: xxvi n.9, 5.)

The formless *jhânas* then entered Buddhism from Jain or related circles in the early days of Buddhism. There was probably an attempt to equate these states with the four *jhânas*, but in the end they were considered to *follow* the four *jhânas*. The final stage, the cessation of mental representations and feeling, was added because the stage of neither mental representations nor no no-mental representations seemed to correspond to the second *jhâna* in which, however, feelings still remain. Thus, after the stage of neither mental representations nor no no-mental representations, a stage was needed in which feelings cease as in the third and fourth *jhânas*. Certain Buddhist schools then accepted the first four *jhânas* and the formless *jhânas* as alternative roads to liberation. (Bronkhorst 1986: 82-86.)

The idea of borrowing is a sound one, as we know that early Buddhist texts are pervaded by influences from and reactions to other Indic traditions. Strong influences to Buddhism from Yoga and Sâmkhya have been suggested ever since Hendrik Kern and Louis de la Vallée Poussin. Recently, Christian Lindtner has declared Buddhism as "just one kind of systematic yoga among others." Buddhism, for its part, has clearly influenced at least the Yogasûtra. (Windisch 1917: 41-44; de la Vallée Poussin 1937; de Jong 1974: I 86-87; King 1980: 1-17; Bronkhorst 1986: 65-70; Bronkhorst 1995; Cousins 1992: 137, 148-149; Lindtner 1993: 90.)

Jainism as the source of Buddhist doctrine and practice has been less discussed. Bronkhorst, however, has pointed out that in Jainism the cessation of mental processes was known as "pure meditation" (*sukkajjhâna*); but due to the bodily emphasis of the Jain practice, it remained a relatively minor aspect of the road to liberation (Bronkhorst 1986: 32-33). Jainist methods of non-action as the way of stopping the accumulation of *karma* as well as annihilation of former actions by asceticism, however, appear in certain Buddhist texts as recommended by the Buddha, although he is in several other contexts made to reject them (Bronkhorst 1995).

As to the purely Buddhist nature of the first four *jhânas*, we have to be more careful;

especially the argument concerning founders of religion being sociologically naïve. Winston King, for example, holds the absolute novelty of the four *jhânas* to be suspect, taking them also as Yogic adaptations, although older than the formless *jhânas*. Details of the mutual borrowing between Buddhism and Yoga may remain forever unexplicated, however. (King 1980: 15. See Ruegg 1989: 9 n.9.)

As to the highest formless *jhâna* itself, according to M I 296, in the cessation of mental representations and feeling there is no cognition (*viññâna*), physical function, speech or mental function (*cittasankhârâ*), and the sense organs are "purified". If to this were added the disappearance of vitality (*âyu*) and heat (*usmâ*) and the destruction of sense organs, the agent could be considered dead. According to the "orthodox" view, this cessation is a "mindless" (*acittaka*), state, but some Buddhist authors have held that it only involves the cessation of mental *activity*, because otherwise it would be difficult to explain how one could regain his cognition (*viññâna*). (M I 296. Griffiths 1983: 63-64; Griffiths 1986: 6; Griffiths 1990: 78-83.)

In any case, the cessation of mental representations and feeling has in certain contexts been understood to be nirvâna or lead to it, as in the following:

> And moreover, my friend: A monk, passing altogether beyond the realm of neither mental representations nor no no-mental representations (*ne-vasaññânâsaññâyatana*), enters the cessation of mental representations and feeling (*saññâvedayitanirodha*) and abides in it, seeing through wisdom (*paññâ*) that the *âsavas* are utterly destroyed. So far indeed, my friend, and without further qualifications, did the Beatific One declare nirvâna in this life. (A IV 454.)

Also Buddhaghosa took the cessation to mean nirvâna here and now. But as it lasts only for so long as the cessation lasts, it is also regarded as only a foretaste of nirvâna, a "touching of the immortal with one's body," as de la Vallée Poussin put it. (la Vallée Poussin 1937: 191. See King 1980: 16, 51, 87, 101, 104-105.) Recently, Mathieu Boisvert has remarked that the idea of a cessation of mental representations and feeling is independent of the four formless *jhânas*, not their culmination. Thus, while the eight *jhânas would* not be a path to nirvâna, the cessation as a separate goal could still be equated with nirvâna. Boisvert further points out that while nirvâna is regarded as an element, a *dhamma, âyatana* or *dhâtu*,

cessation is an experience, "a blissful foretaste of the *nibbâna* element." Nirvâna exists independently, and cessation is its realization by individuals. (Boisvert 1993.) We shall return to this soon.

As to the question of how one can regain his consciousness after the cessation, the concept of *âlayavijñâna* ('store-consciousness')[4] was developed. Different schools had different solutions to the problem, one of which was that a subtle mind (*sûksmacitta*) subsisted even when no apparent mind *functions* remained. On this basis, the Yogâcârins then formed the notion of *âlayavijñâna*. The word appears in a passage where it is said that when a person is in cessation (*nirodhasamâpatti*), his consciousness (*vijñâna*) does not leave the body because "*âlayavijñâna* has not ceased (to be present) in the material sense-faculties." (Schmithausen 1987: 15-20, 31; Waldron 1994-1995: I 215-216, II 12.)

An interesting dilemma lurks here, as it is on one hand necessary that the *âlayavijñâna* is inactive during the cessation, and on the other it must have some object(s) as the Buddhists have had difficulties in conceiving a non-intentional, objectless consciousness (like in a PCE). Thus, the objects and content of the *âlayavijñâna* are said to be "indistinct" (*aparichinna*), "extremely subtle" (*atisûksma*) and "not experienced" (*asamvidita*). (Griffiths 1990: 83-85; Waldron 1994-1995, II 15.)

Regardless of whether the notion of *âlayavijñâna* derives from actual mystical experiences, PCE's or otherwise, it nevertheless speaks of a tendency to postulate some kind of a pure consciousness, serving as the basis for personal identity and continuity, which, however, had to be kept apart from notions of *âtman* (see also Schmithausen 1987, 25-29, 51-56, 74; Waldron 1994-1995, 23).

The third context for the four *jhânas* formula is provided by the four *brahmavihâras*, 'divine abidings' or 'ways of living like Brahma'[5], in which connection the four *jhânas* appear four times in the Nikâyas. In the first case, the *brahmavihâras* follow the first four *jhânas* and are then followed by the formless *jhânas* (M I 350-351). Second, we have two cases where the *brahmavihâras* follow the first four *jhânas* and then lead to a variant of *vipassanâ* (D III 78; A I 182-183). In the last case, the combination of the four *jhânas* and

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[4] '*Âlaya*' usually refers to clinging or to that to which one clings. Schmithausen (1987, 22) has put forward the following definition: "the (... perhaps better: *a*) (form of) mind (that is characterized by)   s t i c k i n g   (in the material sense-faculties)."

[5] Loving-kindness (*mettâ*), compassion (*karunâ*), altruistic joy (*muditâ*), and equanimity (*upekkhâ*) (see King 1980: 56-64).

the *brahmavihâras* is aimed at rebirth in the heaven of *Brahmâ* (*Brahmaloka*, D II 186-187). (Griffiths 1983: 64.)

In the fourth of its contexts, the four *jhânas* formula appears as an independent way to nirvâna (Griffiths 1983: 64-65). Thus, meditation is in the Nikâyas an important but a complex way to nirvâna. It is, however, not the only way, as the first converts of the Buddha, for example, were liberated by merely listening to the Buddha's talk on the *anâtman* (Vinaya I 13-14).

1.3.3. Meditation and Nirvâna

A cataleptic trance, and particularly a voluntary death, may seem rather strange things to strive for, but as we have seen, in some instances death indeed is understood as a way of attaining contact with the "wholly other". Congruent to this, in Hindu and Jaina asceticism, the final liberation was believed to take place after death, because the source of all suffering was thought to lie in human activity which thus had to be gradually stopped altogether (Bronkhorst 1986: 32-34, 46-47).

But, as we have seen, the idea of rebirth deprives death of its role as an access to the "not-world", and consequently, another way of defining the limits of the worldly reality has to be established. Mystical experiences in meditation can be seen as a way of escaping *from* the limits of humanity, but at the same time the door is left open for the question *to* what one then escapes? Where is the "wholly other"? The Upanisadic answer was that the "not-world" was identical with *Brahman*. The early Buddhists, for their part, either were indifferent to the question, or denied the existence of both *âtman* and *Brahaman*, and thus the religious goal had to be understood otherwise.

From the foregoing, we have seen that there have been different kinds of paths to the ultimate goal of nirvâna (see Buswell & Gimello 1992; de Jong 1993: 20). It, however, seems to me that there is confusion in the Nikâyas not only concerning the path but also about the very nirvâna itself. It is, then, no wonder that such confusion has been considerable in Western literature on Buddhism as well (see Norman 1994; Welbon 1968).

To name a few examples of differing interpretations, Rune Johansson thinks that in the earliest phase 'nirvâna' was simply a psychological concept and only later, because of a misunderstanding, came to mean a metaphysical absolute (Johansson 1969: 55, 111). This

interpretation is in line with the view that for his contemporaries the Buddha was a human being, and became deified only later, when no direct witnesses of his life were left alive (e.g. Bareau 1963, 84; Bareau 1969). This, however, is not a view that can be supported by the sources (de Jong 1993: 13; Pyysiäinen 1987).

