

14. The Field of Religion

The campus is in shock. Over the holidays, the Dean died suddenly in his sleep. At first the doctors attributed his death to a heart attack, but after a more thorough review, they found he had had a severe case of sleep apnea. His personal physician told relatives that, as people get older, there is a cumulative loss of cells in the area of the brain that controls breathing. Some deaths of older people with apnea are misdiagnosed as heart failure.¹

The announcement of his death has sent a pall over the campus. Students and professors who had attended his seminars are stunned, bereft. The Dean's last class is cancelled as people go into mourning. The Dean had been their guide into path-breaking research. But professors have decided that a last class for the seminar that meant so much to him has to take place. It will be part of a memoriam that honors his work.

The university president calls key faculty members in the seminar and asks what might be done. They in turn call Linus Kornberg and Margaret Benedict at their mountain retreat and tell them what has happened. The two of them drive back quickly and join their colleagues at a private funeral where selections from the Dean's writings are read, and

attendees are given the opportunity to speak about what this great man has meant to them.

Everyone knows that Professors Kornberg and Benedict have been the most active participants in this seminar. The president and faculty ask the two of them to conduct the final class in his honor. A date must be set quickly, because final exams begin in the following week. Grades will be determined by averaging all the scores given by the Dean for student essays during the semester.

Before his death, Linus and Margaret discover that the Dean had spoken to faculty in the Department of Religion about coming to the last course session. He had informed members of this faculty about the seminar, and they are prepared to join the final class.

Professors Kornberg and Benedict call students about the time when this class will be held. Faculties who have previously lectured in the seminar are also invited to attend: Professors Hopkins in Literature and Hughes in the English Department; Adams in Chemistry, Wilson in Biology, and Hawking and Watson in Physics, along with graduate student Stewart Perry; James and Whitehead in Philosophy, Parsons in Sociology, Mowrer in Psychology; as well as Britten in Music, Matisse in Art, Simon in

Theater.

How should the class be conducted?

Professors Kornberg and Benedict visit the Chair of Religion in her office to learn how students in her department study. The Chair tells them that the department views religion as “a major force in human experience and society.” The faculty holds conferences on campus to discuss faith-based social and political issues. Professors keep track of public events that involve religious leaders around the world. Professors give courses on world religions: Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism.

Sipping on mugs of coffee—it’s unusually good; the Chair brews her own —Kornberg and Benedict hear more from her: “We believe it is crucial for students to respect differences in beliefs. We teach how religion shapes politics, economics, literature, art, science, and economics. Professors are chosen as specialists, but they are not on campus to proselytize or evangelize. The study of religion is an examination of histories, creeds, and institutions, as these become part of public and private ways of life.

Their discussion is frank, as Kornberg states bluntly: “Personally, I am opposed to organized religion. I

think that all religions are filled with unsupportable beliefs, myths, and fantasies. If I speak honestly, my view could disrupt this class. Margaret and I have strong differences here.”

The Chair’s answer surprises him. She asks Professor Kornberg how he feels about Professor Benedict. Linus confesses their love for one another. “We have just returned from a honeymoon.” The Chair replies: “That’s where you begin. Ask the students — “What’s love all about?” Margaret smiles, and Linus, looking a bit glum, stays silent.

The day for the seminar has arrived. The classroom is full. Professors Kornberg and Benedict open the meeting.

Professor Benedict: We are here to complete the Dean’s work. Let us all join for a moment of silence in honor of the Dean. (*Attendees bow their heads. The silence is awesome for some students; a couple of them shift quietly in their chairs. Professor Benedict looks up, shuffles her papers, and says:*)

Thank you all for coming. (She notices that there are many new attendees in the class.)

We are here to talk about “religion and evolution” -- the last subject on the Dean’s program. In anticipation of a meeting, the Dean talked with

faculty in the Department of Religion about what we are doing in this course. He asked their faculty to join us. (*Looking toward them in the front row.*) Thank you for coming.

Professor Kornberg and I recall how the Dean spoke about being honest and “present where you are.” He encouraged spontaneity. So your ideas *could* take us in a new direction today.

I will put on the blackboard subjects that we are discussing. In fact, anybody can go to the blackboard and write what he or she thinks is important in our conversation. That will focus our attention.

But before we proceed, we need to summarize where we have been. Not everyone present today has attended every class, and in honor of the Dean, we have allowed newcomers who wanted to attend into this last meeting. I need your help. (*She goes to the blackboard to write:)*

The Dean’s Perspective

Let me start by reviewing principles we covered during the semester. We need “common ground” with our new members. (*She clears her throat.*)

At the beginning of the semester, the Dean wanted different faculties to discuss evolution. He

said, “It looks like our departments are all branches stemming from one common source. Evolution is like a seed that grows into tree, its branches going in all different directions.

The Dean was an agnostic, but he felt that religion gives purpose and meaning to many people. How did he begin? (*Looks to the class for help.*)

Perry: The Dean began with physics. “If our history goes back to the Big Bang,” he said, “this power must have held all the possibilities for what followed.” The Big Bang held the potential for developing everything -- even subjects in this university.

Hawking: But this was only his theory. And the Big Bang itself is only a theory.²

Benedict: Well. The Dean said he was not exploring a theory but taking a perspective. His perspective began with this analogy, borrowed from Aristotle: “An acorn holds the potential for what grows later as a tree, with its roots, bark, trunk, and leaves.” The Big Bang likewise must have held the potential for what came later as atoms, molecules, cells, animals, human beings and civilizations.

Perry: All the subjects we teach on campus were latent there -- in that beginning.

Kornberg: (*Interrupts, looking toward the religious scholars.*) The Dean said, however, that this does not imply “predestination” or “determinism.” In other

words, it does not mean that things would flow in the way that they *actually* did. Everything might have gone in a different direction. Only the *potential* was there.

Hopkins: (*addressing himself to the newcomers.*)

The Dean wrote a natural-to-human history for us all to read. That story was convincing to me.

Benedict: (*pleased to get support.*) The Dean asked for us to investigate what ideas are held in common among our various fields, our areas of specialization -- physics, chemistry, biology, music, sociology psychology, philosophy, and the arts. (*Kornberg had asked her to recap this idea for newcomers.*)

I should summarize, for everyone, but especially for those of you who are new here today whom I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge (*nodding to several of the new attendees*). He proposed that we are able to “know” only by being conscious. We know all things by *participant observation*. We are participants in our creation of knowledge. We are the subjects, as well as the objects, of what we investigate – this is the case in every field, from astronomy to zoology. By our consciousness, that is, we become part of the object of our own inquiry. (*She looks at Kornberg.*)

Chemists claim to know that all matter—from rocks

to stars—is not conscious. But they know this only through their consciousness. And they cannot divorce themselves from consciousness. We cannot separate our consciousness from the objects we study, ... not completely.

(To Kornberg, lowering her voice, almost as if this were a private moment between them) How am I doing?

Kornberg: *(He nods favorably.)* The Dean asked a key question: Does evolution take place by a *synthesis* of differences? To me, in physics, he asked: What is happening with all those opposing forces and energies?

Benedict: He proposed a strategy for students to think about “oppositions.” He called them *polarities*, *binaries*, *antinomies*. And he wanted us to think about the “substantive ideas” that apply to all fields that he saw involved in evolution.

Hopkins: Substantive? I was not at that session.

Benedict: Certain ideas become substantive for our purposes precisely because they appear in *all* fields of knowledge. They were, let’s see, *(She looks at her notes and writes the terms on the blackboard as she speaks:)* **Attraction-Repulsion, Synthesis-Separation, Symmetry-Asymmetry, Continuity-Discontinuity,**

Linearity-Cyclicity, Equality-Hierarchy, Simplicity-Complexity, Creation-Destruction, Change and Permanence, Individuality-Community, and Transformation-Transcendence.

In other words, the Dean proposed a *framework* by means of which students could explore what is in common among all subjects. The Big Bang contained the potential for “producing” all things that followed that first big event. (*Wondering to herself: “Did he use the words ‘actualizing’ or ‘creating’?” Now she won’t be able to ask him.*) This includes atoms, molecules, cells, organisms, language and civilizations. He said that “synthesis” was his “hypothesis” for explaining what happened. Students could explore it.

Watson: In other words, if these key ideas are in all fields of knowledge, they are “substantive” enough for us to discuss.

Prof. Adams: (*He breaks in.*) You need to define “substantive.” I was not at that meeting either.

Prof. Benedict: Well. “Substantive” means all those concepts that scientists use to describe evolution. These paired terms (*points to the blackboard*), such as Attraction-Repulsion, are common to our discourse across departments and disciplines. (*Looks to Kornberg.*) Scientific concepts lead us into a

deeper sense of meaning for understanding this natural-to-human history.

Kornberg: The Dean talked about the key to evolution being *synthesis*, which keeps repeating itself. Nature is creative repetition, which is always inventing new things. (*Friends of the Dean who had not been in class look puzzled.*) Well. Synthesis involves putting two different kinds of things together and producing something new in the process. In the evolution of atoms, for example, nature synthesized hydrogen and oxygen to make water.

Benedict: We talked about how subjects studied in the university were created by synthesis – Our word *biology* reflects this, for example. It is based on two Greek terms: *bios*, or “life”; and *logos*, which refers to language and logic. At one point in the 19th century, biology was introduced as a new subject in the university. It became a new way of thinking about plants and animals. And in the evolution of language, synthesis can be seen in rhetorical devices like the metaphor. (*Again there are perplexed looks, mainly from new attendees.*) Well. Professor Hopkins, can you define *metaphor* for our new attendees?

Hopkins: A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a comparison is made between two unlike things that have something in common. It is like what the Dean

has been doing in this seminar. (*Kornberg looks at him quizzically.*) In this case, it means bringing together opposite premises in the construction of knowledge. (*Kornberg is thinking.*)

Benedict: Interesting. Now what more? Hmmm. The Dean proposed that, from today's perspective, evolution is moving from the outside to the inside. In the Big Bang, molecules and atoms began outside us, and their movement was an explosive one *outward*, but they are now inside and part of our bodies. They are the foundation of evolution and of our life together.

Professor Adams: What do you mean—or, what did the Dean mean by that—evolution goes from the “outside to the inside”?

Benedict: Look at the anomaly. We see molecules through microscopes outside ourselves, but molecules are also inside of us. They *are* “us.” Or, we are them... (momentarily befuddled, turning to Prof. Hopkins) What should I say: is “we are they” correct? (*peals of laughter*)

Kornberg: (*Laughing heartily along with everyone else.*) *Them are we.* That's a stretch.

Benedict: Well, *they are inside of us.* Look. The evolution of language shows how “interiority” goes from outside to inside. Professor Hopkins, could you tell how this happens? (*She smiles.*)

Hopkins: (*He smiles back to her.*) We see fog externally, and we—civilized people—have appropriated the same term to express a way we feel on the inside. We say: “My memory is foggy,” meaning that we can’t remember something clearly, or very well. In the process, we are comparing the fog we see outside to a particular state of mind. Now we have a way to express something that we feel *inside* in terms of something we see on the *outside*, with our eyes.

Benedict: Great! Thanks for your explanation. But this feeling you refer to is happening on a new level of consciousness.

Before the advent of civilization, people began to create words. They talked about what was happening inside their mind. They had feelings that sometimes *seemed to resemble* something they saw *outside*.

So the metaphor is a synthesis that builds inner space. It moves our mind from our animal attention “outside”—to food, say, like bananas -- toward what *cannot* be seen by our physical eyes -- on the inside. You cannot “see” an internal fog, but you may feel it.

Perry: The Dean called this process “increasing interiority.” As civilization advances, there is a deepening of inner life. People came up with words like “light” and “dark” to describe something they saw on the outside; and then they combined those

words to refer to what they felt inside. Right? (*She looks to Hopkins.*)

Hopkins: They looked at the sunset at the end of the day, and someone said of an elder: “He’s entered his sunset years.” From the process of baking bread, someone borrowed the expression “half-baked” and applied it to an *idea*. (*He looks at new attendees as if to say: “Do you follow us?”*) Someone looked at water boiling in a pot and said: “Momma is boiling mad.” (*The class laughs.*) Right? (*Heads nod.*)

Kornberg: The Dean talked about variations of *synthesis* down through history. Synthesis has taken place in different settings with different words such as: *fuse, blend, combine, join together... mix, merge, unite, amalgamate*, and other similar terms.

Benedict: Yes. Each concept has its own context but also has something in common with the others. That’s what makes it “substantive.” How are we doing? (*She looks at the faculty.*) What else?

Whitehead: I still have trouble with (signs quotes) “substantive.” I cannot accept Aristotle’s doctrine of “substantive being.” I think everything is connected organically all the time. Everything is constantly in development. I do not see any “substantive” soul. (*He looks at the religious scholars, ready for battle.*)³

Benedict: The Dean would be with you. By “substantive,” he meant that it is important to examine these ideas across disciplines. (*She points to*

the blackboard.) He looked at everything dialectically. History *preserves* the past—this implies permanence,—and yet *transforms*, or changes, it at the same time.