Peter Masefield, for his part, holds that nirvâna has been understood not only psychologically but also as a place of immortality from the beginning (Masefield 1986: xvi, 45-54, 66-69, 75. See also Boisvert 1993). In this, Masefield sees a straightforward development from the Rgveda via the Upanisads to Buddhism. According to the Rgveda, the highest reality is formed by Speech (vâc) three quarters of which is hidden from humans but is referred to as Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Agni and the Garutmat bird which is a symbolical representation of the sun. In the Śvetâśvatara Upanisad, Garutmat is described as the one bird in the midst of this world that enters the ocean. Knowing him, one passes over death. (Rgveda I 164: 45-46; Śvetâśvatara Upanisad VI.15; Masefield 1986: 47-50. See Padoux 1963: 15-34; Scharfstein 1993: 63-67, 70-79).

Asanga Tilakaratne[6], who believes that the Buddha was considered purely human from the beginning, has recently attempted to interpret nirvâna rationally and non-mystically as simply the extinction of suffering, or "the extinction of greed, hate and delusion." It is "nothing other than acquisition of a new perspective of reality." There is no entity called 'nirvâna,' and one cannot experience nirvâna but "nirvanically", by developing wisdom. What happens to the enlightened one after death, is not discussed by Tilakaratne. (Tilakaratne 1993: 55-57, 62, 69.)

Likewise, the role of the *jhânas* is left unexplained, as Tilakaratne merely states that the cessation of mental representations and feeling "represents a state close to nirvana," but is not necessary for attaining "cessation of defilements." The historical problem of various paths is left unexamined. This tendency to ignore or belittle *jhâna* meditation seems to derive from Tilakaratne's willingness to prove that Buddhism is not mystical in the sense that although undergoing the *jhânas* means being aloof from the sensory world, it does not mean union with a transcendent being or entity. (Tilakaratne 1993: 61-62.)

Here he, however, ignores the distinction between experience and interpretation. If we, *a priori*, accept mysticism only as a western Christian phenomenon, there is no need to prove empirically that Buddhism is non-mystical. But we could just as well hold that mysticism is

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[6] Although Singhalese by birth, he was introduced to western philosophy and the study of religion at the University of Hawaii (personal communication).

a Buddhist phenomenon, and that the idea of a union with a transcendent entity is only an interpretation imposed on the experience afterwards. Or we may try to understand mysticism as a more complicated phenomenon, as shown in the previous chapter.

'*Nibbâna*' is the Pâli form of the Sanskrit '*nirvâna*', 'blowing out, death, final emancipation' derived from *nîh/nis/nir*, 'out, forth, away' and *vâ* < **aw(e)-*, 'to blow, breathe') (Turner 1966: 419; Mayrhofer 1963: II 171; Mayrhofer 1976: III 186; York 1993: 241). The Pali English Dictionary, however, misleadingly gives the etymology 'to cover, to extinguish a fire' (*nir + vr*) (PED: 362)[7]. It is more probable, as argued by K.R. Norman, that there originally were two homonym words '*nibbâna*', one of them derived from *nir- + vâ-*, and the other from *nir + vr* and yielding '*nibbuta*' (Sanskrit '*nirvrta*'), 'satisfied, happy, tranquil, at ease, at rest'. The fact that the extinction or extinguishing (*nibbâna*) of a lamp was used as an explanation of '*nibbuta*' then lead to the feeling that '*nibbâna*' and '*nibbuti*' ('happiness', etc.) were synonymous, and '*nibbuta*' could be used of both persons and fire. Thus, '*nibbuti*' which meant 'satisfaction, happiness, bliss, pleasure, delight' came also to be used in the sense of 'extinction (of a lamp)' and even 'destruction, death'. (Norman 1994: 221-223.)

As the ultimate goal of Buddhism, 'nirvâna' is practically synonymic with 'enlightenment' (*bodhi*), distinction being made only between the Buddha's (or a buddha's) perfect enlightenment and a learners enlightenment (*arhat*-ship). The root *budh-*, however, actually refers to 'waking up', and thus calling somebody a *buddha* ascribes him with the status of an awakened one, which is in line with Goulven & Pennaod's scheme of polarities based on the dichotomy of light and darkness. The image of awakening is also the image of victory and growth/life, in contrast to darkness, sleep and death.

As to the psychological nature of nirvâna, we have mainly three different descriptions. The first regards the Buddha's nirvâna as somehow due to his childhood experience of peace of mind in the first *jhâna*. The second description is not satisfied with this, but describes this rememberance of the childhood experience to have led to the vanishing of the intoxicants (*âsavas*), which is considered the real meaning of nirvâna. This view is closely tied to the one that the four noble truths form the intellectual basis of nirvâna. Third, nirvâna is in the Tipitaka often said to mean the destruction of the "three poisons": passion (*râga*), hatred (*dosa*) and bewilderment (*moha*) (PED: 362).

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[7] This is repeated in Tilakaratne 1993: 56.

It is also often said that in Buddhism there is a distinction between nirvâna in this life and a parinirvâna that takes place after death; or that a nirvâna with a remainder of *upâdi* ('stuff of clinging') and a nirvâna without *upâdi* were distinguished in the same sense. Yet, according to the oldest Pâli texts, the two parinirvânas are identical to the two *nirvânas*[8], and the conflict of nirvâna in this life and nirvâna after death is resolved with the distinction of *upâdisesa/anupâdisesa* in one canonical passage (It 38-39) only, as Bronkhorst remarks. According to him, this later common distinction represents an attempt to harmonize the two conceptions of nirvâna. However, a more common distinction in the Suttas is that between nirvâna without a remainder and "perfect enlightenment" (*sammâsambodhi*). (Bronkhorst 1986: 94-95; Norman 1994: 215-216.)

According Norman, the first nibbâna is the nibbâna of passion, hatred and bewilderment when the individual is still alive, having a remainder of karma or life, although he or she has actually broken the tie to the "here and now" (*samsâra*). Thus, strictly speaking, nirvâna cannot be attained "here and now", attaining it immediately liberating you from the "here and now". After the remaining karma or life has been "blown out", the second nibbâna, nibbâna of the *khandhas* (= the five constituents of existence) follows. (Norman 1994: 213-215.)

However, the descriptions of the destruction of the intoxicants and the "three poisons" of passion, hatred and bewilderment are stereotypical accounts which do not further our understanding of the psycho-physiological nature of nirvâna very much, the operationalization of such definitions being almost impossible. 'Nirvâna' is best understood as a mythological concept (Pyysiäinen 1993b: 155), referring to an undefinable "not-world". Norman's words are worth quoting at length:

> We are in *samsâra*, which is *dukkha, cala* [= transient], full of birth, old age and death. One who gains release from *samsâra* is, therefore, in a state which is the opposite of these. He, or his state, is *sukha* [= happiness], and he or it has no birth, old age or death. It is, therefore, very easy to say what he or it does not have. It is not at all clear what he or it has — nor does it matter. (Norman 1994: 225.)

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[8] Norman accepts E.J. Thomas's interpretation of 'nirvâna' as 'release' and 'parinirvâna' as 'attaining of release'. The difference thus is only a grammatical one. (Norman 1994: 217.)

As it is the distinctive feature of Buddhism to favor low-level interpretations of mystical experience, nirvâna can most naturally be seen as a generic term giving expression to the Buddhist ideal, without superimposing upon mystical experience any strict interpretation concerning where one escapes *to* when one takes leave of the sensory world. The role of 'nirvâna' as more a cultural model than a psychological term comes clearly to the fore in the fact that many Buddhists of our time say that nirvâna was possible only when the Buddha was among us, or will be when the future Buddha will come (see Bunnag 1973: 19-20; Bond 1988: 56-58, 113; Sharf 1995). Such nostalgia is apparent in the legend of the Buddha's first public talk that led to the very easy conversion and liberation of the five monks, for example (Vinaya I 10-14).

It is misleading to identify nirvâna — as Peter Harvey does — as a mystical *experience* of empty consciousness, as a "timeless experience of a 'consciousness' which had transcended itself by dropping all objects." As such, nirvâna would differ from the cessation of mental representations and feeling which Harvey takes as an unconscious experience. (Harvey 1993: 41.) But nirvâna is not an experience, but a vague and generic term that cannot be said to refer to any actual and clearly identifiable state of consciousness. In the earliest phase, it embodied the idea of liberation from suffering and death, as well as of an eternal beatitude with the chain of rebirths broken (de Jong 1993: 20).

Extinguishing a fire as the image of nirvâna is of particular interest. In 1861, Michael Faraday published his six lectures on the chemical history of a candle, and Alwyn Scott has recently referred to his findings in order to shed light on the problem of consciousness, the dynamics of a nerve impulse being similar to those of a flame in the sense that both are governed by nonlinear[9] diffusion equation. In the nervous system, wavelike nonlinear impulses of activity, travelling with constant speed and shape, release stored energy as they propagate. This released energy supplies the power that is dissipated in the circulating ionic currents of the nerve impulse. Both the candle and the nerve impulse have an all-or-nothing quality: they either burn or they do not; and neither of them conserves energy. On the contrary, the heat released by the flame diffuses into the melted wax and vaporizes it, supplying fuel to the flame which releases more heat, and so forth, establishing a power

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[9]

Linear phenomena are simply the sum of their parts, and therefore easy to predict, as in calculating where an artillery shell will land. Nonlinear events are more than the sum of their parts, like a tornado whose arising from a thunderstorm cannot be exactly predicted . (Scott 1995: 4-5.)

balance in same manner that is analogous to the propagation of a nerve impulse along the axon. (Scott 1995: 24, 49-50, 53-54.)

It is then no wonder that the flame and burning so often appear as poetic images of the course of the human life. On the one hand, burning with force is a symbol of a "full life" and passion, and on the other full life can take you to an early grave[10]. You can only live at the cost of dying. In the famous "fire sermon" (Vinaya I 34-35; S IV 19-20), the Buddha taught to a thousand converted Brâhmanical ascetics (*jatilas*), who had previously worshipped Agni, that everything was on fire: sense organs, their respective objects, sensory acts and consciousness, all were burning. In I.B. Horner's translation:

> I say it is burning with the fire of passion (*râga*), with the fire of hatred (*dosa*), with the fire of stupidity (*moha*); it is burning because of birth, ageing, dying, because of grief, sorrow, suffering, lamentation and despair.

Thus, the Brâhmanical meaning of fire is reversed in Buddhism: the sustainer of Brâhmanical culture has become the source of suffering, the three fires of passion, hatred and stupidity corresponding to the three fires of the *Agnihotra* (Gombrich 1990: 16-20). Passionate life does not, however, end in final death, because death is only a gateway to a new birth. Only in nirvâna the fires of passion, hatred and stupidity are extinguished once and for all, and thus the Buddha claimed to have become, due to his perfect enlightenment (*sammâsambodhi*), "cool and extinguished" (*sîtibhûto 'smi nibbuto*, M I 171; Vinaya I 8).

As we have seen, this extinguishing has both psychological and spatial aspects (rooting out of the "three poisons" and *khandha parinibbâna*). In Masefield's interpretation, the notions of micro and macro cosmoses, or internal and external realities, have in the Indian tradition often been considered two figurative means of referring to that elusive reality which is somehow between the two (Masefield 1986: xvi). In light of our discussion of how conscious phenomena of the internal reality of humans are conceptualized employing spatial imagery, it is only natural that also nirvâna has been spoken of as a place (*padam*) and, later, even as

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It is to be noted that the Proto-Indo-European root **mer-* has the meanings 'to flicker, to darken' and 'to die', with a flickering light regarded as a light which has half-passed to the otherworld (York 1993: 250-251 n.12). The Buddhist school of Vatsîputrîyas-Sammatîyas held that flames, together with sounds, were the only material entities that were momentary (like all mental entities) (von Rospatt 1995: 37).

a city with doors and everything (see Norman 1994: 219, 223-225). This imagery should not, however, be understood literally, and in the last analysis nirvâna as "not-world" transcends both spatial and psychological language. In Theravâda, the paradoxical nature of the idea of a "not-world" is brought to the fore especially in the *Atthakavagga* of the *Suttanipâta*, in which one is told to avoid attachment on any "views" (*ditthi*). One should "abstain from disputes, for the only aim (of them) is praise and profit (Sn 4:828; also 4:844)". And,

> If any have taken up a view (*ditthi*) and dispute, and say, "Only this is true," then say to them, "There will be no opponent for you here when a dispute has arisen." (Sn 4:832. This and the following translation by K.R. Norman.)

Congruent to this:

> "Mâgandiya," said the Blessed One, "nothing has been grasped by (me) from among the (doctrines), after consideration, (saying) 'I profess this'. But looking among the (doctrines), not grasping, while searching I saw inner peace." (Sn 4:837.)

The avoiding of views leads to a mystical-like experience (cf. Gómez 1976):

> There are no ties for one who is devoid of mental representations (*saññâ*). There are no illusions for one who is released through wisdom (*paññâvimutti*). But those who have grasped mental representations and view wander in the world (*loka*), causing offence. (Sn 4:847.)

> He has no (ordinary) mental representations of mental representations, he has no deranged mental representations of mental representations, he is not without mental representations, he has no mental representations of what has disappeared. For one who has attained to such a state form disappears, for that which is named 'diversification' has its origin in mental representations. (Sn 4:874.)

Grace Burford has drawn attention to the fact that the teaching of the Atthakavagga contains

a paradox in that it endorses a view that views are to be avoided (Burford 1992: 48). This, however, is not just an unhappy logical error in the text, but a very logical outcome of the fact the Buddhists responsible for the creation of this text have wanted to postulate nirvâna as a goal that transcends the limits of human language and culture. Such a mystical (cf. Gómez 1976) goal can be expressed in verbal language only through paradox.

I shall now move on to explore how the Theravâda Buddhist notion of the unconditioned relates to this and helps us to understand the nature of nirvâna as the goal transcending both life and death.

2. THE UNCONDITIONED ANALYSED

2.1. The Idea of *Dharmas*

According to Buddhist ontology, the phenomenal reality is conditioned (*samkhata*[11]) of small elements called '*dharmas*' (Pâli: *dhamma*). Literally the Sanskrit word '*dharma*' means 'bearer, supporter', and in Buddhism 'quality, property'. From the Rgveda onwards it has also meant 'Law' or 'Eternal Order', and in Buddhism specifically the Law revealed by the Buddha. These two meanings are related in the sense that the 'qualities' are regarded as conditioned by the Law. (Glasenapp 1938, 385; Mayrhofer 1963, II 95; von Rospatt 1995, 169. See Carter 1978, 112)

In Buddhist ontology, the qualities (*dhammas*) are all that there is, in the last analysis. Thus, all objects are only the sum of their properties, which means that a change in the properties changes the ontological identity of the object. Dyeing a cloth, for example, means that the pale cloth at the outset is a different thing from the ruby cloth after the dyeing. Qualitative change means numeric change. Strictly speaking, then, we should abandon all talk of "objects" and "things", as the reality is constituted only of the changing properties (*dhammas*). (von Rospatt 1995, 169.)

This perpetual change has often been referred to as the "momentariness" of the *dharmas*. According to Alexander von Rospatt, however, the specific theory of the momentariness of *dharmas* is a sectarian development possibly introduced to Buddhism by Buddhaghosa in the 5th century AD, and was originally not accepted by all early Buddhists. (von Rospatt 1995, 15-28.)

The Sanskrit and Pâli word for 'moment' is '*ksana/kkhana*', which derives probably from the root '*aksan-*' ('eye' [Mayrhofer 1956, I 284]), with the winking of the eye being the paradigm for a very short period of time, as in the German '*Augenblick*' (or in the Finnish '*silmänräpäys*'). '*Ksana*' as the winking of the eye, has not, however, originally referred to the definitely smallest unit of time. On the contrary, time was conceived of as infinitely divisible. In the Sarvâstivâdin tradition, however, '*ksana*' came to mean *the* shortest and indivisivible period of time the length of which was equated with the duration of conditioned *dharmas*. (von Rospatt 1995, 94-110.)

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[11] From *samkharoti*, 'put together, compound'.

According to the Theravâdins, the existence of *dhammas* could be divided into equally long periods of origination (*uppâdakkhana*), of endurance (*thitikkhana*), and of destruction (*bhangakkhana*). Material *dhammas* were believed to last 17 times as long as mental *dhammas*, and to form series which constitute the temporally extended units which we experience in ordinary life. (von Rospatt 1995, 34, 96.)

In Rospatt's view, the fleeting nature of mental events, together with the fact that they were not ascribed to a lasting subject (*anâtman*)[12], then lead to the doctrine of their momentariness. Later, the doctrine of momentariness was extended to concern material *dharmas* as well. (von Rospatt 1995, 113, 121-152.)

Thus, the doctrine of the *dharmas* entails that the perceived reality is like the image on a television screen, which is composed of tiny dots ("*dharmas*"). The image has no "own-being" (*svabhâva*), only the dots (*dharmas*) do, although they are transitory (*anitya*). It is only the *dharmas* that have an intrinsic essence (*svabhâva*) and a unique property (*svalaksana*), which give them their identity. The *abhidharmists* of various schools then developed lists of *dharmas*, thus aiming at an exhaustive ontological inventory. There is nothing in reality in addition to the listed *dharmas*. (Lamotte 1958: 665; Snellgrove 1987, 22; Corless 1989, 21-22. Cf. Abhidharmakośa, t. I pp. 150, 222.)

The Suttapitaka of the Theravâdin Tipitaka presupposes a *dhamma* theory similar to that of the Abhidhammapitaka although it is not explicitly worked out in the *Suttas*. Only in the *abhidhamma*, the *dhammas* of the *Suttas* are classified to a restricted number of irreducible constituents of reality. (Glasenapp 1938, 408-409.)

According to the Theravâda *abhidhamma*, there are 81 conditioned *dhammas* classified into three categories:

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According to Claus Oetke, the *anâtman* does not mean, in the Pali Canon, the radical view that their is no subject or bearer for experiences (*Erlebnissen*) and states of consciousness. Although the early Buddhists did not hold a theory of the *âtman* as a specific substance of its own, they shared the untheoretical "common-sense" view of the subject as a psycho-physical being which is referred to by such expressions as 'person' and 'living being'. (Oetke 1988: 113, 129, 152-153, 155-156.)

I. 28 material forms (*rûpa*)

II. 52 ethically pure, impure or neutral psychological factors related to the thinking mind (*citta*) and consciousness (*viññâna*)

III. The pure thinking mind as such. (See Lamotte 1958, 658-662.)

The 28 Material Forms

A) The four elements: Earth, water, fire, wind

B) The 24 derivative phenomena:

Five sense organs, or the "internal bases" (*ajjhattika âyatana*): eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body;

Six material objects of sense, or the "external bases" (*bâhira âyatana*): form, sound, odor, taste, touch;

The two sexes;

The heart as the physical basis of mentality;

The two types of intimation expressing thought: gestures and speech acts;

Physical vitality;

Space;

The three properties of the body: agility (*lahutâ*[13]), elasticity (*mudutâ*[14]), malleability (*kammaññatâ*[15]);

The three characteristics of conditioned *dharmas*: arising, duration, decay-transitoriness (*jarâ-anicattâ*);

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[13] This word is derived from '*lahu*', 'light, quick' at the background of which is the Indo-European root **legh/lengh-* with the meanings of 'quick' and 'light' (as opposite to heavy) (see PED: 579, 582). Thus '*lahutâ*' can be translated as 'agility, nimbleness, lightness, buoyancy'.