Kornberg: I had trouble with that word “transcendence.” (*Benedict is worried that he will start to argue and prolong the discussion.*) We can say that two different atoms transform—by synthesizing—to make water, but I cannot see water “transcending.” This concept of “transcending” is not in science.

Benedict: Well. The appearance of water laid the foundation for life on earth. In fact, it created the basis for chemists to do empirical work. Remember the changing atmosphere in the early days of earth? But this topic is pretty technical to discuss on this last day of class.⁴

Kornberg: You mean that our body evolved in an atmosphere that allowed for physical sensation. Yes. Scientific truth is based on our senses. (*He does not want to start an old fight, but...*)

Benedict: And sensation is a part of the fields of energy in the universe. It’s vibratory. (*Kornberg nods.*) So our physical senses tell us what is true in a *relative* sense. But remember: Thoreau said there is more going on in the universe than meets the eye. The whole truth is not found in science alone.

Hawking: This sounds like there is some *purpose* in evolution. And that importation into the *facts* worries me.⁵

Benedict: Yes. That's the very reason we are here today – to learn about the purpose of evolution. We want to find out what religious scholars think. Professor Kornberg will introduce them. (*She writes on the blackboard.*)

The Field of Religion

Kornberg: We have with us, Ramana Singh, who studies and teaches Eastern religions – such as Buddhism and Hinduism. (*He points in his direction.*) We have Professor Theresa Merton and Professor Thomas Gallagher Burns, S.J., over there (*points to them and smiles*), who teach about Catholicism and its history. Karl Tillich, in front of me here, represents the Protestant tradition. Let's see. Over there (*points*) is Martin Herschel, who teaches the history of Judaism. And here (*pointing*) is Jalal al-Ghazzali to speak of Islam. Welcome to all of you. (*Students notice: Kornberg sounds more gracious than he has in previous classes.*)

Benedict: Professor Kornberg and I sat with our guests last night to discuss our subject of religion. Each world religion has a hundred subdivisions, so to speak. We cannot cover all the details of the groups and sub-groups that they comprise.

Kornberg: All of you (*to students*) would have to major in their department to delve into the details and *substance* of religion. (*Everybody grins at his reference to “substance.”*) Our guests have told us that their field is even more complex than chemistry. (*Everybody chuckles along with Kornberg, who Benedict, and the students, see developing a self-deprecating humor.*)

Benedict: We asked Ann to put together a timeline on religion. She passed it along to several other students for corrections. (*She points to Jerry, Alice, and Kathleen*) Yes! Kathleen, it is so good to see you back in class! (*Kathleen looks elated; her pregnancy crisis is over, and she is excited to be back for this discussion.*)

(*Initially Benedict had asked students to compile a brief outline as a homework assignment, in fact. “Make it simple,” she advised them. She wanted to avoid a conflict on the nature of this history among the religious scholars they’d invited to participate.*)⁶

History and Evolution of Religion

200,000 to 51,000 BCE

200,000

Archaeologists find possible evidence of religious practices.

130,000

Neanderthals bury their dead by intention.

90,000

Human skeletal parts found buried in Israel, painted with red ochre, and accompanied by artifacts.

70,000

A giant stone in the African Kalahari desert resembling a python surrounded by broken spearheads looks like the site of ritual offerings.

50,000 to 11, 000 BCE

Burials are more elaborate in this period, with sculptures and art in modern Turkey, pre-dating agriculture.

11, 000

The first cities, states and kingdoms evolve as theocracies.

10,000 to 3400 BCE

The settlements of Çatalhöyük appear to have a spiritual center with communal shrines.

3300 to 1,200 BCE

Stonehenge is completed.

Zoroaster is born.

The Pyramid Texts are composed in Egypt.

Minoans worship goddesses.

The *Vedas* are composed, and Hinduism begins in India.

Moses is born.

The Sumerian epic of *Gilgamesh* was written.

1300 to 900 BCE

Akhenaton introduces monotheism in Egypt.

The first books of the Torah are composed.

Olmecs build temples in Central America.

Parsva of Jainism appears in India.

800 to 300 BCE

Early Brahmanas are composed.

Lao Tse is born. Gautama Buddha is born. Confucius is born.

200 to 100 BCE

Pompey captures Jerusalem and annexes Judea.

1 to 400 CE

The birth of Jesus and the Crucifixion.

The Siege of Jerusalem and Destruction of the Temple.

Manichaeism Gnosticism begins.

The Mayan civilization begins with religious practices.

The oldest known version of the Tao Te Ching is written.

The first Ecumenical Council, the Council of Nicaea, is convened.

The beginning of Shintoism in Japan.

380

Theodosius the 1st declares Nicene Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire.

381

Constantine revises the Nicene Creed repudiating Arianism and Macedonianism.

5th to 9th century CE

570-632

Life of the Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam.

650

Qur'an is completed between 680-681.

712

Kojiki, the oldest surviving book in Japan, and Shinto texts are written.

10th to 13th century CE

1054

The Great Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches takes place.

1095-1099

The first Crusade

1107-1110

Sigurd I of Norway wages the Norwegian Crusade on Muslims in

Spain, the Balears and Palestine.

1147–1149

The Second Crusade is waged.

1189–1192

The Third Crusade, to re-conquer the Holy Land

1199–1272

More Crusades until 1272

14th to 18th century CE

1378-1417

The Western schism begins in the Roman Catholic Church.

1500

African religions are introduced to the Americas.

1517

Martin Luther posts his 95 theses to begin the Protestant Reformation.

1469-1539

The life of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism

1634

The first steps of the Roman Catholic Church in North America

1635

Roger Williams is banished from Massachusetts.

1656

Puritan authorities imprison Quakers for being “subversive.”

1692

The Salem witch trials begin.

1730

America’s first synagogue is dedicated in New York City.

1772

Emanuel Swedenborg dies.

19th to current century CE

1850s

The life of Bahá'u'lláh founder of the Bahai Faith

1899

Aradia (aka the *Gospel of the Witches*) is published.

1930s

The Nation of Islam is founded in the United States.

1952

Scientology is created.

1960s

Neopagan movements gain momentum.

2000s

Pope John Paul II passes away.

Benedict: Thank you. Do you have anything more to say about this history?

Ann: Oh! God and the Devil are in the details. ((*She smirks, and everyone laughs.*) But really, I couldn't stop reading these histories; I spent hours and hours, reading. I should have majored in religion! (*She chuckles. Benedict knows that Taoism is not taught on campus because it is not considered a world religion. In fact, the Chair had explained to the Dean that Buddhism is not a religion, but the Dean's decision to teach it prevailed nonetheless.*)

Benedict: Well. I think this seminar is the penultimate core class for students on a liberal arts campus! The course has some of our faculty thinking, too, of all things! (*Smiles happily at all.*) Now, the question: Can we connect religion with science? (*She looks to Kornberg who goes to the blackboard to write:*)

Creationism vs. Science

Benedict: What about creationism? (*She knows her recent honeymoon partner in physics thinks creationism is ridiculous and looks to her guests, the religious scholars, to speak.*) What do you all say? Do any of you know of scientists in your faith? How might they combine their faith with their theories about the science of evolution? (*She looks to Professor (Father) Burns.*)

Prof. Burns: Yes. Michael Behe is Catholic and a brilliant biochemist. Behe says there is evidence of biological systems that are “irreducibly complex.” “They could not possibly have evolved by natural selection.” They must have evolved by “intelligent design.”⁷

Wilson: No biologist with any credibility supports Michael Behe.

Perry: But you should read the way Behe explains his case. It’s persuasive (*He looks toward Benedict, who nods for Perry to proceed.*) Some parts of animals and cells cannot be explained by natural selection. For example, specialized tasks cannot have evolved in the eukaryotic cell with any continuity in time. This includes the digestion of nutrients and the excretion of wastes. Proteins are synthesized outside

these compartments and reach their destinations *only* with the help of “signal” chemicals that turn other reactions “on-and-off” at the appropriate times.

This is a “regulated traffic flow” in the cell that is incredibly complex – Behe calls it an “irreducible system.” All parts must function in harmony or the system breaks down. It could not have evolved in time in any normal way. (*He looks at Kornberg.*) How could it have evolved in sequence? (*No answer: Kornberg does not know that much of biology.*) And look at the coordinated mechanism that causes blood to clot... (*Wilson starts to speak, but Benedict interrupts him.*)

Benedict: This is too complex for us.

Wilson: The class should know, Behe accepts the biology of evolution. That’s different than creationism.

Benedict: Do other scientists with a religious faith support the science of evolution?

Herschel: Gerald Schroeder is a Jew. He was educated at MIT and immigrated to Israel where he studied the Torah. He was interested in the interpretation given to evolution by the Kabbalistic School.

Benedict: Interesting! Have you read his work?

Herschel: Yes. He has combined the thinking of a 13th-century Kabbalist scholar by the name of Nachmonides with modern cosmology and general relativity.

Benedict: What does he say about the purpose of evolution?

Herschel: Schroeder says it is “the gaining of wisdom.” He quotes the first line of *Genesis 1*: “With wisdom God created the heavens and the earth.” He argues that science shows how wisdom was built into the system right from the beginning. (*Herschel knows that Kornberg is a Jew and looks to him now.*) Have you read any of his work?

Kornberg: Schroeder is an Orthodox Jew. He thinks that some Intelligent Designer created the universe. We have our differences. (*Kornberg abhors the idea of “intelligent design.” Internally he is gnashing his teeth, so to speak, but he looks to Herschel respectfully and nods for him to proceed.*)

Herschel: Schroeder says: “If I substitute the word ‘information’ for wisdom, theology begins to sound like quantum physics. With this replacement of one word, we witness that ‘increase’ of information and

we see a confluence of the physical with the spiritual. Evolution is a study in ‘increasing information.’ It is an expression of the Divine but not necessarily a perfect design. Quantum physics is the point where starts to speak just above?⁸

Kornberg: But how? Quantum physics deals with particles of energy.

Herschel: Atoms have a nucleus with electrons spinning around it. All of these particles take up only some 0.0001 percent of the atoms. In other words, an atom is something that is 99.9999 percent *empty*. (*Professor Singh says to himself, “For the Buddha, ‘Emptiness’ is the essence of all things: ‘Be empty.’” He will wait patiently for his turn.*) The nuclei and electrons are made up of smaller particles called "quarks." And they are simply *energy*, not matter. Quarks could be part of "consciousness."

Benedict: Interesting. You are saying that quarks could be the objective side of our consciousness. (*She looks first at Kornberg, but realizing immediately he would take an hour to debate that point, she turns to Al-Ghazzali.*) Professor Ghazzali, could you tell us what Muslims think about evolution? Are there Muslim scientists who hold the two perspectives together?

Professor Ghazzali: Sufis say: “Catch the story of evolution in our poems.”

Benedict: Well. Ann is a Sufi. (*pointing to Ann.*) She told us that Rumi wrote about evolution in the 13th century. That was way before Darwin. Tell us about it!

Ghazzali: Well. Rumi's poem goes something like this:

“I died as a mineral and became a plant, I died as plant and rose to animal, I died as animal and I was Man. Why should I fear? When was I less by dying? Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar with angels blest; but even from angelhood I must pass on: all except God doth perish. When I have sacrificed my angel-soul, I shall become what no mind e'er conceived. Oh, let me not exist! for Non-existence proclaims in organ tones, 'To Him we shall return'.⁹

Kornberg: (*Skeptical.*) What is Rumi’s concept of reality?

Ghazzali: The reality is hidden, concealed from your eyes.

Kornberg: (*in a friendly tone*) Well, that sounds like string theory in physics. In M-Theory, the dimensions of the universe are hidden from sight.

Ghazzali: What is M-theory?

Kornberg: Well, it is a combined version of string theory. Before M-theory, short for “Membrane theory,” there were five string theories. They held

that the fundamental ground of the universe was composed of 2-D strings. M-theory combined all string theories, as well as 11-dimensional supergravity, into one unified theory of *everything*.

Benedict: We talked about string theory. Can you say something more about it for new attendees?

Kornberg: M-theory is a field that explores General Relativity. I can appreciate Rumi's poem and see a connection from it to M-theory. We are connected through the same fabric of energy.¹⁰ (*Benedict looks startled at his sudden support. She peers at him closely.*)

Ghazzali: Rumi scholars -- including William Chittick -- say that Rumi's poem points to the progression of the human soul.

Kornberg: "Soul!?" Uh-oh, you lost me. No proof.

Benedict: (*Changing the subject.*) Professor Ghazzali, has religion evolved?

Ghazzali: All the prophets have preached the same message: Believe in one God. Mohammad was a messenger of God. He revealed the truth through the *Holy Quran*.

Benedict: Could you say there was progress in civilization?

Ghazzali: Yes, progress for Arabs. Before

Mohammad, Arab societies were sunk in darkness and poverty. Arabs believed in different gods and goddesses. There were more than 360 idols. Life was barbarous and brutal. Tribes fought with each other over trivial matters. An argument over horses or water could lead to the slaughter of thousands of people.

Benedict: So the Prophet Mohammad brought civil order into the Arab world?

Ghazzali: Yes. The birth of the Prophet was in A.D. 570. This event brought about evolution in the life of Arabs. (*He pauses; Benedicts signs for him to continue.*) Mohammed was born in troubled times. He proclaimed his belief in one God, not many gods, and at that point certain people -- who had once called him "trustworthy" -- began to plot to kill him. The Prophet traveled to Medina, and that trip marked the beginning of the Muslim calendar. Mohammad's message spread rapidly.¹¹

Mowrer: (*He speaks his mind.*) Is nonviolence in the tradition of Islam?

Ghazzali: Yes. According to the Qur'an, God does not love *fasad*, or violence. *Fasad* occurs in verse 205 of the second Surah. It is "action which results in disruption of the social system, causing huge losses

in terms of lives and property.”¹²

In the Qur’an you would read that *peace* is one of Allah’s names. If Moslems want to please God, they read verse 5 of the sixteenth Surah. Allah guides “us” to "the paths of peace." Paradise is called "the home of peace." Violence destroys; non-violence creates. It is the road ahead.¹³

Kornberg: Then, what is “Jihad”?

Gazzali: Jihad means to struggle with one’s utmost. It is used to refer to non-violent struggles as well as violent struggles – for both types of struggles.

Ann: Tell us more about the Sufis.

Ghazzali: Well, there are many types of those. Let’s see.

Sufism started out as a Shia movement. But over the past several hundred years, it has almost disappeared from the Shia, and is now mainly a Sunni movement. Hanbalis, Shafis, Malikis and Hanafis can all belong to different Sufi "tariqas," as they are called. Sufism means “those who are awakening.” (*Singh cocks his head at the word “awakening.”*) Sufi leaders were interested in enlightenment. Some were ascetics.

Benedict: (*She looks at Singh.*) Asceticism. Does

this sound familiar?

Singh: Yes. Early on in his effort to find enlightenment, Siddhartha -- the Buddha -- adopted some of the methods of the Jains, depriving himself of worldly goods – before he found his own way.

Ghazzali: Sufis who became ascetics developed different religious orders. Some became dervishes. Some became mendicants, traveling around the country, living off of charity. Some developed a saintly stature. Today there are hundreds of mystic orders with millions of adherents in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Arabia. Sufis are like mystics.

Ann: Mystics?

Ghazzali: Sufis emphasize a “direct knowledge” of God. They believe in personal experience more than dogma. So, Sufis are often at odds with the official establishment. They do not like a state enforcing the *political sovereignty* of Allah.

Jerry: Ann and I have talked about the Kabbalists.

Herschel: The Sufi belief in “the unity of being” fits with my belief as a Jew: the unity and oneness of humanity.

Benedict: Anyone else: Questions on evolution?

Kornberg: (*He looks at both Singh and Ghazzali, eyes flashing.*) Who is the creator of the universe?

Singh: In Buddhism, there is no creator. Buddhism is more like a "spiritual philosophy." It has no absolute god. Buddhists see this idea of a "creator" as anthropomorphic. You project your image of some human- or animal-like figure that gives birth to the universe. (*Kornberg is surprised.*)

Benedict: What about Hinduism?

Singh: Lord Brahma is part of a Hindu trinity, which includes Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. Brahma is the infinite, the source of all space, time, causation, names and forms, has many interesting and instructive designations. But Brahma is different from the Supreme Cosmic Spirit in Hindu Vedanta philosophy-- known as Brahman. The Hindu conception of Brahman is of an all-encompassing "divine force."¹⁴

Benedict: "Force." In physics, this could be "physical energy." Let's combine them and see what happens. (*Benedict goes to the blackboard and writes:*)

Divine Energy

Putting together these two words—"Divine" and "Energy"—might lead us to think in a new way.

“Energy” is in the language of science. “Divine” is the language of religion. Let’s just imagine how they might come together... Your random thoughts?

Adams: Not a good idea. Religion and science have totally different premises. Do not try to match them.

Benedict: In the science of evolution, we have discussed types of energy that divide and integrate with past forms. Each new form becomes an essential component of a new whole. *(She pauses.)*

Herschel: Is that the Dean’s philosophy?

Benedict: Yes, but it is complicated. Harry, you are in mathematics. What can you tell us?

Harry: Kurt Gödel showed that for any formal axiomatic system, there is always a statement about natural numbers which is true, but which cannot be proven in the system. *(Herschel says, “What?”) In other words, Gödel showed that no consistent set of logical relationships could be proven within the system itself. To do so would add another proposition outside the field that would then create another set that could not be proven without stepping outside of that. (Benedict is impressed with Harry.)*

Perry: Now! The Dean argued that the subjective and objective orders of thought are based on different premises and are unresolved. But in fact

they overlap. The arts emphasize subjectivity, and science emphasizes objectivity.

Wilson: (*smiling in guarded sympathy*) Well, I say that nature is like a work of art. (*humorous now*) The theory of natural selection is based on survival, and survival itself is an art.

Ghazzali: Survival, for me, is not the motive for evolution. That motive is *Life*. The purpose is to increase Life! (*He pauses; he is speaking to scientists.*) Life is bigger than survival! The energies of Life encompass the energies of survival. (*Benedict sees that life includes survival, as an idea. But Ghazzali's expression is one of strong feeling, not just of an abstract idea.*)

Benedict: Your idea – and its energy – would fit with the Dean's perspective. Both the *idea* and the *feeling* of life had to be hiding in the Big Bang.

Ghazzali: I would go further. The purpose of evolution is to discover Life in all its magnificence. (*He pauses.*) Life exists in silence and sound, swiftness and stillness -- in all things.

Benedict: We talked about the differences between things in physics -- between waves and particles. A wavelike energy is transformed into a particle "thing." Each and every thing is connected in some

unseen way. Objects appear to have opposite properties but the same energy. I'd like to invite other guests to join our discussion now.

Tillich: Here is my question: Is energy a spirit that exists in all things?

Perry: Well. Scientists can measure electromagnetic energies, but we also “experience” them! (*Students are thinking.*)

Benedict: Interesting. New members in the seminar may not know that we have talked about energy in the body in terms of measurements to the universe around us – from Gamma Rays to Elf waves.

Perry: The whole range of electromagnetic energy takes place in lightning during a thunderstorm. A bolt of lightning can travel at speeds of 130,000 miles per hour and can reach temperatures at 54,000 degrees of Fahrenheit, hot enough to fuse silica sand into glass. Some members of the audience today were not here when we discussed these energies. Let me give a graph on “electromagnetic energy” to those who were not in the seminar when we talked about it. (*He hands out a copy of the graph to new attendees.*)

The brain is an electromagnetic structure with “inter-dimensional energy.” Consciousness can go into the

fourth dimension.

Kornberg: What do you mean? (*Speaking down to Perry who, after all, is a mere graduate student in physics.*)

Perry: Consciousness causes vibrations to change in the brain. It changes the frequency and amplitude of energy in the cells. So we could say that consciousness is a cause for changes in magnetic energy.

Watson: Einstein talked about frequency, in time, and energy, in amplitude, -- and about time travel. And we talked about astral bodies in the last session.

Perry: We know that a 4th dimension exists. It could be that, when they are energized enough in meditation, humans could walk into the 4th dimension. And mystics might even experience that 4th dimension. In mathematics, a sequence of numbers can be understood as a location in an n -dimensional space.¹⁵

Benedict: Wait. (*She smiles.*) This could become “irreducibly complex.” (*Everybody laughs, Behe’s theory in action.*) But do wait. I want our guest scholars to talk.

Professor Singh, is evolution explained by “increasing complexity”? Have world religions

become more complex over the centuries? (*She goes to the blackboard to write:*)

Complexity: Spiritual Life

Professor Singh: Yes, very complex. Look at the history chart. (*Now addressing Kornberg directly.*) Think about those signs of religious belief in caves and graves. Religion has evolved. I also think that religion has developed more specializations than chemistry! (*Teasing, Singh smiles at Kornberg while almost everyone doubles up. New attendees look puzzled as Kornberg's face blushes hot pink. Margaret Benedict is not laughing, though; she sees humility in her partner.*)

Kornberg: What do you think of the Dean's concepts of evolution? Do they apply?

Singh: The *Majjhima Nikaya* can help you.¹⁶ (*He pauses. He is ribbing Kornberg who knows nothing about this subject.*)

Kornberg: Okay. What does that mean?

Singh: You have to study Buddhist Scripture. The human being could be a micro-cosmos of the macro-cosmos. When you get to know the *subtle energies* of your body -- you get to know the universe. (*The Chair has told Singh that Kornberg and Benedict are*

partners. They have just come down from a honeymoon in the mountains. She said to Singh: "Be wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove with Professor Kornberg. Start with his love for Professor Benedict, their love for one another.")

Kornberg: We have talked about subtle energies, but I cannot measure them. (*Benedict goes to the blackboard to write:*)

Subtle Energies

Singh: If you are ever in a loving relationship with someone, you should try *Tantra*. (*Singh is going to follow the Chair's advice.*)

Kornberg: "Tantra"? What is that?

Singh: It is a discipline that produces an experience of subtle energy.

Kornberg: Such as what?

Singh: The word *Tantra* comes from a word in *Sanskrit* that means to "extend, expand, spread, spin out, weave; to put forth, manifest." *Tantra* is like a *cosmic weave* made up of different energies, and we are part of that weave. People in ancient religions knew about it.

Kornberg: I never heard of it.

Singh: In Hindu thought, cosmic evolution is a polarization that took place right from the beginning. Shiva is a god who represents the elements of the universe. Shakti is a goddess with dynamic potency; she makes these elements come to life. As they come together within you -- as these two energies combine -- they become the *Unmanifested*. (*His words are carefully chosen.*)

Kornberg: There is no “unmanifested” in science. Can you measure it? (*“But the ‘dark energy’ of physics cannot be seen or measured,” Perry is thinking.*)

Singh: You cannot measure it. You have to experience it. It is divine energy. It *manifests* through your body.

Tantra is a method of meditation that helps you experience high energies, the music and beauty behind all things. They are the energies of Male and Female ... the warp and woof of the universe. (*Kornberg frowns at this, as do other scientists in the room, but Benedict understands where he is going.*)

Benedict: In Hindu books, Tantric practices refer to ancient spiritual disciplines and meditations.

Singh: Understanding of Tantra based on Tantric

practices was first handed down through oral tradition. But the books Professor Benedict is talking about are thousands of years old! They were written as a dialogue between the Hindu god Shiva -- who is "the penetrating power of focused energy" -- and his consort, Shakti, the female creative force.

Benedict: Hinduism and Buddhism assume that the universe is composed of universal energy, greater than any individual or group.

Kornberg: (*his brow furrowing more deeply in a frown*) Who says?

Singh: The practice of Tantra is an ancient one, as we said, that is focused on the enlightenment of individuals. But when practiced by both members of a couple, it can channel energy through each partner in liberating ways. Tantra elevates a couple's relationship into an art. Love becomes a sacrament. Partners become more "complete" in their experience together. They discover parts of themselves that have been dormant or repressed.¹⁷ (*Kornberg is pondering.*)

Benedict: Would you say that this is energy that has helped to drive evolution right from the beginning?

Singh: Yes. It is a divine energy. We can discipline

that energy to aid spiritual development. When we practice Tantra, the boundaries of our mind and body expand with a new awareness; we are more empowered. We *perfect* ourselves through self-denial and restraint. (*Professors Merton and Burns know what he is saying. They practice abstinence and are right on track with him.*)

In this tradition, sexual energy is called “hidden lightning.” When this form of life energy is disciplined, it becomes creative. By means of it, we can move into a higher stage of consciousness. So sex is not just for biological survival. It also has the capacity to advance evolution.

Benedict: (*Wanting to help explain, she looks to Kornberg.*) We talked in class about opposing energies—remember, the Yin-Yang principles? In terms of Eastern thought, these energies are in the body. They can be brought together, the Dean would say “synthesized.” (*She has never discussed Tantra with Kornberg; she now looks back to Singh.*)

Singh: Harmonization of the Ying-Yang energy in Tantra practice can bring more than physical ecstasy. It becomes a subtle, joyous transcendence. It stays with you. (*He looks directly at Kornberg, whose eyes widen and eyebrows start to twitch at the word*

“transcendence.” But he restrains himself from speaking.) These forces are exquisite -- our *inmost* power. (*Kornberg looks unhappy, but says nothing.*)

Benedict: In Hindu thinking, the on-going process of synthesizing these energies in time brings about a completion of one's self. Remember? The Dean asked, “What is the self?” (*Kornberg’s eyes squinch; he looks like he’s in pain, but he is genuinely trying to remember.*)

Singh: If this consciousness is developed, it leads to the completion of the “self.” (*His eyes scan the classroom to see if students are following him, then he goes on to explain.*) The Tantras are sacred teachings that make us aware of our subtle body. I cannot go into all the details of this practice, but I can say that over time it reveals what we call a “transcending energy.” (*Kornberg grimaces again.*) With practice, partners can master the tantric postures, known as *asanas*, and *pranayamas*, or breathing techniques....Partners can tone and strengthen ...and harmonize the Yin-Yang forces for each other.