[14] From the Vedic root *mrd-*, 'soil, earth, clay' > '*mudutâ*', 'softness, impressibility, plasticity'(PED 517-518, 537).

[15] PED (p. 194) gives 'workableness, adaptability, readiness'. I am following Lamotte (1958: 659: '*malléabilité*').

Material nourishment

The 52 Mental Factors

A) 25 morally pure (*kusala*) mental factors, such as faith/belief (*saddhâ*)

B) 14 morally impure mental factors, such as bewilderment (*moha*)

C) 13 morally neutral mental factors whose moral nature depends on the related thought

The Pure Thinking Mind (*citta*)

Citta is closely related to the conscious mind (*manas*) and consciousness/cognition (*viññâna*).

2.2. Introduction to the Unconditioned

Besides the conditioned *dhammas*, the Theravâdin tradition knows one unconditioned (*asamkhata*[16]) *dhamma*, whose origination, endurance, and destruction are not seen (A I 152). According to Bareau, the word 'unconditioned' has originally been coined as a negative description of nirvâna in the same way as '*ajâta*' ('not born'), and thus the opposition of unconditioned and conditioned realities parallels exactly the opposition of nirvâna and *samsâra*. (Bareau 1951, 5, 18-19, 218, 250.) Norman, however, remarks that, in connection with '*amata*' and '*ajâta*', '*asamkhata*' has both the meanings of 'unconditioned', i.e. not produced by the *paticcasamuppâda* and 'without conditioned things' (Norman 1994: 221).

In the *Theravâdin* Suttas, nirvâna is the one and only unconditioned reality not conditioned by anything else. The fact that the Suttas often speak of the *asamkhata dhammas* in the plural must be taken as only a stylistic feature, since no other unconditioned *dhamma* than nirvâna is ever mentioned in them. (Bareau 1951, 15, 31-34, 248, 250; Lamotte 1958, 675.)

The *Sarvâstivâdins*, however, accepted in their *abhidharma* three unconditioned: 1) Nirvâna due to the understanding of the four truths and consisting of a detachment from

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[16] CPD (p. 491) gives the translations 'not prepared, uncaused' and 'unproductive'.

impure *dharmas* (*pratisamkhyânirodha*), 2) Nirvâna not due to this understanding and not consisting of this detachment but of a prevention of any *dharmas* arising in the future (*apratisamkhyânirodha*), and 3) space (*âkâśa*). (See Bareau 1951, 47; Lamotte 1958, 675.)

The *Mahâsamghikas* and related sects, for their part, believed in nine different unconditioned, but the three Chinese and one Tibetan versions of *Vasumitra's Samayabhedoparacanacakra* agree only on the first seven which are: the two nirvânas, space, and the formless *dhyânas*. The eighth thesis concerns (with slight variations in different versions) the uncondiotionality the net of mutual dependencies (*pratîtyasamutpâda*), and the ninth takes the eightfold path to be unconditioned. (See Bareau 1951, 113; Lamotte 1958, 675.)

In the *Prajñâpâramitâ* texts and scholarly *Madhyamaka* treatises of Mahâyâna, the world of conditioned (*samskrta*) *dharmas* was judged as illusory on the basis of an ontological relativity of sorts: the way words refer to reality is only a matter of conceptual convention (see Pyysiäinen 1993b: 104-107). From this, we can seemingly infer that only the unconditioned is real (see Pyysiäinen 1993b: 107-110).

But, as the unconditioned can only be paradoxically conceptualized in terms of the conditioned, it follows that our idea of the unconditioned is illusory as well. So, the unconditioned must be beyond the dichotomy of conditioned and unconditioned (see Pyysiäinen 1993b: 110-113). This reasoning is perfectly in line with our previous discussion of how that which is "not-worldly" can only be represented through mystical paradox (cf. also Klein 1992).

On this basis, the Madhyamakas developed a distinction between "worldly surface-convention" (*lokasamvrti*) and ultimate truth (*satyam paramârthatah*). Words and signs should not be taken literally because they are only a skillful means (*upâya*) to point to the ultimate truth that, according to the *Yogâcârins*, can only be realized by intuition (*pratyâtmavedanîa*). (See Nagao 1992: 13-22; Pyysiäinen 1993b: 107-108.) Conventional language provides us with a "doctrinal bridge that will reach out beyond the sphere of mystical silence (Gómez 1987: 447)."

Guy Bugault (1993: 579) has remarked that the distinction between the two truths should not be understood to mean that there are two layers of reality in the sense of a phenomenal and a noumenal reality. The distinction is practical, or therapeutic, not speculative in nature. At this point, we should call to mind William Paden's remark, in connection with Durkheim, that the sacred-profane dichotomy is not a wooden assertion that all religious people believe

the universe to be statically divided in two and only two parts. "Anthropologists have of course found no such thing," says Paden. (Paden 1994: 206.)

Could the unconditioned, then, mean — like the sacred for Durkheim — the "systematical rooting out of attachment to the profane world" by meditation and insight, rather than testify to a strict ontological dichotomy? In many Mahâyâna texts this seems to be so, but does this hold true in Theravâda as well? The fact that the number of things or phenomena that came to be considered unconditioned gradually increased in the early non-Mahâyâna schools seems to speak for this. In what follows, I shall provide a semantic analysis of how the unconditioned is described in the Pâli Nikâyas.

2.3. Semantic Analysis of the Unconditioned

According to M III 63, a monk can be said to be "skilled in the elements" when he knows that there are two kinds of elements (*dhamma*): the conditioned and the unconditioned. Thus, these two types of *dhammas* can be taken to form together an exhaustive ontological inventory. This also entails that the unconditioned is not transcendent to the conditioned *dharmas*, but somehow immanent within them; it has its own intrinsic essence (*sabhâva*) and unique property (*salakkhana*). The essential difference between the conditioned and the unconditioned is said to be that the origination (*uppâda*), destruction (*vaya*), and change (*thitassa aññatthattam*) of what is conditioned is apparent, while the origination, destruction, and change of what is unconditioned is not apparent (A I 152). In other words, there is no coming into existence, destruction, or change in the unconditioned.

This *dharmic* duality is also applied to explain the four noble truths as follows (Patisambhidâmagga I 118):

> **To understand suffering means to understand**: painfulness (*pîlanattha*), conditionedness (*samkhatattha*), being on fire (*santâpattha*), change (*viparinâmattha*);

> **To understand the origin of suffering means to understand**: accumulating (*âyuhanattha*), the source (*nidânattha*), bondage (*saññâgattha*), hindrance (*palibodhattha*);

> **To understand the cessation means to understand**: the escape (*nissaranattha*), detachment (*vivekattha*), unconditionedness (*asamkhatattha*), freedom from death (*amatattha*);

> **To understand the path means to understand**: the way out (*niyyânattha*), cause (*hetuttha*), seeing (*dassanattha*), predominance (*adhipateyyattha*).

Thus, the unconditioned means detachment and escape from the conditioned which is characterized by suffering, change and death, metaphorically illustrated by the image of being on fire. The way out is open to those who see and understand the cause of being conditioned.

In the Udâna, the escape is described to be:

> (something) free from birth (*ajâta*), a not come into existence (*abhûta*[17]), a not made and an unconditioned, because, O monks, if there were not this free from birth, not come into existence, not made and unconditioned, one who is born here, come into existence, made and conditioned would not know an exit (*nissarana*[18]). (Udâna: 80-81. See Norman 1994: 217 n. 33.)

The Unconditioned is also described with Upanisadic imagery:

> There is, O monks, that sphere (*âyatana*) where there is no earth, water, fire or wind; no infinity of space, no infinity of consciousness, no nothingness, no stage of neither mental representations nor no no-mental representations. There is no this world, no otherworld (*paraloka*) and no moon or sun. There is no coming, going, or duration, no falling or arising, I tell you monks. It is neither fixed, nor moving, it is unimaginable (*anârammana*). That is verily the end of

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[17] From *a-bhû-*, with the meanings of a) 'not come into existence, unborn, uncreated'; b) 'not being, unreal'; c) 'false, not true' (CPD: 384). André Bareau (1951: 18), following the commentary and judging from the context, translates here '*non-venu à l'existence*'.

[18] The word signifies a) 'going out, departure', b) 'giving up', c) 'being freed' and especially 'an escape from *samsâra*' (PED: 374). Bareau (1951: 18) translates here '*l'issue*'. Cf. Abhidharmakośa: t. I p. 12: "*Nihsâra signifie 'sortie (sâra = nihsarana) nécessaire', le Nirvâna (nirupadhisesanirvâna) de tout conditionné.*"

suffering. (Udâna: 80. Tr. by F.L. Woodward with minor alterations.)

Where water, earth, fire, wind no footing find,

There shine no stars, no sun is there displayed,

There gleams no moon; no darkness there is seen.

So when the sage (*muni*), the brâhmana, by wisdom

Of his own self hath pierced (unto the truth),

From form and no-form, pleasure and pain he's freed. (Udâna: 9. Tr. by Woodward.)

Like the Upanisadic passages quoted in the first chapter, these quotations from the Udâna picture the final release to take place in a "wholly other" reality transcending even the dichotomy of world and and "not-world", life and death, as well as light and darkness. In other words, the unconditioned is characterized as a total violation of the basic categories by means of which people understand reality.

The most detailed description of the unconditioned is to be found in the Asamkhatasamyutta of the Samyuttanikâya (S IV 359-373). Here it is defined in identical terms as nirvâna to be the destruction of passion (*râga*), hatred (*dosa*), and bewilderment (*moha*) (S IV 359).

The way to the unconditioned is then described as consisting of various kinds of meditations and efforts. They are:

- Bodily mindfulness (*kâyagatâ sati*), one of the three aspects of Buddhist meditation (S IV 359);

- Calm and insight (*samatha vipassanâ*), i.e. *jhâna* meditation combined with insight into the ultimate nature of reality (S IV 360);

- *Samâdhi* with initial cognition (*vitakka*) and reasoned examination (*vicâra*), with only reasoned examination, and with neither of them (S IV 360);

- Empty *samâdhi* (*suññatâ samâdhi*), samâdhi beyond characteristics (*animitta samâdhi*), and objectless *samâdhi* (*appanihita samâdhi*) (S IV 360);

- The four settings up of mindfulness (*satipatthâna*), which relate to body, sensations, mind, and phenomena (S IV 360);

- The four best efforts, i.e. efforts to block unprofitable states arising, to abandon arisen unprofitable states, to bring into existence profitable states, and to sustain and increase arisen profitable states (S IV 360);

- The four bases of psychic power (*iddhipâda*) (S IV 360);

- The five controlling powers (*indriya*), which are faith, vigor, mindfulness, *samâdhi*, and wisdom (*paññâ*) (S IV 361);

- The five strengths (the same as above) (S IV 361);

- The seven constituents of awakening (*bojjhanga*), which are: mindfulness, investigation of the *Dharma*, vigor, joy (*pîti*), repose (*passadhi*), *samâdhi*, equanimity (*upekhâ*) (S IV 361);

- The eightfold path (S IV 361)

In the second chapter of the Asamkhatasamyutta, in sections 13-43 (pp. 368-373), the Buddha teaches to the monks 32 goals and the respective ways to the goals. The goals, which can be taken as epithets of the unconditioned, are as follows:

1) The not bent (*anata*)
2) What is without the intoxicants (*anâsava*)
3) The truth (*sacca*)
4) That which is beyond (*pâra*)
5) The subtle (*nipuna*)
6) The hard to see (*sududdasa*)
7) The unfading (*ajajjara*)
8) The permanent (*dhuva*)
9) The undecaying (*apalokita*)
10) The invisible (*anidassana*)
11) The not plural (*nippapañca*)
12) The peace (*santa*)
13) Freedom from death (*amata*)
14) The excellent (*panîta*)

15) The bliss (*siva*)
16) The place of security (*khema*)
17) The destruction of thirst (*tanhakkhaya*)
18) The wonderful (*acchariya*)
19) The marvellous (*abbhuta*)
20) Health (*anîtika*)
21) The state of health (*anîtikadhamma*)
22) Nibbâna
23) The freedom from suffering (*avyâpajjha*)
24) Dispassion (*virâga*)
25) The purity (*suddhi*)
26) The release (*mutti*)
27) The freedom from desire (*anâlaya*)
28) The refuge (*dîpa*)
29) The ultimate shelter (*lena*)
30) The final protection (*tâna*)
31) The shelter (*sarana*)
32) The final end (*parâyana*)

I shall examine these epithets in some detail in the following.

1) The not bent (*anata*)

Leon Féer's Pali Text Society edition of the text has here *'anta'* which F.L. Woodward translates as 'the end'. *'Anta'*, however, seems to be a mistake here, the right word being probably *'anata'* (*a* + *nata*), 'not bent, without inclination'. Two Burmese manuscripts have *'anata'* for *'anta'*, and the Thai-edition of the Royal College of Mahâmakuta (Bangkok) also has *'anata'*. Furthermore, *'anata'* as 'not bent' would be more in line with the ambiguous *'pou-k'iu'* in the Chinese text than *'anta'*. (Bareau 1951: 20-21 ns.16-17. S IV 368 n. 3.) I therefore accept *'anata'* as the right word here. It is rather difficult to interpret its meaning, however.

In principle, *'anata'* could also represent *'anrta'* and thus mean that which is opposite to the ordinary way of things. In that case, the word would be almost a synonym for numbers 18 and 19 in the list. Third, *'anta'* may be a mistake for *'amata'* which, however, is # 13 in our list. (CPD: I 145-146, 237.)

As to *'anta'*, it means, according to PED, nirvâna as the goal. Literally it signifies 1) 'end, finish, goal, extremity'; 2) 'limit, border, edge'; 3) 'side'; 4) 'opposite side, opposite, counterpart'. (PED: 46; CPD: I 237.) Thus, *anta* could be interpreted to represent the

unconditioned as the goal in the sense that it is the end-point of *samsâra*, its utmost limit or the absolute borderline of reality. As such, it is closely tied to # 4 (*para*), and has more a spatial than a temporal connotation. The unconditioned as *anta* would be both that which is separated from the conditioned and the limit that separates, i.e. something "wholly other".

The unconditioned is never described as dangerous or as a source of anxiety, as Leach presumed sacred things to be. On the contrary, its attributes are always emotionally positive in nature. Consequently, it could represent the positive, "right hand" aspect of the "wholly other". '*Anta*' not only makes *samsâra* what it is by setting it apart, but also supplements *samsâra* by a way out of it. But '*anta*' most probably has no textual basis.

2) Without the intoxicants (*anâsava*)

There are two etymologically different words '*âsava*' ('that which flows out or on to') meaning 1) 'spirituous liquour' and 2) 'affliction, pain' (Skr. *âsrava*) and 'evil influence, depravity, misery' (BHS *âśrava*). In Pâli, the meanings cannot be kept strictly apart, '*âsava*' as an obstacle to nirvâna referring to ideas that intoxicate the mind (PED: 114-115; CPD II 239).

The four "intoxicating" *âsavas* are sensual pleasures (*kâma*), becoming (*bhava*), ignorance (*avijjâ*) and (later) views (*ditthi*). These appear in the Tipitaka in stereotypical descriptions of how someone achieved nirvâna by liberating himself from the *âsavas*, as in the case of the Buddha's first five converts who achieved nirvâna by merely listening to the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha himself is reported to have gotten rid of the *âsavas* in the fourth *jhâna* (M I 247-249). No further explanation for the nature of this liberation is provided, and in later Buddhism the *âsavas* no longer play a central role. In Jainism, '*âsava*' referred to the effect of karma that flew in. (Johansson 1985: 177; Masefield 1986: 85.)

As *anâsavañca*, the unconditioned is without sensual pleasures, becoming, ignorance and views, the factors that tie humans to *samsâra*. Those who are ignorant or have wrong views strive for sensual pleasures and want to continue their existence in *samsâra*. Thus, this doctrine of intoxicants is one of the attempts made by the early Buddhists to give conceptual content to the liberating experience.

However, the explicit descriptions of this liberating insight are late attempts to theorize about the nature of the ultimate goal propagated by the Buddha. At some point in time, the

idea that the four *jhânas* culminate in the destruction of the intoxicants has been connected with the view that the insight is based on an understanding of the four noble truths. In this way, a combination of these two alternatives has come to be considered the true nature of the liberating insight. (Bronkhorst 1986: 95-98, 100-104. Cf. Schmithausen 1981: 205.)

The Buddha's own liberating experience is, of course, the natural paradigm for the ultimate goal of Buddhism (see Pyysiäinen 1987 and 1993b: 15-16), but its various descriptions are not unanimous or clear about its nature (see Pyysiäinen 1993b: 101-103). The word 'nirvâna' appears only in the Ariyapariyesanâsutta (M I 167) with no explanation of how the Buddha reached it. In the *Suttas* Mahâsaccaka, Bhayabherava and Dvedhâvitakka, the Buddha ponders whether there could be "another way to *bodhi*" and attains liberation after the four *jhânas* and the three knowledges (*ñâna*) of which knowledge of the *âsavas* is the most important (M I 17-23, 114-117, 163-166, 247-249; II 212). The account of the Vinaya simply begins with the remark that the *Bhagavant* had recently become a perfect buddha (*pathamabhisambuddho*; Vinaya I 1). (See Bareau 1963. See also Bareau 1980.)

With all this taken into consideration, the characterization of the unconditioned as *anâsavañca* should be seen as a mythological attempt to take the Buddha's and his first converts' supposed experiences as the paradigmatic ground upon which the discourse on the unconditioned can be anchored.

3) The truth (*sacca*)

'*Sacca*' means 'real, true, truth' (PED: 668), and characterizes the unconditioned as the source of all truth*s*, the paragon according to which everything should be measured. It is the ultimate truth.

4) That which is beyond (*pâra*)

'*Pâra*' refers to that which is beyond by being either higher up in space or further in time. In the expression '*paro loko*' ('the world beyond'), it signifies the life to come or future life (as opposed to *ayan loko*). (PED: 418.) Thus, the unconditioned is that which comes after *samsâra* either spatially or temporarily. However, if we grant that nirvâna, even when

reached in this life, leads to the cessation of *samsâra*, we cannot take '*pâra*' here as a temporal reference to the life to come. It is exactly the opposite: that which is altogether beyond life as normally understood (*samsâra*). As such, it has more a spatial connotation and refers to something "wholly other".

5) Subtle (*nipuna*)

'*Nipuna*' has the meanings of 'clever, skillful, accomplished, fine, subtle, abstruse' (PED: 360). The unconditioned is in this way pictured as something extremely difficult to understand and perceive. It is barely within the limits of human reasoning powers.