Benedict: (*She looks to Kornberg.*) Do you recall that we talked about Kundalini energy?

Singh: Kundalini is the force behind evolution.

When couples, romantic partners, channel this force, they deepen their love for one another -- and for others on the planet. Partners mature emotionally. *(Students sense this talk has something to do with sexual energy, partly at least, but are not yet sure what he is talking about.)*

Benedict: Students, are you following Professor Singh? *(Students are silent.)*

Matisse: So far you have talked about what are supposed to be the end results. Could you tell us more about the process? Is this mainly about sex? *(Professor Matisse is an advisor to students in dormitories and knows the problem of unwanted pregnancies. He thinks of the need for sexual discipline on campus and wonders if Singh could be invited to talk about restraint in dormitories.)*

Singh: A divine force works through people when they fall in love. Through tantric practices, they discover a powerful vortex of energy. It rises like liquid fire through two subtle bodies and goes into the seventh chakra at the top of the head. This union begins what is called a “nectar rain of orgasmic splendor” in the entire nervous system. It moves through the body’s aura; it is mystic love. *(Kornberg looks out the window.)* In the process, all impurities

of the mind and body are burned up.

Benedict: (*glancing at Kornberg*) Okay, but Professor Singh, could you bring this down to us Earthlings? In India, yogis spend years under the guidance of a spiritual teacher. The Tantra practice is not easy. A person can make mistakes. It requires *discipline*. Right?

Singh: Yes. In India a yogi commits to a practice of meditation that is bound by a code of moral conduct. This can mean celibacy... but not necessarily. The intent is to realize *moksa*—that’s liberation. It is the discipline of a lifetime.

Merton: Interesting. In Catholicism, nuns and priests practice celibacy.

Singh: Yes. And so do some dedicated Buddhists. But this particular practice, part of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, can involve two partners in the presence of one another, feeling divine intimacy. Tantra is subtle energy, transformative. A couple merges their energies in the process – right into a blissful union.

Benedict: The Dean would call it “synthesis” (*smiling at Kornberg discretely.*) – the harmonizing of opposites.

Singh: Yes. But it is not an energy you *measure*; rather, it is an experience. When a couple can realize the heavenly nature in one another, the “self” matures.

Benedict: “Self.” If he were here, the Dean would want to hear more from you about that. What does the “self” mean? (*Boldly, Mary steps up to the blackboard and writes:*)

The Self

Singh: In Buddhism the word “self” is used with a small “s” and is similar to what you call ego. It is the cause of suffering. You think you have an ego or “self,” but it is illusory. You need to “let go” of *ideas* about the self, since these foster self-centeredness and all traits of egocentricity.

Kornberg: What traits?

Singh: Hate, fear, anger, attraction and repulsion. The Buddha saw that we suffer because we consider our “self” —our ego identity— as something fixed. But this idea puts us in conflict with the truth that everything—even the “self” and our notions about it—is impermanent. Everything, that is, is changing all the time. When we see these changes occurring to “us” — such as aging, illness and death—which they all do, we ask, “What did *I* do to deserve this?” or

"Why is this happening to *me*?" –After his enlightenment, or awakening, the Buddha devoted his entire life to helping other people wake up to this fundamental truth: that everything is impermanent, in constant flux, and that the fullest understanding and realization of that brings an end to suffering.

Prof. Mowrer: (*in psychology*) There is no “self”! What is this?

Singh: The feeling of a separate "I" is just your ego-consciousness. It is composed of desires and emotions. The “I” and the “self” are illusions. They are part of your ego, clinging to attachments and desires.¹⁸

Perry: I think the “self” evolved through animal identities, and then with the evolution of language. It started with the forces of attraction, which billions of years later became human desire; and repulsion, which became human aversion. The more desire and aversion we have, the stronger the ego. Dropping the “ego-self” is the final stage of human evolution.

Singh: (*Surprised.*) The ego-self depends on desire; its life-blood is desire. The self and desire are like two sides of a coin — one cannot exist without the other. It is like pedaling a bicycle: if we go on pedaling, the bicycle goes on moving; but if we stop pedaling, the bicycle will start slowing down and

eventually collapse. Without *desire*, and its equal and opposite *aversion*, the self has no reality.

Kornberg: That's beyond me. (*He laughs but Singh hears scorn in his voice. He looks directly at Kornberg and speaks of what he sees.*)

Singh: Let me tell you a story from the life of the Buddha. (*He thinks a moment.*) One day in India the Buddha was on his way to Benares and stopped under a tree where young princes were having a picnic with their wives. One prince, unmarried, had brought a prostitute along. Suddenly, the prostitute could not be found, and so they asked the Buddha: "Have you seen her?" The Buddha said: "What do you think, young men? Which is better for you? To search after a woman, or to *search after your self*?"¹⁹

Kornberg: (*looking first at Benedict then back to Singh*) Nonsense: Search after yourself, and simultaneously let go of your self! That's a contradiction.

Singh: The Buddha means search for your higher Self—conventionally it's often spelled with a capital "S" to distinguish it from the ego—that is held within your body. Ultimately, this higher, impersonal Self is all that exists. In Tantra, you do not just look for a woman to fill your needs. A woman is a helper to find your way, but the path into Bliss is inside of

you, not somewhere else. It means that you unite different powers within yourself. Then you transcend your lower self. *(This time Kornberg rolls his eyes at the word “transcend.” Then he looks toward Benedict, almost pleading: should he raise his usual fuss about this matter?)*

Benedict: Students, do you have questions?

Mary: *(Head tilted back, looking at Singh in wonder.)* Yes, I am curious about pretty much everything you are saying! What do you mean when you say our body carries divine energy?

Singh: Your body is a temple. It is where you experience the “most holy.” It is the ground through which you become aware of your spirit. In Tantra, you must lose your “self” —again, what I’ve been calling the “ego-self” —to experience that higher Magnificence, Splendor, and Beauty in the universe. It is contained in-and-through the body, not outside of it, in some transcendent “Other World.” *(He glances at Kornberg, kindness peeking out through the crinkles at the corners of his eyes.)*

Benedict: *(She interrupts. She wants time for other guest scholars to speak.)* What kind of books would you recommend to Mary and other interested students, I mean, follow-up books written for

Americans.

Singh: Well. They can read *The Art of Tantric Sex* by Nitya Lacroix. They could also read *The Art of Sexual Ecstasy* by Margot Anand. These authors write about how you can experience a conscious connection to the life force -- the source of creation. (*He looks to students.*) You are linked to everything that lives and loves. You can enter a field of power greater than any individual self. Or—a better way to express it might be—you can become aware of this field of power that already exists within you. (*Kornberg looks out the window, silent.*)

Mary: *Myself.* Who am I?

Singh: You are in the great dance of existence. (*Mary looks pleased.*) The body is surrounded by, and participates in, subtle energies that are gateways into every part of the universe. (*Kornberg and Adams scrunch down in their seats.*)

Benedict: We must move on to other guests. What final advice would you give?

Singh: Mary, find a guru, a teacher. You start by learning how to breathe. Breathing is a pathway into transforming your life. The simple act of breathing will lead you beyond the limitations of the self—

which are mere perceptions after all.²⁰ (*Mary now looks puzzled.*) If you want to become a violinist and play in the Chicago Symphony, you look for a great teacher. Find your identity. (*Benedict goes to the blackboard to write:*)

Identity

Benedict: *Identity!* Other scholars? What can we conclude about it? Who are we?" (*She looks to Professor (Father) Burns.*)

Burns: The great writer Soren Kierkegaard says that "self" keeps revealing itself.²¹ (*He smiles.*) According to Kierkegaard, "self-realization" comes slowly.

Parsons: Well. Our personal identity changes in the context of society.

Benedict: (*speaking softly*). Could you explain that?

Parsons: Our self-identity develops through social relations. It is created first through the family; then, it expands in association with friends; and then it grows larger as we identify with more groups and eventually with our country. When we travel, we begin to identify with other people around the world. Our identity keeps changing and expanding as we mature.

Benedict: Guests! Professor Parsons is a sociologist. How does this sound to you?

Tillich: Theologians would say: Our true identity is

not found in human culture and the secular tradition. There is a difference between “culture” and “faith.”²² (*Benedict looks to Father Burns.*)

Burns: Catholics would identify with a saint or the life of Christ. Saints like St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross did not need to travel around the world to find their identity. (*He looks sidelong at Parsons.*) They found union with Jesus right where they lived. Professor Merton, I believe you have written about these matters...

Merton: The highest identity is what Catholics call "Consummate union." St. Teresa called it "the seventh resting-place" -- the "interior castle."

Tillich: I know about St. Teresa. She suffered terribly. If you read the Gospel of Thomas, you will learn about suffering. Jesus said: “The person who desires to rise above all things must descend below all things, for the way to the heights passes through the depths of anguish, which generate the fires of Life. The person who has suffered and found Life is blessed.”

Merton: Teresa knew this Blessed life. Thomas also said: "Learn the meaning of the creation which surrounds you, and you will perceive the mysteries hidden from your sight, for Eternal Truth is recorded on all that exists. I tell you the truth when I say that

there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed to the person who can read the creation of the Elohim."

Benedict: Professor Singh. Does this resonate for you?

Singh: Buddhists develop what we call an "ultimate compassion."

Benedict: That sounds like Christian theology.

Singh: But Buddhists have differences with Christian theology. (*He looks at Burns and Merton and then turns back to the class.*) First, there is no permanent "self" as I mentioned. Second, Buddhists have no God. (*The class looks surprised.*)

Kathleen: I don't understand.

Singh: Kathleen, close your eyes. (*He waits for her to do so.*) Look inside. Can you find your "self"? If you think you can, where do you say it may be—in your brain? Your arms? Your legs? (*Kathleen looks puzzled. Singh knows she cannot identify where her "self" is exactly.*) And can you see God? Where is "it," or "he," or "she"?

Tillich: Well, in terms of syntax: God is the object of your sentence about "seeing." And yet, God is not an object. So I use the term *transtheistic*. This is *not* theism. Transtheism is neither theistic nor atheistic.

Mary: I don't understand this word.

Tillich: “Transtheism” is not a view typically held by Protestants, but it is becoming part of a new movement in what's called “spirituality.” It refers to what people have to endure in what appears to be a senseless world. (*Mary looks puzzled.*) Why do our loved ones have to die? Why do people live with pain—some people, that is—for long periods of time? At times life can have little or no meaning for us humans. So it requires courage to live with meaninglessness in and of itself. Suffering leads people to deepen their faith. People do not know what happens after people die.²³

Hawking: Do we *have* to know the outcome of death?

Tillich: As we live out our lives, we are not always aware, moment-by-moment, of having to die; but in the light of the experience of actually dying, our whole life becomes different. For some, death means finding a deeper faith -- without a name, a church, or theology. It moves in the depths of all we experience. It is the power of Being. We all participate in it, often as fragmentary glimpses, expressions.²⁴ (*“How eloquent!” Benedict thinks, “but Tillich has probably lost most of the class in this explanation.”*)

Merton: Catholics believe that Jesus gives meaning to our lives. They say the soul of a saint is in “Divine Presence,” filled with “infinite joy.” (*She looks at Burns.*)

Burns: And St. Teresa speaks of a “transforming union” in her raptures. She calls it a “spiritual betrothal.”

Benedict: Professor Singh, what does this say to you?

Singh: That’s Christian language. For Buddhists, there is Truth and serenity. But there is no “thing” in Nirvana; rather, at the highest level of consciousness is a *fertile void*, “No-thing.” The Emptiness spoken about at that level is profound, where the ego-self has finally let go of its *grabbing* or *pushing away*, chasing after chimeras. Empty of all the fantasies and unreality we humans so readily concoct, and yet equally a *Fullness*—expansive, encompassing—of all that truly IS, that “power of Being” Prof. Tillich just named. And yet paradoxically, the Buddha is in each and every thing we know by our senses—and we can say, simultaneously beyond them, in terms of their conditioned, failing existence.

Watson: (*Speaks for the first time.*) No self!

Singh: The Buddha has “Ultimate Compassion.”

This Compassion is not the same as human “sympathy” or “empathy,” but it does manifest in our everyday lives as these very human feelings. When you are in Ultimate Compassion “you” are not “you,” not merely acting, that is, out selfish ego desires. “You” are not limited to the ego-self, but are in union with all things.

Kornberg: (*Intending good humor:*) I would say, that this is *definitely* and *irreducibly* complex. (*He laughs with some chagrin.*)

Benedict: What do our guests say about our identity? Are we irreducibly complex? Or, could we be irreducibly simple? (*She looks across the class.*)

Perry: The Dean spoke of “simplicity and complexity” together. He called them binary principles that were present from the beginning of time. The Dean’s concept of binaries seems fundamental to what Professor Singh is saying. (*This is a new thought for the guests. They do not answer. So Kornberg speaks.*)

Kornberg: I see evolution showing an increase in complexity. But how could there be an “increase in simplicity?” They do not fit -- together. (*Trying in his way to be more open—Margaret’s suggestion—he looks uncertainly at Singh.*)

Singh: Compassion is simple, but *you* would find it complex. To get to the Buddha's level of Compassion is difficult, in fact, even rare for followers. This level of consciousness cannot be explained in ordinary language, I admit. (*Kornberg looks again at Prof. Merton to discover her answer.*)

Merton: Jesus was simple. And he believed in simplicity, "Be like a child." He said: "Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child cannot enter into it."

Burns: Jesus said: "Love your enemies." That *sounds* simple. But you must develop Christ consciousness to do it. (*He looks at Kornberg.*) Can you love your enemies? (*Kornberg's eyebrows rise and lower a couple of times, but he stays silent.*)

Singh: The Buddha, if living in his body today, might say to the Dean: Self-realization is the synthesis of all opposites.

Benedict: Synthesis. Does that make sense in your language?²⁵ (*She looks at each of the scientists present: Kornberg, Adams, Watson, Wilson. But they say nothing.*)

Merton: For some Catholic theologians, it means joining the outside to the inside. You will not see Jesus floating down from the sky. (*Bob wonders*

what she means.) Jesus said, "If you say that the abode of the Gods is in the sky, the birds will arrive there before you. If you say it is in the sea, the fish will arrive there before you. Know that the heavenly realm is both inside you and outside you, and you will know that which is outside by that which is inside."²⁶ (*Kathleen breathes out a strong "Yes" that everyone hears.*) This comes from one of the secret Gnostic gospels.

Burns: When Jesus saw infants being nourished at the breast, he said to his disciples, "These infants being suckled are like those who enter the Kingdom." They said to him, "Shall we, then, as children, enter the kingdom?" Jesus said to them, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and female one and the same . . . then you will enter [the Kingdom]."²⁷

Alice: Wow! I've never read *that* passage.)

Benedict: This is another passage from the Gnostic *Gospel of Thomas*. You might want to ask Prof. Burns about it after class. Students! Questions?

Harry: (*to Professor Merton*) Tell us. Does the Dean's perspective on evolution fit with the

Christian story? The Dean compared the Big Bang with the potential hidden in an acorn, like in Aristotle.

Merton: Jesus spoke of bread and the potential hidden in you: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until it was all leavened. The Kingdom is within you.” (*She looks with warmth to Professor Burns for support.*)

Burns: Jesus also said: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field.”²⁸

Kornberg: (*He wants to go to the core.*) But you claim there is a *purpose* to evolution. What is that purpose?

Merton: The purpose! (*Pause.*) The purpose is to bring heaven into the earth. It is -- as you say -- the final synthesis. We are here to join heaven and earth. The prayer of Jesus was: “Thy Kingdom come; Thy *will* be done, on earth as it is in Heaven.”

Benedict: Interesting. Professor Ghazzali, you have been quiet. What would you say is the purpose of evolution?

Ghazzali: Bahá'u'lláh taught that the purpose of evolution was the development of the soul -- with all its capacities. Evolution takes us – with our help –

towards the Great Communion. The purpose is to increase our awareness of the Good -- and of the Truth and the Beauty around us.²⁹

Benedict: But we keep living with war, murder, rape, and torture. How could you say we are evolving?

Ghazzali: Bahá'u'lláh taught that we must establish a world federation to stop war. Nations go to war because there is no law and order. Wars bring mass murder, rape, and torture.

Parsons: Bahá'u'lláh was ahead of his time.

Ghazzali: He was a realist. But he also said, as we learn more about what love means, our awareness increases. We expand consciousness -- toward higher and deeper levels.

Look back in history. Human personality and character develop over time, becoming more refined. Human life will gradually come to reflect more and more qualities of our Creator.

Merton: Christians say that we are made in the image of God.

Ghazzali: Yes... created "in the image of the Transcendent One." Bahá'u'lláh taught that the soul evolves as it develops the attributes of God. So

divine qualities are not external; they are latent within the soul, just as the color, the fragrance, and the vitality of a flower are latent in the seed. They need only to be perceived and developed.

Bob: I never heard of ... Bowoola. [Bahá'u'lláh].

Singh: He lived in the nineteenth century. Today he has millions of followers around the world in what is called the *Bahá'í religion*. Followers see him as the Manifestation of God -- the Divine Teacher for our modern period.

But according to Bahá'í belief, other manifestations of God included Moses, Abraham, Christ, Muhammad, Krishna, and Buddha. Spiritual masters appear at intervals to found great religions. They bring human civilization to ever-higher levels of achievement.³⁰

Kornberg: Professor Singh, what is the purpose of evolution?

Singh: To realize Nirvana (*looking at Kornberg*) -- with all your atoms and molecules and cells transformed and transcended. The purpose of evolution is to reach Buddha awareness. Evolution is the work that has been developing *identity* since the beginning of time. (*Tillich whispers, "The Ground of Being."*)

Kornberg: Really! (*He is outright scornful at this. Benedict worries about his attitude.*)

Singh: (*unflappable, jovial, as if commiserating*)
Well, I am sorry to hear the credulity in your voice. It means the loss of your identity. (*Benedict smiles; she understands what he means.*) If you develop “Buddha nature,” as it’s often called, your ego will inevitably be lost. The *idea* of “you” that your ego is attached to will become “history.” Whenever human desires arise, you will no longer be *attached* to them, or follow blindly wherever they lead, like a will-o-the-wisp. Buddhists say, “Then, there is no *hold* or *grasp* on your personal identity,” and no personal identity to cling to anything, internal or external.

Watson: (*He has been drifting off and wakes up.*)
I’m lost. I’ve *been* lost! (*Everyone laughs.*)

Singh: *You* are no longer “you.” “You” -- are in-and-through all things.

Kornberg: (*Cool, not believing.*) Professor Merton, what do you say? Do we lose our identity?

Merton: Jesus was born a carpenter’s son in a manger and grew up -- beyond his identity as a human child. He developed beyond himself so to speak. At some point we know he became the *Christ*. He became “one” with all of us; he became “one”

with all things.

Benedict: That sounds like the Buddha.

Merton: That's why the Savior could say: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in; I needed clothes and you clothed me; I was sick and you looked after me; I was in prison and you came to visit me."³¹

His disciples could not understand who he was. But he had become one with God.

Benedict: *(to Professor Herschel now)* In the Jewish tradition, what is your understanding of Christ? *(She knows this could produce an argument, but these differences must be brought to the fore for students to see.)*

Herschel: Jesus was living within the Jewish tradition. Look at what the Torah says -- in Isaiah. There you will find, "Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry? And bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" Those ideas were in Judaism before Jesus was born.³² *(Pause. Benedict looks for him to expand on what he has said.)* Jesus was known as "the son of man." He was a good man, even a great man. He realized his

own humanity.³³ (*Sister Merton and Father Burns are thinking to themselves, “More than this: Jesus is the Son of God.”*)

Benedict: Professor Singh. How would you compare “the Buddha” with “the Christ”?

Singh: There is no difference between Buddha-hood and Christ-hood. There was of course a difference in them as individuals in history. You know of course that Siddartha lived four hundred years before Jesus was born.

Kornberg: There are *no* differences? I don’t get it.

Singh: There are historical differences. But in the Buddha, after his enlightenment, there were -- to borrow the Dean’s words -- no polarities, binaries or antinomies. Buddhists call it “non-duality.” The path of the Buddha brings you into the uttermost sublime consciousness. The radiance in the universe is in him... and equally hidden in you. (*Benedict knows that there are various interpretations among different traditions of Buddhists and Christians and worries: they won’t have time to touch on the most salient points of them all. She looks at her watch. She must keep aware of the time. For her, this is the most exciting session of the semester; she could spend all day listening to experts on this topic!*)

Benedict: Let us hear again from Professor

Ghazzali. (*looking toward him*) What would you say about the Dean's binaries: night/day, subject/object. Do *they* disappear in your faith?

Ghazzali: Yes, but you begin the practice slowly. Islam teaches that Allah, the one god, has 99 attributes. You can understand some of those attributes in one lifetime, but Allah's essence cannot be "comprehended." (*He looks directly at the class and pauses.*) And anyway, all *comprehension* assumes *opposition*. (*Pauses.*)

Professor Tillich: The Ground of all Being precedes "logos." It is not comprehensible.

Benedict: (*looking again to Ghazzali*) You mean, any statements about Allah are just... symbols.

Ghazzali: Yes. You cannot set limits on the Transcendent. The Prophet said: The proud will not enter Paradise, nor will a violent speaker.

Benedict: What would Protestants say about the Dean's perspective? Is the Big Bang like a seed? (*She looks to Professor Tillich.*)

Tillich: (*He flashes friendly looks toward Burns and Merton, as he reinforces what they have said.*) Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed." It looks very tiny, but when it falls on good soil, it

grows into a shelter for birds of the sky. (*Professor Wilson thinks to himself: “Good soil, bad soil”: This theologian must see “chance” in evolution, like biologists.*)

Benedict: Do you think evolution takes place by *synthesis*?

Tillich: (*He smiles to [Sister] Merton again in recognition of their mutual support.*) Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is like a woman mixing yeast into dough and turning it all into large loaves.”³⁴ (*Parsons thinks of Herbert Spencer and his organic theory of evolution.*)

Benedict: Well. (*Looking for differences.*) How is the Christian tradition different from Eastern traditions -- on this matter of “identity”?

Tillich: Remember. Personally I am not “theistic.” God cannot be made into an object. “God” is beyond our grasp. Protestants face the “cloud of unknowing.” We *all* face it. With this phrase I am alluding, as Professors Burns and Merton know full well, to that “Cloud of Unknowing” which was written into the medieval Catholic tradition (*in solidarity with his Catholic colleagues, despite all of their differences*).³⁵

Benedict: What about Islam on this matter? It appears that we cannot know God. (*She looks to Ann and the class instead of to Professor Ghazzali.*)

Ann, forgive me. You have been memorizing Sufi poetry, and I've neglected until now to call on you. Have you memorized any poetry about this great "unknowing"? How can we *know* what is behind the evolution of this universe?

Ann: (*Startled at first, she resumes her composure.*) I recited a poem in our dorm. It is another one by Rumi. It's about *not knowing* Nirvana. Ahem (*clearing her throat*).

The Universe

What if someone said to an embryo in the womb,
 "Outside of your world of black nothing
 is a miraculously ordered universe;
 a vast Earth covered with tasty food;
 mountains, oceans and plains,
 fragrant orchards and fields full of crops;
 a luminous sky beyond your reach,
 with a sun, moonbeams, and uncountable stars;
 and there are winds from south, north and west,
 and gardens replete with sweet flowers
 like a banquet at a wedding feast.

The wonders of this world are beyond description.

What are you doing living in a dark prison,
 Drinking blood through that narrow tube?"
 But the womb-world is all an embryo knows
 And it would not be particularly impressed
 By such amazing tales, saying dismissively:

“You’re crazy. That is all a deluded fantasy.”
 One day you will look back and laugh at yourself.
 You’ll say, “ I can’t believe I was so asleep!
 How did I ever forget the truth?
 How ridiculous to believe that sadness and sickness
 Are anything other than bad dreams.”³⁶

Benedict: *(The visiting scholars are amazed at this recitation.)* Oh! Ann, that’s impressive! Thank you.

We will come back to your point about the embryo in the womb. But first we need to talk more with our Catholic scholars about evolution in the Church itself.

Professor Merton, I am surprised to see a woman teaching Catholicism in this department. What can you tell us about your role?

Professor [Sister] Merton: Women have been part of the Church since the beginning. We are part of the past, and now I think, we are going to be a big part of the future. *(She smiles broadly.)* The Church, too, is evolving.

Kornberg: But you work in a patriarchy! *(It’s as though “Bluntness” is his middle name. He can’t help himself.)*

Merton: Well, I value the authority of the Pope. I

respect his integrity. And still, I believe he makes a mistake by *not* accepting women as priests. Let me be clear, though: *the Pope has recommended that all good Catholics speak what they think and feel.*

All the faithful are accorded “freedom of inquiry and thought” -- and “freedom of expression. I’m quoting now from Canon Law.³⁷

Kornberg: (*to Professor [Father] Burns.*) You are also teaching Catholicism on our campus. How does this happen? You are both Catholics. Which one of you is the authority? (*Kornberg starts to say what he thinks about the authority of the Pope but holds his tongue. This leads Benedict to write on the blackboard:*)

Power and Authority

Benedict: “Power!” (*Surprised at herself for writing the word.*) That is a “substantive idea”! It cuts across all disciplines. The Dean never mentioned it as a feature of evolution, and I never thought of it until this minute. Hmmm.