6) Hard to see (*sududdasa*)

Invisibility is usually associated in religious thought with darkness and hell, whereas visibility is related to the brightness of day and sky. In darkness, all visible boundaries and related cultural categories disappear, and also biological growth ceases. Thus, darkness is a danger to the human existence. But, as we have seen, such disappearance of categories may also be positively valued as an escape to "not-world". The way to enlightenment goes through the "dark night of the soul", so to speak. Yet interpreting the unconditioned as darkness seems at first sight to be at odds with the ideas of a "*Dhamma* eye" and "seeing the *Dhamma*" (e.g. Vinaya I 11-16). When the Buddha taught the father of Yasa, "a son of a good family", the father obtained a *Dhamma* eye as though the Buddha would have set upright that which had been upset, would have uncovered that which had been covered, or had brought a lamp into darkness (Vinaya I 16-17).

But, here the true order of things *was* covered from the eyes of the father until the Buddha made it visible. In other words, it was "hard to see" for those who were "surrounded by darkness" as the Dhammapada says (verse 146). Thus, the ultimate truth (nirvâna, *Dhamma*, unconditioned) is associated with darkness in the sense that we cannot see it with ordinary eyes, and with light in the sense that it is the ultimate truth that reveals to us the true order of things. The facts that views are considered an *âsava* and the Atthakavagga of the Suttanipâta exhorts us to give up all views although seeing is the goal (Burford 1992), could

be interpreted to mean that a mystical way of seeing and understanding has to be substituted for all ordinary seeing and understanding. Bearing in mind the paradoxical nature of mystical language, we can say that the enlightened vision is one that transcends the dichotomy of seeing and not-seeing. What counts as light and what as darkness depends on from which point of view we look at the matter[19].

7) Unfading (*ajajjara*)

'*Ajajjara*' is the opposite of '*jajjara*', 'withered, feeble with age', and refers to nirvâna as that which does not fade away (PED: 277; CPD: I 39). It characterizes the unconditioned as something not subject to old age, decay and transitoriness (*anicca*). In other words, it is permanent and timeless, contrary to our existence in *samsâra*.

8) Permanent (*dhuva*)

Like '*ajajjara*', '*dhuva*' pictures the unconditioned as something permanent (see PED: 342) in contrast to life in *samsâra*.

9) Undecaying (*apalokita/apalokina*)

This word is the opposite of '*paloka/palokin*', 'destined for decay or destruction' (see PED: 442), and thus refers — like *ajajjara* — to that which is not subject to decay (CPD: I 280).

10) Invisible (*anidassana*)

Here we can only repeat what was said concerning '*sududdasa*'.

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[19]   York (1993: 238) cites as evidence for his idea of polarized perception among the Indo-Europeans precisely the bipolar root **leuk-/*leug-*, ('light', 'dark'), among others.

11) Not plural (*nippapañca*)

The text has '*nippapam*', which, however, must be an error for '*nippapañca*' (Bareau 1951: 21 n.19)[20]. It is uncertain whether '*papañca*' is identical to Sanskrit '*prapañca*' (*pra* + *pañc* 'to spread out') 'expansion, diffuseness, manifoldness', or is connected with '*pada*' and thus refers to an obstacle (orig. *papadya*) and hindrance to spiritual progress.

PED takes this latter derivation to be more likely but, nevertheless, translates '*nippapañca*' in this context as 'free from diffuseness'. (PED: 360, 412.) According to Bareau (1951: 21 n.19), '*nippapañca*' signifies that which is "without all vain verbal development." Luis Gómez translates '*papañca*' in like manner as (verbal) 'multiplicity' and 'dispersion' (Gómez 1976: 142-143. See Vetter 1990: 45, 55 n.17).

In Mahâyâna texts, '*prapañca*' refers to that world of plurality which we create with the constructive activity of our mind (*vikalpa*), although the ultimate reality is nondual and attainable with *nirvikalpajñâna* only (see Lindtner 1982: 270-271; Loy 1988: 54; Griffiths 1990: 85-90; Pyysiäinen 1993b: 104-124). If Gómez is right, as I believe he is, in that the Atthakavagga contains a similar type of path theory as the Madhyamaka, then taking '*papañca*' to mean 'multiplicity' in the Atthakavagga is most natural.

Translating '*nippapañca*' here as 'not plural' would, then, establish a possible connection between the idea of Atthakavagga's mysticism and the idea of an unconditioned. If this is the case, '*nippapañca*' is of utmost importance in our list of epithets because it has at once ontological and psychological aspects, connecting such spatial epithets as '*anta*' and such psychological ones as '*anâsava*'. The unconditioned as *nippapañca* is that ultimate nondual reality one can only understand in mystical vision, not through verbal discrimination.

It is difficult to decide for sure whether this conviction is a) only a doctrinal postulate, b) is actually caused by such mystical experience that it objectively forces one to such conclusion, irrespective of one's doctrinal frame of reference, or c) is the product of an interaction between doctrine and experience in a hermeneutical circle.

This issue is briefly touched by Alexander von Rospatt with regard to the doctrine of momentariness. According to him, the doctrine of momentariness of all conditioned *dharmas* is *primarily* based on the analysis of change. This doctrine was then at least not challenged by yogic experiences. The depiction of these experiences, however, also "raises the

[20] Woodward is aware of this, and gives '*nippapañca*' but translates it as 'taintless' (The Book of Kindred Sayings IV 262).

possibility that they provoked the realization that things are momentary." It "*cannot be ruled out*" that the yogic experiences could have been objectively speaking such that they have convinced the practitioners of the momentariness of all phenomena, and "*it is conceivable*" that such experiences were the decisive factor which started the formative process of the doctrine of momentariness. (von Rospatt 1995: 215-217. My italics.) In light of our previous discussion of mysticism, it is dubious that an experience could straightforwardly cause a doctrine. Thus, we have to accept the third alternative that there has been interaction between mystical experience and the view of the unconditioned as *nippapañca*.

As the Buddhist doctrine has developed gradually and in conversation with other Indic traditions, it is impossible to decide which was first, a particular experience or the doctrine of the unconditioned. Excluding the experiential aspect altogether would, however, clearly do violence to the sources. It is very unlikely that the doctrines of *dhyâna*, nirvâna and the unconditioned would have developed without any experiential background. That would be a similar oversimplification as if a future scholar of the year 4,000 would declare that the Americans of the 20th century had an idea of relaxation but that it is doubtful that the formulations of this idea would have anything to do with anyone's experiences.

12) Peace (*santa*)

'*Santa*' (< *sammati* 1. 'to be appeased, to be calmed'; 'to cease'; 2. 'to rest, to dwell') means 'calmed, tranquil, peace(ful), pure, and bliss' (PED: 675-676, 695). It is interesting that the ideas of calmness and purity are combined in '*santa*', because *santi* and *suddhi* are the ideas through which the goal is most often expressed in the Atthakavagga (Burford 1992: 40, 42). It is characteristic that they both receive their meaning from what is *not* the case. In other words, they do not provide a clear definition of what the ultimate goal is, only what it is not (the *via negativa*). Thus, we can say '*santa*' to characterize the unconditioned as negation of the conditioned, which of course is obvious in any case. With regard to language and concepts, this means that only negations apply to the unconditioned.

13) Free from death (*amata*)

If we recall the distinction between death and dying and the meaning of the idea of rebirth with regard to death, it is apparent that '*amata*' can here only mean freedom from the perpetual re-dying (unless it only means freedom from premature death). When combined with the idea of nirvâna without remainder, freedom from death refers to a state which is beyond both life and death. Thus, Norman is absolutely right in emphasizing that such translations as 'immortality' are misleading because of the connotation of unending life. Moreover, it is not the unconditioned itself that would be "undying" or "deathless"; it is the one who is in nibbâna that is free from dying. (Norman 1994: 218-220.)

But what could such a state be like? The difficulty to grasp that comes well to the fore in the traditional unanswered question "Does a tathâgata exist after death?" (see *MPPS* k. 2, p. 74 c.) In fact, the question *should* not have an answer because it would break the complete "otherness" of "nirvânic death". Also Norman remarks that it was, perhaps, the idea of the complete "otherness" of nirvâna that prevented the Buddha from answering (Norman 1994: 225).

Taken transfigurationally in Munz' sense of the term, the unconditioned thus represents a mystical experience of freedom from time and dying. Dualistically taken, it is a representation of a reality in which there is no more dying (and being born). (Cf. CPD: I 387-388.) We should, however, bear in mind that even death receives its meaning in a sociocultural context. In India, death was an essential component in the sociocultural system whose other main components were the ideas of caste (*varna*), *karma*, and later *samsâra* (the round of rebirths). Death had social value as a transformation to a new status of ancestor as well as to a new incarnation, better or worse. Death was not an escape from the system but, on the contrary, its reaffirmation. Immortality meant being outside of the system (Penner 1983: 107-108). Thus, freedom from death is equivalent to freedom from the sociocultural system.

14) Excellent (*panîta*)

'*Panîta*' means 'raised, exalted, lofty, excellent' (PED: 403). In thus describing the unconditioned as of ultimate value, '*panîta*' characterizes the unconditioned as the axiological

opposite of *samsâra*. It emphasizes the positive aspect of the "other" of culture, devaluating the established socio-cultural system.

15) Bliss (*siva*)

'*Siva*' refers to something auspicious, happy and fortunate. According to PED, it here means 'happiness' and 'bliss'. (PED: 711). The unconditioned as '*siva*' is the opposite of man's present condition of unease (*dukkha*), and thus is the complete psychological reversal of *samsâra*. Like '*panîta*', it stresses that true happiness can only be found outside of the worldly conditioned reality.

16) The place of security (*khema*)

'*Khema*' has the meanings 1) 'full of peace, safe'; 'tranquil, calm', and 2) 'shelter, place of security, tranquillity, home of peace, the Serene'. PED takes it to here mean, as an epithet of nirvâna, 'the Serene'. (PED: 239.) One can, of course, find serenity or calmness only when one feels himself or herself to be safe (Csikszentmihalyi 1991: 43); and it is precisely this that also the last four epithets in our list stress.