Has *power* changed during this time of evolution?

Perry: The meaning of power has gone from the *outside to the inside*. In physics I have thought about

it being expressed in the explosions of stars—externally that is, but we have also seen its meaning change through history. It has continued to show up with different meanings in terms of society.

Historians write about the “power of governments.”
(*He looks to Parsons for support.*)

Parsons: In the social sciences “power” generally refers to the way in which rulers dominate people.

Benedict: But we have seen society in evolution. What do you say about that?

Parsons: Over time during the history of civilization, I think power at the top has been decentralizing and spreading out to more people.

Benedict: Could you give us a few details?

Parsons: I mean, we have seen power go from being held exclusively by individual pharaohs and emperors -- with their total control over people under their rule -- to the more limited power of kings during the Middle Ages. Kings began to lose power to the nobles—remember the *Magna Carta*?—and finally to revolutions that brought into existence new positions as *heads of state*. We call people in such positions “presidents,” or “prime ministers,” of democratic nations. Democratic nations have checks

and balances, and “presidents” owe their power formally to the people.

Hughes: Power has many meanings in literature. The French philosopher Michel Foucault wrote about how states regulate the lives of their subjects.

Morrer: Think of how slaves slowly gained power after the Civil War. Think of how women got more power with voting rights. Think of the civil rights movement. People were helping minorities to get more power, to develop their own authority.

Benedict: But the concept of “power” has developed to have even more subtle meanings. (*She knows this is new territory.*)

Merton: Think of the *power of Jesus*.

Britten: Think of the *power of Beethoven*.

Parsons: In society power was once “authority over,” and then it became “authority with.” Now authority is given...I mean the power to help others gain their own power.

Benedict: Ah. Professor Merton and Professor Burns, how do you see power in the Catholic Church? Is it changing?

Merton: Power in the church has changed over time. Some Catholics believe that real power comes from the top down—they are the realists, and others are idealists. Idealists believe power should come from the bottom up. I think over time that the power in Rome has been decentralizing slowly -- to that of the bishops and priests. Today there is a call, especially in this country, for more power for women and lay people in the Church.

Professor Burns: We are – how to explain it? – the same and different at the same time. (*He looks at Kornberg.*) I recall, Professor Kornberg, hearing about this idea of “same-and-different” being raised in the session on physics: “Is each atom the same as others and different at the same time? Does each atom have its own place in the history of the universe? So this is not a foreign idea.

Catholics have many *different* views but we are of *one* faith. In fact, beliefs among our members on the question of power and authority go from the “radical left” to the “radical right.” (*He pauses.*)

Kornberg: “Radical left!”

Burns: Look at our peace activists. In the United States, think about the Berrigan brothers, Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta. In France,

look at Lanzo del Vasto. In Brazil, look at Dom Helder Camara. In Ireland, look at Mairead Corrigan. In Italy, look at Danilo Dolci. They all modeled themselves after the life of Jesus. They practiced love and nonviolence against great odds.

Kornberg: I get your point: one faith with many differences among members. But, how do Catholics interpret evolution? Who is the final authority on that? The Pope? What about the beginning... of everything?

Burns: The Church does not have an official position on the Big Bang, no formal statement on how the stars and planets were created. But if the universe did evolve in this way, Catholics say, *it is due to the work of God.*³⁸

Kornberg: What about biological evolution? (*He looks to Merton.*)

Merton: The same. The Church does not take an official position on how animal life developed. But if human life did evolve through natural selection, *it would be due to the guidance of God.*

What can I say? The Church allows for a theory of evolution but insists on a *special creation of the soul.*³⁹

Benedict: I remember reading Teilhard de Chardin.

The Church had trouble with his research on evolution. It would not allow him to publish his work.

Burns: He was a French Jesuit. But he was also a paleontologist, biologist, and philosopher. He tried to bring together the different views of religion and science. One of your students has studied him. (*She looks toward Mary, whose eyes drop modestly, and Benedict nods for Burns to continue.*) He knew the science of evolution and said: "Humankind is heading for an Omega point." When that final event happens, consciousness will lead us to a new state of peace and planetary unity. This higher unity would be based on the *spirit of the Earth*.⁴⁰

Kornberg: And so he was a Catholic, but he stood on his own power and authority as a scientist. (*Burns nods "Yes," but he's aware of the implied compromise.*)

Benedict: (*to Herschel.*) Where is the "power and authority" in Judaism? What do Jews say about evolution?

Herschel: I mentioned Gerhard Schroeder. He is in a position similar to that of Teilhard de Chardin.

Benedict: How?

Herschel: He said that a higher consciousness is (quote) "nascent" through all these layers of complexity in evolution.

Kornberg: It would be interesting to compare the

ideas of Chardin with Schroeder's. One holds to the New Testament and the other to the Old Testament.⁴¹ (*Kornberg is angling for a debate. Benedict redirects the question.*)

Benedict: Students, what do you think? Can anyone speak to these outlooks, Catholic and Jewish? (*No hands go up.*) Mary! What do you say?

Mary: I've read Teilhard de Chardin's work. It's now published. He said the earth is still evolving. According to him, the earth will develop -- with us -- into a higher consciousness.

Merton: He made a prophecy: We will evolve past this modern Age -- the "Age of Nations." We will develop a new sphere of global awareness.

Benedict: Mary, how does this link with science? Does he say that the earth is alive?

Mary: Chardin talked about how we have been on a "living earth" -- this was the case before scientists ever knew it. He even came up with this idea before James Lovelock ever imagined it. Remember our class in biology? Lovelock, the biologist, said the Earth is a living organic being; the earth is self-organizing. (*Benedict is amazed. "Mary is certainly sharp," Benedict thinks, "putting her memories of science together with Catholic thought."*)

Benedict: Is Mary right? (*She looks at Professor*

[*Sister*] Merton.)

Merton: Yes. Teilhard de Chardin thought the Earth was alive. He proposed this as a better way to describe evolution, better than Herbert Spencer's "survival of the fittest." Our universe, he insisted, strives towards a higher consciousness. It does this by arranging itself into more complex structures.

The Earth, he said, is a guiding force at the center of our future. At the Omega Point we will see "complete compassion" with "ultimate happiness."⁴²

(*Singh is reminded of the Buddha: "Ultimate Compassion!"*)

Mary: Yes. Chardin says we are evolving towards this "great passion." The Earth is evolving as a new organ of consciousness. He called it ...a ...let me see...(*pausing because she cannot remember*).

Merton: The "Noosphere" he called it. The Noosphere is a consciousness evolving at a planetary level.

Mary: He said: This stage is comparable to the evolution of the *cerebral cortex* after the appearance of the human brain. It becomes a "planetary thinking network."

Merton: How can we explain it? Again, according to Chardin, the Noosphere is a global network of self-awareness. It gives us instantaneous feedback. It develops an "immediate planetary communication." It becomes a different global network of identity.

Jerry: “Global network!” It is developing right now -- around the world. It’s the Internet! How could this fellow (what was his name? Chárden?) have imagined the Internet?

Mary: Well, he was amazing. The Internet did *not* exist in his day. He said this planetary communication would soon evolve. (*Parsons thinks to himself: “Global sociality.”*). But Chardin said it evolves with the heart, not just through the mind.

Merton: He said that humanity is building a “composite brain.” And it is happening right now... before our eyes.

Benedict: Well! This is interesting. But we must conclude this discussion on Teilhard de Chardin. He sounds like an authority in himself, and it would take us all day to understand his work. Let’s move on. But can you try to sum him up for us, however minimally? How can students study the work of this Jesuit?

Merton: Chardin wrote books that students could study...let’s see -- *The Hymn of the Universe, The Making of a Mind*; and, as I recall, *The Future of Man, The Phenomenon of Man, Science and Christ...*⁴³

Benedict: One more thing. The Dean proposed: Evolution is leading us toward a “deep interior.” How would Catholics view this?

Merton: Catholics would not agree with the Dean on

this. The *consciousness of God* comes BEFORE the Big Bang -- and AFTER it as well. That is very different from the Dean's perspective. For Catholics, God is omniscient and omnipresent.

Burns: Immanent and transcendent as well. The Jesuit Bernard Lonergan proposed a cosmic process that develops from stage to stage. Each stage exhibits a greater freedom than the preceding stage, and this leads to the freedom of humanity to restructure itself.⁴⁴

But Father Lonergan was like our Dean. He taught about development toward an "interior" life. He saw everything as the "ground of consciousness." He sees the evolving universe as "generalized emergent probability."⁴⁵ (*He looks to Tillich and then to Professor [Sister] Merton.*)

Merton: For mystics, the "interior life" is a foretaste of Heaven. Catholics believe people can experience heaven on earth. Read St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Teresa of Avila; and I mentioned St. John of the Cross. Students can read Saint Augustine, Saint Anthony, Hildegard of Bingen, Thomas Aquinas, Catherine of Sienna, Francis de Sales...

Benedict: (*Interrupts.*) Thank you. Students. Do you have any immediate questions?

Mary: The Dean asked us: Who are we? What do Catholics say? (*Benedict goes to the blackboard.*)

Who Are We?

Merton: We are the Children of God! (*She speaks authoritatively but softly, with motherly feeling. She is about to say more, with tenderness, but Burns decides that students need an intellectual answer in this secular university. And, there are scientists in this class.*)

Burns: Catholic intellectuals wrestle with your question.

Mary: (*emboldened*) “How?”

Burns: In many ways. For example, Catholics debate the work of Søren Kierkegaard, a philosopher who lived and wrote in the nineteenth century.

Mowrer: (*He breaks in.*) Kierkegaard! I know his books: *Fear and Trembling ...* and *Sickness unto Death*. (*He read these books during his depression, looking for answers and identity.*) What do Catholics say?

Burns: They say: you must search the inmost depth of your existence. Your *inner life* harbors a secret.

Mowrer: A secret?

Merton: Yes. The “self” has a secret -- unknown to you.

Benedict: I’m sorry. The students have not read Kierkegaard. Explain what you mean, if you will.

Merton: Yes, of course. Kierkegaard was fighting against modern philosophy, of his time, including Hegel’s work.

James: Hegel's writings seem so distant, abstract and removed from the real world. Kierkegaard, I think, is a poet. He claimed that each person is engaged as an individual in a quest for truth. I think their approaches differ, but Kierkegaard never thought of himself purely as an anti-Hegelian. In fact, he praised some of Hegel's readings. A big difference between the two is Kierkegaard's poetic writing style standing as against Hegel's formal, turgid style.⁴⁶ (*Kornberg looks curious.*)

Merton: The point is that Kierkegaard did not believe that the self, as "subject," is in "constant development." The "self" does not exist, with "ever ascending levels" of consciousness, as Hegel claimed.⁴⁷

Kornberg: History is neither "ascending" nor "progressive"? Ha! (*"I'll enjoy this," he thinks.:*)

Burns: Hegel was promising to make absolute knowledge available through Reason, the science of logic. Anyone with the capacity to follow the dialectical progression of Hegel's logic would have access to the mind of God. This was equivalent to the logical structure of the universe.

Kierkegaard insisted the self has a secret "legacy" that could not be anticipated. This kept Hegelian "thought" from achieving "closure" in logic. He thought Hegel's philosophy was a prideful attempt to build a new tower of Babel, a *scala*

paradisi — a dialectical ladder, which humans could climb with ease up to heaven.⁴⁸

Benedict: “Dialectical ladder!” This idea is too complex for the class.

Mary: What do you mean: too complex! (*Her forehead wrinkles in a frown.*) We have been over tough territory before. (*She wants to hear more. Benedict nods for Merton to speak.*)

Merton: Kierkegaard says the “self “does not mature by reflection and reason alone. To know “who you are” requires trembling.⁴⁹

Mary: Ooo....Why?

Merton: The “self” has depth -- beyond what we know by our mind. Kierkegaard writes this in *Fear and Trembling* but also in *Repetition*. Life is filled with irony.⁵⁰

Mary: Irony?

Merton: Life has its contradictions. You will find a contradiction in any expression of language. (*Mary’s face shines eagerly, intent.*) Kierkegaard likes the immediacy of human expression. It is more real when it is not mediated by thought.

Burns: For him, immediacy has more “reality”; language has more “ideality”. The moment we make any statement about reality, the contradiction real-and-ideal is present. Every word I speak is an “ideal,” a symbol of reality. (*He looks to Merton,*

and Benedict notices the loving relation between these two scholars as they look to one another.)

Merton: In his book *Repetition* Kierkegaard gives a fictional name to its author: Constantin Constantius. “Constantius” loves a mystery. He goes to the theater to learn about the “self.” He wonders, “Who are we?” His story is “our story,” about identity.

(Pause.)

Benedict: Identity! That’s what the Dean would say.

Merton: Constantius views the self as a kind of play, a spontaneous performance. It happens when the shadows of an individual’s possibility are set in motion under pure imagination. Each individual has a variety of shadows. They have equal status....⁵¹

Ann: How do we find our identity?

Merton: Well. In this case, you can find it through your major in -- theater. Actors experiment with different roles and reveal what is hidden from consciousness. They construct a role as if it were their “self.” The roles are “shadows of possibility” for the actor.

Ann: You mean: I learn more about “who I am” in each performance?

Burns: For Constantius, you --or any human being during a lifetime -- take one role after another and keep broadening a sense of self. As we humans take different roles in life, we mature, and go beyond our old selves. *(Ann is now feeling positively perky about*

her choice of a major.) A play helps to reveal the mystery of “who you are.” Each act is an avenue into a new self. “Who you really are” lies dormant in the process.

Merton: Dormant. If you read Kierkegaard, you find the best actors are lyricists who let their natural energy “hurl out on the stage.” They do not *reason* what they do. They give themselves to the moment. They live by the power of laughter. (*She winks.*)⁵²

Whitehead: Ha! (*He laughs without thinking.*)
Laughter!

Burns: Kierkegaard likes spontaneity.

Benedict: (*almost wistfully*) The Dean liked spontaneity.

Merton: The Truth cannot be summed up in rational categories.

Burns: The way that Kierkegaard writes about *repetition* is like a new philosophy, but the book, ironically, is not a philosophy in the ordinary sense. Constantius suggests that “repetition” suggests a transcendence.” Figure that one out!⁵³

Benedict: I cannot figure it out.

Burns: The book is written as a farce. You have to read the book to see how “repetition” cannot be defined. It is not rational. You find the answer by your impulse in the context of each moment.⁵⁴ (*His eyes swerve toward Kornberg. Benedict notices and worries afresh. She would change the subject, but*

Mary is so intrigued by it. Merton keeps going.)

Merton: Kierkegaard said Christianity requires “existential communication.” When we try to repeat some past experience, we cannot really do that without changing it.

Burns: Kierkegaard’s concept of repetition is about the irony of *self-development*. How do we reconcile the fact that the “self” changes over time, yet maintains itself?⁵⁵

Kornberg: (*drawn in for the moment, in spite of himself*) How about our memory of who we are?

Merton: Kierkegaard insists that a Christian must rely on *revelation* for the truth, not reason.⁵⁶

Benedict: This sounds like what the Dean was proposing as intuitive feeling.

Merton: And Kierkegaard goes further, making repetition a creative opening to transcendence.

Kornberg: This was crazy talk when the Dean initiated it, and it’s even crazier now. (*Kornberg looks at Benedict openly to stop this discussion. She nods a more furtive Yes, but she wants other scholars to speak about “identity.”*)

Benedict: How would a Protestant see this matter of developing self-identity? (*She wants the discussion to be ecumenical.*)

Tillich: Jesus said you must give up your identity. If you give up your life for me, you will find true life. We must live by the power of God working through us. Paul puts it another way in Galatians 2:20. “I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”

Merton: Do you see the irony? Constantius says: Repetition could mark a radical shift for modern thought. The answer to your question — “Who are we?” — is no longer in philosophy. It is in faith.⁵⁷ (*Benedict goes to the blackboard and writes:*)

Faith

Merton: (*She looks at Kornberg.*) Yes. Faith. Constantius proposes a theory that is subjective. He proposes it to stand against science, which is objective in its methods of observation.

Kornberg: Indeed.

Burns: Indeed. “Repetition” has a meaning hidden from objective observation.

James: Søren Kierkegaard is making an inquiry into the “subjectivity of truth;” and then into “the truth of subjectivity.”

Benedict: Could you explain what all of *that* means?

James: Kierkegaard explains that objective truth is

an “outer truth,” and subjective truth is more of an “inner truth.” He distinguishes between speculative philosophies such as you find in Hegel, as a type of reasoning that seeks objective truth -- and religious faith that seeks subjective truth.

Benedict: Yes, but...

James: Objective thinkers are indifferent to the truth of subjectivity. Subjective thinkers find an eternal happiness in subjectivity. That eternal happiness is found through faith. Faith is a passionate inwardness that affirms the truth of subjectivity.

Kornberg: But what is meant by *truth* in any of this?

James: Truth is in both orders: in objectivity *and* in subjectivity. For Kierkegaard, the objective thinker finds truth by *approximation*. The subjective thinker finds truth by *appropriation*.

Benedict: Please explain more.

James: The objective thinker needs to quantify something, making it into a *probability*. The subjective thinker must accept *uncertainty*. Faith can only be attained by an acceptance of uncertainty.

Burns: So Kierkegaard says truth is a paradox.

James: Exactly. Truth may be objectively defined as a passionate inwardness, which may change in depth or intensity according to the experience of the subjective thinker. Inwardness is an ethical infinity in which the individual can find happiness.

Benedict: (*puzzled by this exchange*) So truth may be defined from either an objective or subjective point of view. And paradoxically, both of them constitute *truth*. But faith must be discovered subjectively. Does Kierkegaard see *stages* in the development of faith?

James: He talks about “states of existence.” Truth for subjective thinkers is appropriated, by passion, as they progress from the “aesthetic” to the “ethical,” and on to “religious” states. The subjective thinker is always in a state of becoming. The passion of the subjective thinker is found through a deepening “inwardness.” “Being” is always in a process of “becoming,” always in a state of uncertainty.⁵⁸

Kornberg: What is the highest stage?

James: The “religious stage” is the highest. The religious person understands that suffering is intrinsic to his or her experience. The “aesthete” considers suffering to be something accidental, while the religious person understands that suffering is an essential part of existence.⁵⁹

Merton: In seeking eternal happiness, a person must experience suffering. This is the paradox of faith.
(*Nonsense, whispers Kornberg.*)

Burns: Christian faith means renewing a passionate relationship to an unknown object that could never be known -- by science.⁶⁰

Kornberg: (*Out loud this time*) Nonsense. (*He looks at Benedict.*) Let's go back to *evolution*.

Merton: (*Showing surprise.*) We are talking about evolution! Jesus represents the *final stage* in this long journey through history.

Evolution is not merely a scientific story!

Benedict: Professor Mowrer: You are a scientist and you read Kierkegaard. What do you think?

Mowrer: Yes. I read his work.

Benedict: So tell us, what do you think?

Mowrer: He makes Abraham in the Old Testament look like a saint. He claims Abraham took an absolute leap of faith in order to believe in God. But I worry about this.

Burns: Why?

Mowrer: Julian Jaynes, a Princeton psychologist, says that the brain of *Homo sapiens* is essentially the

same today as it was in the primitives who first mastered fire around 100,000 B.C.E. But Jaynes also claims that people did not become humanly conscious until the second millennium B.C.E. If humans were not conscious until then, what were they like? How did they function? Well. People behaved pretty much like *chimps* until around 10,000 B.C.E.

Benedict: We talked about Jaynes in our session on anthropology. For him, consciousness of self did not evolve with the brain; it is a product of language, the result of symbolizing.

Mowrer: Yes. Before developing the capacity to reflect consciously on complex problems -- humans coped with stress by obeying the dictates of hallucinatory voices in their minds. The brain evolved to make room for these voices and became bicameral, using the left hemisphere for speech and the right hemisphere to produce inner commands. He thinks Abraham was hallucinating.

Benedict: My, my. Well. The ability to hear such commands became almost universal among humans by 10,000 B.C.E., but they were hardly commonplace. The distinction between commands would not emerge as separate features of the mind until the birth of an ability to abstract. He thought this

capacity became recognizable with the beginning of philosophy about 600 B.C.E.

Mower: Jaynes argues, “Bicameral man heard the voices of gods” and believed that these inner voices came from a divine source.

Benedict: Hmmm. But Jaynes did not take into consideration the difference between animal “consciousness” and human “self-consciousness.”

Mowrer: Jaynes says that, as the bicameral mind broke down, and humans developed more linguistic consciousness, they heard these voices with less frequency. Between the second and first millennia B.C.E., people began to talk more among themselves.

Burns: What evidence does Jaynes offer?

Mowrer: He cites some evidence from the Old Testament. He says that early figures recorded, like Abraham, lacked full consciousness; he was just hearing the word of God and obeying the sound. But later sections of the Old Testament reveal how people become more introspective. Jacob accepted his dreams at face value, but his son Joseph interpreted them. And Moses became more symbolically conscious. He still hears the voice of God, but he only sees a burning bush. Jaynes argues that people

hunger to recover the lost voices; in modern society those primordial yearnings continue.⁶¹

Benedict: Does anything else concern you about Kierkegaard's work?

Mowrer: I was surprised by how Kierkegaard treated Job's suffering in his book *Repetition*. He gets very complex on this subject. (*Benedict, hoping to draw out a psychological perspective, goes to the blackboard to write:*)

Suffering

Burns: (*He realizes that the class has not read the book and takes a moment to explain the case.*)

In Kierkegaard's book *Repetition*, Constantius is trying to conduct a scientific observation. He sees a young man intoxicated with the story of Job. (*He looks at Herschel*). The young man says: "Although I have read Job again and again, each word remains new to me... born fresh as something original, new in my soul. I take in the passion little by little, until...I become ... unconscious in drunkenness."⁶² (*Herschel looks puzzled.*) In other words, the young man isolates himself. He only has Job as a companion.

Mowrer: So? What does that mean? (*Mowrer himself has read the Book of Job over and over to console himself in his depression.*)

Burns: In Job, the young man finds a voice for his own suffering. The man is complaining about the overall purpose of things. Job is his ideal.

He says of Job: “When everything went to pieces, you became the voice of the suffering... the cry of the grief-stricken, the shriek of the terrified, and a relief to all who bore their torment in silence, a faithful witness to all the affliction and laceration there can be in a heart, an unfailing spokesman who dared to lament...”⁶³ (*He looks to Sister Merton, hoping to invite her thoughts.*)

Merton: Well. The Book of Job is powerful. No one can read it without being moved. But when Kierkegaard’s young man adopts Job as his model, he tries to imitate Job’s complaint to heaven, and it just doesn’t work.

Burns: So the story is a farce. The source of the comedy in *Repetition* is the absurdity between the trials of this young man and the trials of Job. The young man sees a connection between Job’s loss and his own. But that connection doesn’t exist.

Mowrer: (*concerned*). What do you mean?

Burns: I can’t keep a straight face when I see him comparing his own suffering with Job’s. In one day, Job loses five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses, seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, seven sons, and three daughters. And then he is smitten with boils from head to toe, which he

scrapes off with a potsherd. God, whom Job has worshipped all his life, inflicts this suffering on him. (*He pauses.*)

Mowrer: What's your point?

Burns: What is the young man suffering from? He had an unhappy love affair! That's all (*smiling*). This man's suffering is so trivial compared to the trials of Job that the identity is hilarious. All of the young man's complaints about the injustice of the universe are nothing in comparison to what Job suffered. The triviality in the young man's suffering is a caricature of Job. Job's suffering is genuine.⁶⁴

(*Merton shrinks at the thought.*)

Hughes: (*Teaching in the English Department, he knows the work of Kierkegaard and interrupts.*) The young man's condition reminds me of Macbeth. "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, Creeps in this petty pace from day to day" ...a young man depressed at the loss of his partner. However, Macbeth's speech is made immediately after he hears of the death of Lady Macbeth.⁶⁵

Benedict: Or Hamlet! Is this madness real?

Hughes: Hamlet has his own ethical struggle -- like that of the young man. Hamlet contemplates suicide and wrestles with his fear of a possible afterlife. Then he is handed the skull of the old king's jester, dead for 23 years. Boom! He comes to his senses; he faces reality. "Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him," he

says. Suddenly facing reality, Hamlet loses his self-pity.⁶⁶

Benedict: Interesting. Hamlet then considers “death” as it underlies all life and human endeavor. He loses his self-indulgence. (*Mowrer is now really down. They are talking about his condition.*)

Mowrer: But...(*upset*) the loss of a woman’s love could be as great as Job’s losses. The depth of such loss could remind him of the brutal father ...who beat him. The effect of parental beatings is like a ghost in the walls. It could develop into a depression. It could re-appear to him, affect him as an adult, like the memories a holocaust. Child torture can produce a psychosis that cannot ever be overcome completely, even in the best of cases. The young man in this story had no purpose ... No reason to live.

Merton: Professor Mowrer has a point. Kierkegaard said, “Despair is not just an emotion.” In a deeper sense it is the loss of self. He meant that it describes the state when one has a wrong conception of oneself. (*She looks at Professor Burns sternly.*)

Burns: Do you remember what he said? I can quote it: “I am at the end of my rope. I am nauseated by this life. I stick my finger into the world—it has no smell. Where am I? What does it mean to say: the world? What is the meaning of that word? Who tricked me into this whole thing and leaves me standing here?”