It is of interest to note in this connection that the English word 'sanctuary' has also the meaning 'place where one is safe', as in the expression 'take (seek) sanctuary'. As we saw, the Latin '*sanctus*' refers to the "wall" that encloses that which is *sacer*, and in this way provides shelter. Here '*khema*' is related in meaning to '*pâra*': it, like the equivalents of 'sacred' in many Indo-European languages, refers (in meaning, not in etymology) to something that is set apart.

Ultimate peace can only be found in that which is apart from *samsâra*. Thus, we are here again dealing with the idea of a "wholly other" that defines human reality by its difference from it.

17) Destruction of thirst (*tanhakkhaya*)

'*Tanhâ*' means 'thirst' and '*khaya*' 'destruction' and 'loss,' especially of passions, life and rebirth (PED: 235). According to the four noble truths, thirst is the reason for suffering, although the net of mutual dependencies takes ignorance (*avijjâ*) to be the ultimate cause. Here, like in connection with '*anâsavañca*' (# 2), we have an attempt at a conceptual interpretation of what the Buddha's insight had been about. The unconditioned is pictured as a state without productivity based on thirst, i.e. the reverse of culture.

18) Wonderful (*acchariya*)

'*Acchariya*' refers to that which happens without a moment's notice, at the snap of a finger; and thus means 'wonderful, surprising, strange, marvellous' (PED: 9; CPD: I 37). The unconditioned as *acchariya* is something contrary to the ordinary way of things, something which escapes the prevailing system of cultural classification.

19) Marvellous (*abbhuta*)

'*Abbhuta*' often appears together with '*acchariya*', and means 'wonder(ful), marvel(lous), supernatural, astonishing' (PED: 60; CPD: I 331-332). Thus, it is here of the same meaning as '*acchariya*'.

20) Health (*anîtika*)

'*Anîtika*' (*an* + *îti*, 'no ill') refers to a condition free from injury, distress and calamities of the season, to a sound condition and health (PED: 33, 123; CPD: I 178). With regard to meaning, although not to etymology, this word thus bears a similar connotation of well-being than certain Indo-European words for 'sacred'. Although the etymology of '*anîtika*' is different as compared to the words from *heil-*, its use in the context of the unconditioned expresses a similar idea, emphasizing the positive, integrating aspect of that which is set

apart.

21) The state of health (*anîtikadhamma*)

This epithet hypostasizes the previous one, making it into a separate reality.

22) *Nibbâna*

Here we can only repeat what has already been said concerning nirvâna.

23) Freedom from suffering (*avyâpajj[h]a*)

'*Avyâpajjha*' (< *vy* + *â-pad-*) means a) 'not to be injured or harmed', b) 'harmless or not injuring', and here, as a synonym of nirvâna, 'freedom from suffering' (CPD: I 485). As *avyâpajjha*, the unconditioned equals nirvâna as a condition free from thirst that is based on discrimination, and therefore free from suffering.

24) Dispassion (*virâga*)

'*Râga*' means 'excitement, passion, lust' and is usually combined with '*dosa*' ('anger') and '*moha*' ('bewilderment'). The lack of these three is the stereotypical description of nirvâna. (PED: 567.) '*Râga*' often appears in the combination '*chandarâga*' ('exciting desire'). '*Virâga*' characterizes the unconditioned as free from discrimination according to what is pleasurable and what is unpleasant.

25) Purity (*suddhi*)

Under #12 (peace), it was noted that purity is a negative concept, expressing lack of dirt. Dirt we have interpreted with Lord Chesterfield and Mary Douglas as matter out of place, i.e. something that does not fit in the prevailing system of cultural classification without contradiction (like spit on your tie). It is the surplus of order. (See Douglas 1989: 160-161. Also Lopez 1992: 156-157.) Thus, purity has two aspects: the purity proper comes from strict order, whereas the complete absence of order produces purity in the sense that because there is no order, there can be no disorder either. In this latter case, however, we should rather say that there is neither impurity nor purity.

In Indian context, the society with its caste system is based on strict rules for purity. The purity of the unconditioned, however, cannot be based on cultural order because the *śramanas* specifically wanted to go out of society, and the unconditioned is a representation of that. Thus, it is purity in the applied sense of neither impurity nor purity, absence of a system of classification.

26) Release (*mutti*)

'*Mutti*' (< *muc*- 'strip off, get rid of') refers to 'release, freedom, emancipation' (PED: 535, 537). Here it means freedom from that which is conditioned, from the culturally categorized reality.

27) Freedom from desire (*anâlaya*)

The various meanings of '*âlaya*' are divided to spatial and psychological as follows: 1) a) 'house, dwelling, household, a built structure'; b) 'nest, perch, shelter'; c) 'abode, seat, haven, repository'; d) 'domain, sphere'. 2) a) 'liking, inclination, attachment, fondness for, partiality toward'; b) 'affection, love'; c) 'desire, yearning, clinging, sensual attachment (synonym for '*tanhâ*')' (see CPD: II 197).

'*Anâlaya*', as an epithet of nirvâna, has both the meanings of 'homelessness' and of 'freedom from desire' (CPD: I 167). In this way it, like #11 '*nippapañca*', connects the

psychological and spatial/ontological aspects of the unconditioned: being homeless equates being free from desires. The unconditioned is spatially speaking an unbounded entity, and psychologically a state with no distinction between pleasant and unpleasant. Thus, *'anâlaya'* emphasizes the categorial openness of the unconditioned.

28) Refuge (*dîpa*)

'Dîpa' literally means 'double-watered' (< Ved. *'dvi'*, 'two' and *'âpa'*, 'water') and signifies an island or a continent "between two waters." Abstractly, it means 'shelter, refuge, liberation', and often appears together with *'tâna'*, *'lena'* and *'sarana'*. (PED: 323-324.) Thus, we are dealing with an abstract category which is derived from the image of concrete space between geographical boundaries. *'Dîpa'*, like *'khema'*, contains the idea of something being set apart and marked off, although within the given system. This marked off area, the unconditioned, is also positively valued as the "wholly other" positive supplement to human culture.

29) The ultimate shelter (*lena*)

'Lena' is derived from Sanskrit *'lî'*, 'to hide' and refers to a cave or rock cell used by ascetics as a hermitage and place of shelter. Its abstract meaning is 'refuge, shelter' and as an epithet of nirvâna 'final liberation'. (PED: 586.) The unconditioned as *lena* is the absolute, metaphysical hermitage giving "wholly other" shelter.

30) The final protection (*tâna*)

'Tâna' (< Ved. *trâ*, 'bringing or seeing through') means the shelter, protection and peace provided by the Dharma (PED: 298-299). Thus, the unconditioned is the metaphysical source of the protection by the Dharma.

31) The shelter (*sarana*)

'*Sarana*' signifies 'shelter, house, refuge, protection' (PED: 697). The meaning here is the same as above.

32) The final end (*parâyna*)

'*Parâyana*' (< *parâ* + *i*) means 1) 'final end, support, rest', and 2) 'going through to, ending in, aiming at, given to, attached to, having one's end or goal in' (PED: 421). Here the final end, the ultimate goal, is said to be the destruction of passion, hatred and bewilderment, as in the beginning of the Asamkhatasamyutta.

* * *

Thus, the unconditioned as the ultimate goal of the disciples of the Buddha, is quite clearly pictured in the Nikâyas as something set apart from the conditioned *dharmas*. It is set apart in the positive sense of purity and ultimate reality transcending the phenomenal superstructure people themselves construct out of conditioned *dharmas*. The epithets of the unconditioned are mostly negations, it is beyond perception and not constructed by the human consciousness and discursive thinking. However, as Buddhist cosmogony recognizes no creator transcendent to the world, the world contracting and evolving by turns by itself, also that which is set apart from the whole world (the "not-world") must paradoxically be immanent in regard to world. Thus, the unconditioned is amid the world, yet being its complete negation.

On the one hand, the unconditioned is pictured by using spatial imagery, on the other meditation and mystical experience are said to be the means of reaching it. This tension between spatial and psychological language can be explained as due to the fact that conscious phenomena tend to be conceptualized through spatial imagery, mind or consciousness having no form in itself, as we have seen. Mere use of spatial imagery as such does not lend support for claims that the early Buddhists would have regarded the unconditioned literally as a place no more than talk about "subconsciousness" can be used as evidence for a belief according to which subconsciousness would literally lie spatially under consciousness. It is only a

question of spatial *imagery*.

Although the unconditioned should be understood in terms of consciousness, it is obvious that there is not necessarily any direct connection between the various characterizations of the unconditioned in the Nikâyas, not to mention those in the Abhidhamma, and mystical experience of individual Buddhists. As we have seen, verbal interpretation of experience easily begins to live a life of its own, is elaborated in the course of transmission, and can even assume the form of "a dry verbal tradition to be executed on command." This, however, does not mean that there never was an experience. As we know that the human organism is capable of rather radical changes in the way it processes information concerning the so-called external world as well as the self, that such experiences have been regarded as at least one means of attaining the Buddhist goal, and that the unconditioned has been identified with the goal, it is reasonable to suppose a connection between the notion of unconditioned and mystical experience.

I think the notion of unconditioned provides support for my thesis that religious doctrinal systems contain both a way of categorizing reality (here especially the lists of *dharmas*) and a means of calling this categorizing in question (meditation and mysticism). This calling in question in principle takes place both at the level of interpretation and the level of experience in a "hermeneutical circle". In the Tipitaka, the cited passages of the Atthakavagga are a good example of how religious doctrine tries to transcend itself by taking recourse to paradoxical formulations. Such religious paradoxes can both reflect mystical experiences and serve as a catalyst to search for such experience as personal verification of the ultimate rationality of paradoxical doctrine.

3. CONCLUSION

Our ability to make sense of our existence, act in an adequate way and even to survive depends on the ability to classify information, i.e. to form classes, genera, or types to mark necessary divisions within our conceptual schemes, the minimum requirement for a conscious thought being a primary distinction of one bit. Thus, theoretically, a primary division separates between the world or reality as we know it, and formless, uncategorized reality as prior to any human thought.

Reality is categorized within various conceptual systems, religious doctrinal systems being the ones that purport to categorize the reality as a whole. The main thesis of this work has been that religious doctrinal systems contain both a specific way of categorizing reality and a way of calling this system of categorization in question.

The fundamental role of dichotomy in human cognitive processing probably has its source in aspects of language structure: antonym pairs, syntactic structure, etc., and it is syntax that has made thinking and consciousness of consciousness possible in the sense we know them (in contrast to other species and children under two). The very word 'consciousness' possibly derives from the Proto-Indo-European root *sek-, 'to cut, to divide into two'. This may be said to reflect the fact that consciousness in the sense of consciousness of one's own conscious nature is essentially bipolar, always setting the subject and object apart. Consciousness creates the dualities of inner—outer, subjective—objective, body—not-body, and self versus not-self by maintaining boundaries that divide the primal, undifferentiated experience.

The most important dualities are between consciousness itself and the reality of which humans are conscious, and between an individual himself or herself and the external world. The first duality also appears in the polarities of mind and body, of culture and nature. Religion, then, deals with these vital distinctions by which such categories as 'person'/'soul' and 'nature'/'flesh' are established.

'Sacred' (from *sak- which is a variant of *sek-, 'to cut') is a concept by which people define and mark the boundaries between themselves as individuals and as a community (ethnicity and territorial boundaries), between auspicious and dangerous days and times, as well as between what is human and part of culture and what is outside of it (Veikko Anttonen). Thus, many instances of transcending the bodily, territorial and temporal boundaries are governed by behavioral norms that are declared "sacred". Thus, the Ob-Ugrian Khanty and Mansi women, for example, were considered sacred (Khanty, *jémen*;

Mansi, *jelpin*) during periods of menstruation; there are over 100 prehistoric place names in Finland which are compounds with '*pyhä*' ('sacred') as their first half, and the seventh day of the week is more than often a holiday, i.e. a holy day (in Finnish, *pyhäpäivä*).

But, when systems of classification are developed into abstract religious doctrines, the idea of sacred boundaries reiceives a metaphysical interpretation in the duality between the world or reality understood as an entity, and the "wholly other" reality which I have here also called "not-world". This is because, as we have seen, thinking operates in distinctions that are "forms of thought" (Spencer Brown). As bodily beings, we can only conceptualize things employing spatial imagery, and thus also conscious phenomena are spoken of using such expressions as 'below' (*sub*consciousness), 'above' ('*high* spirits'), and so forth. Thus, also world as a totality is understood as an entity located in space. Then, naturally, the question arises what lies outside of the world, although this may be a meaningless question from the scientific point of view.

Religions, however, connect the ultimate goal of humans to this idea of "not-world" together, interpreting the transitory "worldly" reality to be a reflection of the eternal "not-world" at best. Gods of various kinds are personifications of the "not-world" which, however, cannot be directly represented in thought or language because it lies outside their scope. All descriptions and images of the "not-world" are taken to be mere approximations, metaphors, or negative descriptions of what is ultimately ineffable.

This, however, does not exclude experiential verification of the reality of the "wholly other". Various types of extraordinary experiences, difficult to explain in terms of the prevailing system of classification, are oftentimes regarded as manifestations of the "not-world". Familiarity with religious doctrines and ideas can cause one to search and even attain such experiences, but experiences that are hard to explain can also cause people to develop interpretations for them that may eventually turn into doctrines.

Mysticism is the domain *par excellence* of such experiences and doctrines. Although also mystical goals are spatially conceptualized as being at the top of a hierarchy of being (Neoplatonism), beyond the sun and the stars (Upanisads), etc., they nevertheless are sought in subjective meditative experiences. Thus, it seems that spatial language is only the conventional way of conceptualizing inner experience. Neither experience nor doctrinal interpretation has causal primacy in mysticism, neurophysiological changes and their meaning-giving verbalizations being intertwined in culture-bound ways.

The traditional division of mystical experience into extrovertive and introvertive ones

separates between experiences in which the so-called external world is experienced without the mediation of the syntactic module of the brain and without the self which is an abstraction from the totality of one's doings (Derek Bickerton), and experiences in which the so-called external world is totally shut off from one's consciousness. In the extrovertive experience, one interacts with the external world probably much as in Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi's "optimal experience" characterized by a one-pointedness of mind in which action and awareness merge, irrelevant stimuli disappear from consciousness, and the separate self that is normally felt to be continuously watching and evaluating one's doings is lost. The introvertive experience involves the problem of how one can retain consciousness when all intentional objects disappear, i.e. what would pure consciousness be like? This may be an impossible question to answer because the "pure consciousness event" (Robert Forman) is a pure negation. Consequently, it can be considered the experiential counterpart of the spatial "not-world".

Thus, also mysticism deals with the sacred boundaries that separate an individual from his or her surroundings. These boundaries are normally felt to be clear physical facts, but yet we continuously transcend them through the bodily openings taking energy and receiving information from the external world, as well as emitting various bodily liquids and excrement and sending information back to the external world. Various cultural practices are meant either to confirm these boundaries (individualism), or to nullify them (collectivism). Both extrovertive and introvertive mystical experience are supposed to demolish the boundary between an individual as subject and all that is normally felt to be object, either by removing the self or both the self and the external world.

This, however, means that the distinction between extrovertive and introvertive experience itself is transcended in the experience. Normally, we have to separate between external and internal reality in order to be able to grasp the reality as a whole (Paul Roubiczek) and interact with it. Neurophysiologically, the extrovertive—introvertive distinction can be explained as based on whether one one acts as a relatively open system that uses information acquired from the external world, or as a relatively closed system operating according to inherited (biological) information.

This distinction possibly can be operationalized by reference to the two divisions of the nervous system involved: the sensory receptors transmitting information from the sense organs to the central nervous system, and the motor division of the nervous system transmitting signals to the muscles and glands. Every change in the activity in the motor

system triggers a change in the sensory system, and vice versa, a relationship Roland Fischer has labeled as "sensory/motor (S/M) closure". Thus hallucinations, for example, can be explained as a prevalence of the sensory component of self-awareness at the expense of the objective motor component. In the case of the extrovertive mystical experience, muscle system activity decreases whereas the input of sensory data does not, which means that the S/M closure is not 1:1, but 1/0 (sensory activity dominates over motor). Introvertive mystical experience, for its part, would be characterized by something like a 0:0 closure, at least in the case of a clear PCE. Besides this, mystical enstasy (not ecstasy) is characterized by increased parasympathetic activity.

The Buddhist notion of unconditioned (*asamkhata*), as presented in the Pâli Nikâyas, is a good example of how a religious doctrinal system includes its own negation in the form of an ultimate goal that can only be described through negations and metaphors, and can be realized in an ineffable subjective experience of which it is not dependent, however. The unconditioned is described in both spatial and psychological images, the spatial ones being conceptual conventions of handling conscious phenomena. Yet the unconditioned should not be understood directly to reflect individual mystical experiences. It is impossible to say exactly how and why it was first developed, i.e. whether someone was trying to communicate and explain his mystical experience by inventing the term "unconditioned" to characterize it, or whether the term is a purely analytic construct needed to make the doctrinal system coherent.

What is certain is that all epithets of the unconditioned cannot be directly reflecting anyone's experiences, and that, nevertheless, the Buddhist doctrine is essentially structured by the idea of mystical experience which it is meant to embody and convey. The Buddhist doctrinal system can be said to relate to mystical experience in the same manner as any conceptual system relate to experience, impinging on experience only "along the edges" (Willard Quine). We cannot asses how individual words and sentences refer to reality (external or internal) independently of the total conceptual system of which they are a part. Thus, although we cannot decide which one is primary, experience or interpretation, the Buddhist doctrine in principle guides people to seek for mystical experience.

The unconditioned is clearly presented as equivalent with the mystical goal of nirvâna and in this sense is itself mystical. As we know that the human organism is capable of rather radical neurophysiological changes along the lines of mystical doctrines, it impossible to discard all experiential explanations of the Buddhist doctrine of meditation. Although the

various descriptions of meditative states in Buddhist texts can be, and probably are, scholastic elaborations, this does not mean that there cannot be any actual experiences behind these doctrines. It is in the nature of language that it is not constrained by actual properties of physical reality. Once some experience has been verbalized, the verbalization can be related to other verbalizations and developed without direct reference to the original experience. Thus, the unconditioned should be understood as the outcome of a "hermeneutical circle" between neurophysiological changes and the doctrinal interpretation of their meaning. The experiential processes are here a processual structure that is postulated to explain the existence and meaning of the specific doctrinal system (McMullin's "structural explanation").

Abbreviations

A = Anguttaranikâya. The Pali Text Society editions and translations.

CPD = A Critical Pâli Dictionary

D = Dîghanikâya. The Pali Text Society editions and translations.

M = Majjhimanikâya. The Pali Text Society editions and translations.

MPPS = Mahâprajñâpâramitâśâstra

PED = Pâli-English Dictionary

S = Samyuttanikâya. The Pali Text Society editions and translations.

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