Who am I?”⁶⁷

Merton: He is not feigning madness. He is asking, sincerely, urgently, “*Who am I?*” He is suffering. People suffer like that. (*Merton and Burns look at each other as though to confirm their interpretations.*)

Burns: (*He faces the class to explain the story more thoroughly.*) Constantius is saying that the young man is egotistical – identified with himself...with his own suffering. So he cannot be taken seriously. He’s pathetic. He can’t see the gulf between his own suffering and the vastness of the suffering of Job.

Merton: (*She looks at Mowrer pointedly.*) The young man is in Kierkegaard’s stage of “ethical existence,” bound to his poetic-ideal nature. He has drawn closer to God, and closer to himself, but he has deeper levels of authenticity yet to probe. When he began to open to his humanity by faith, he received strength. But feeling that initial strength, he abandoned too soon his quest as a *Knight of Faith*.

James: (*explaining for the class.*) The “Knight of Faith” is some one who has placed complete faith in God. Each of these levels of existence — aesthetic, ethical, and religious — envelops those below it. An ethical person is still capable of aesthetic enjoyment, for example. But that final stage of religious faith includes those previous conditions.⁶⁸

Burns: That sounds like the principles of evolution:

The molecule includes the atom and so on. But the stages between these ways of faith are inward, not outward. There is no solid external sign in behavior to determine at what level of faith a person is living.

James: Someone with religious faith finds freedom from despair. This type of faith recognizes what has always been there: a self to be realized beyond “itself” within the circumstances in which it finds itself -- like immediately, right now.

 Hmm. I wonder what the Dean would say? Religious faith looks like a synthesis between the infinite and the finite.

Burns: Well. The young man has not arrived at that synthesis. When the clouds of despair return for him, he complains again. The opposing forces of existence strike up their thunderbolts; the storm really comes for him. The question is: Will the young man ever reach the stage of religious faith? (*Mowrer is feeling terrible.*)

Merton: This story is also about the freedom to take personal responsibility for one’s suffering.

Burns: Job becomes great by taking responsibility for what happened to him. In spite of his suffering, Job stays responsible. The young man, on the other hand, refuses to take responsibility. He feels guilty for the way he behaved toward the young girl. He looks for an excuse, but he has no one to blame but himself. Job becomes his ideal... But he is not Job.⁶⁹

(Mowrer asks himself: “Is suffering my responsibility?”)

Merton: True. The young man identifies with Job but – unlike the young man -- Job is innocent. The man walked out on his love without any explanation. He left the girl behind alone, confused.⁷⁰ *(The class is following every word. Katherine remembers being left alone by her boyfriend when she was pregnant; she had become depressed. Across the aisle, Jane remembers the loss of her father and is still working through the pain.)*

Burns: His misunderstanding of Job is hilarious. The young man says, “Am I losing my mind. I’m dead.”

Mowrer: It is *not* “hilarious”! The young man is suffering.

Burns: He says, and I quote: “Am I losing my mind? I’m weak; sometimes I’m dead; I’m in a rage. My whole being is in agony. How did I get this way? What caused it? What happened? Who am I?”⁷¹ *(Mowrer is shocked. This is exactly what he had asked himself when he was depressed.)*

Merton: *(She senses Mowrer’s condition.)* I agree with Professor Mowrer. It is *not* hilarious.

Burns: The young man refuses to take responsibility for his own suffering. Look.

The moment he says he is waiting for a thunderstorm to save him, it’s clear. The story is a

farce. Do you remember *that scene*?⁷²

Mowrer: Yes. But I never thought of it as a comedy. (*Mowrer loves thunderstorms. He feels comfortable in them. He goes outside to feel torrents of rain hitting his face and feels at one with nature.*)

Benedict: (*Interrupts.*) Professor Burns, the class has not read this story. Tell them what happens.

Burns: The young man in the story waits for a thunderstorm that will save him and set him free. He wonders if the storm will change his identity; make him unrecognizable.

So, he puts his hope on the end of the Biblical story when Job gets everything back that the Lord took from him. The man hopes that, like God— a thunderstorm will save him. It's a farce.

Benedict: Perry, can you remind us of what you said about lightning in a thunderstorm?

Perry: In a thunderstorm, lightning carries the whole range of electromagnetic energy. That's *power* -- outside.

Merton: Job says his suffering cannot be due to divine punishment.

Burns: Exactly. Job does not deserve his suffering, but in spite of everything, he keeps the faith. He's a Knight of Faith. (*Mowrer feels that he does not deserve his suffering. His misery is due to his father having beaten him. He did not cause his own condition!*)

Mowrer: This is idealism. (*He remembers struggling over whether his condition was in his mind or his body. He had leaned toward a materialist point of view after he took pills for his depression. They had eased his suffering, at the material level.*)

James: So, Professor Burns, what did you learn from this book? Is it about “subjective idealism”?

Burns: The “subject” is each person. Each one is given the power, responsibility, and freedom to create a future for him- or herself.

Merton: Constantius says *Repetition* requires a second reading. The meaning of the book is deep.

Benedict: How?

Burns: Constantius is engaged in explaining the meaning of a concept whose meaning is never general, but rather always particular and individual, and therefore always hidden from objective observation. He cannot do it.

Merton: So given this impossible task, the only way for Constantius to succeed is to fail. By becoming a comic actor, Constantius fails in the task that he sets for himself—to verify the possibility of repetition by objective, scientific means. Nothing can be repeatedly precisely as it was before.

Burns: But he succeeds in clarify the subjective nature of life. The book leads you inward, not outward. Repetition can only be found in the unique,

subjective experience of an individual who freely and uniquely enacts that role on the stage of existence.

Merton: In other words, you cannot reduce the existence of an individual into the bounds of general categories. Faith is at the root of existence.⁷³

Burns: Faith is a personal matter. But Kierkegaard wants you to make your own judgment before you die.⁷⁴ (*Benedict is upset for having allowed this part of the discussion to go on for so long. She has been entranced by the energy of her Catholic professors. They are strong in faith.*)

Benedict: We need to move on before our time is up – and, before our time is *really* up... *before we die.* (*She chuckles.*) Well. So let's make *Death* our topic. (*She wants students to feel, not just think, about the meaning of evolution. She writes on the blackboard:*)

Death

We are finishing a long seminar on evolution. Can you tell me: Why do we have to die?

(The question is so abrupt that the class falls silent. Some students' smile uncertainly; some send one another sheepish under-glances; others recall the death of a loved one. When her father died, Jane had asked her mother that same question— "Why?" Professor Herschel breaks the silence.)

Herschel: That's life! (*Shrugging his shoulders, he raises his hands in a palms-up gesture that breaks the tension, causing everyone to laugh.*) Similar to

the way that flowers are born in their season on earth and die in the winter, death is in our nature: I think we are perennials. (*Everybody laughs again, especially Singh.*) But we are much more than flowers.

Merton: Our soul lives on after death!

Singh: Well. The idea of life-after-death is ancient. Students should read about reincarnation in Eastern religions -- Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism. These religions are very different from Western religions, such as Christianity.

Benedict: Professor Mowrer talked about reincarnation in our last session.

Mowrer: Yes. (*Returning to the immediacy of the moment, he brightens.*) I just saw Jim Tucker on television last night -- on "Larry King Live."

Kornberg: (*looks at Mowrer, half-exasperated, half-puzzled*) For Pete's sake: Who is Jim Tucker?

Mowrer: He's medical director of the Child and Family Psychiatric Clinic --at the University of Virginia. He is a board certified child psychiatrist who worked with Ian Stevenson. I talked before about Stevenson and "life after death."

Kornberg: (*unremittingly exasperated*) I do not believe in life after death. (*Worried again, Benedict slowly waves her right hand up-and-down: "Calmly please."*)

Mowrer: But Tucker studies the matter

scientifically. He says that quantum mechanics tells us that memories carry over from one life to another. (*Kornberg shakes his head “No!”*) The act of observation, he says, collapses wave equations. Consciousness is not just a by-product of the *physical* brain. It is a separate entity that works at a higher level of vibration.⁷⁵

Kornberg: (*looking at Mowrer.*) This “after-life” is a fairytale -- for people afraid of the dark.

Benedict: (*Interrupts.*) We all have opinions, but the actual death of someone you love also involves feelings. (*quietly*) Students, what do you think?

Jane: (*glancing at Professor Kornberg*) If *this* life is all there is, what is the point of living? (*Silence. She is speaking more aggressively than ever before.*) If we're all going to be dead in the end, what difference does it make what we do with our lives? We are all going to die; we will all be forgotten. Our lives will be nothing but a name on a tombstone; And at some point in time, no one will be able to read the writing on the tombstone. Our bones will disintegrate, and nothing will remain. (*The class is shocked at her frankness. She sounds angry, but Benedict senses that she is in a new place. She hears energy and strength in her voice.*)

Merton: (*She looks sternly at Kornberg, commiserating with Jane.*) There is life after death!

Mowrer: My studies show an afterlife.

Burns: Our soul is immortal... (*Jane is unaffected.*)

Tillich: (*He regards Jane unwaveringly.*) There are no valid arguments for an afterlife -- or even for the existence of God. But let me tell you: Nobody can live without hope, even under the worst of conditions, even in poverty, sickness, failure, endless suffering. Without hope, we despair. Look at Job.

Herschel: Job says, "For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its shoots will not cease," -- but as "the waters wear away the stones and the torrents wash away the soil of the earth, so thou [God] destroyest our hope."⁷⁶

Tillich: Job was tested beyond belief. (*He moves forward on his seat.*) The psalmist says: "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him."⁷⁷ (*The class is quiet.*) Death demands stillness. Waiting requires patience, ... and more patience. Patience builds faith. (*Some students feel almost as if they are in a church, not in class on a university campus.*)

Merton: In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapters 12 and 13, Paul indicated that "faith," "hope," and "love" are spiritual gifts granted by the Holy Spirit to every Christian. Hope allows us to become who we are.

Perry: Jane is right. The earth will take our body. It will decay. And those very same elements will pass on to other organisms -- plants, animals, and other human beings. (*Jane listens.*) New species will

appear. And they will grow and die in their turn. *(Pause.)* When our sun dies, it will expand into a red giant and burn up the Earth. All life on Earth will disappear. Only heat will be left, and evaporating black holes ... *(Benedict wonders where this is going.)*

Hawking: *(Smiling.)* Or, the universe might contract back on itself. And fuse all matter and energy into a final Big Crunch. Yes, either way that means *The End*; all life in the universe will die and be gone forever.

Whitehead: Bertrand Russell said, "Any serious philosophy is built on a firm foundation of unyielding despair."⁷⁸

Benedict: Wait a minute.

Wilson: We are a thermodynamic system. Death is the state of our mortal body. Death means that the body cannot get energy from the environment to organize itself. *(Benedict feels like she is holding a stinking skull. How quickly everyone has lost that feeling of grief at the death of the Dean!)*

Herschel: *(Continuing this mood of realism.)* Well, an afterlife may not be too happy. Do you remember Sisyphus? The gods punished him for cheating death. He had to roll a heavy stone to the top of a hill, and when it rolled back to the plain he was doomed to repeat this meaningless activity -- for eternity. It was *repetition*, the ancient way.⁷⁹ *(This conversation is*

depressing for Benedict and the class. Then Herschel adds:) Death means nothing. *(Pause.)* Life means everything.

Benedict: Life! Ah. We talked about how Derrida was before he died: full of life and sounding like an atheist. What did he say about death? *(She looks at Professors Merton and Burns:)* Did you read *The Gift of Death*?

Merton: Yes. Derrida's *Gift of Death* influenced Catholic theology. It was a big topic of discussion in a conference at Villanova University. It is all about divine revelation as "phenomenology and tradition." Derrida says the *rational* has its limits when we face death.⁸⁰

Burns: Death carries its *mysterium tremendum*. Derrida writes about what is required of us at death.⁸¹

Mowrer: What is "required"?

Merton: A leap of faith.

Burns: Death is a secret "senseless meeting" with ourselves that goes beyond reason. We must take responsibility and make death a gift.⁸²

Merton: Death requires us to lose our "self." We have no assurance of any compensation for our loss. So death can cause fear and trembling.

Benedict: Students: Are you following this?

Mary: I do not understand "mis-te-re-

eum”...(Benedict goes to the blackboard and writes:)

Mysterium tremendum et fascinans

Benedict: *Mysterium tremendum et fascinans* means “fearful and fascinating mystery.” Death is the biggest mystery of our lives. Rudolf Otto coined this term in a book called, *The Idea of the Holy*.

Tillich: For me, “life after death” is not a place. God is not a thing.⁸³

Herschel: That’s sounds like Derrida. By the way, was Derrida an atheist?⁸⁴

Merton: Derrida was asked why he does not say he is an atheist. He said it was because he had “many voices” that gave him no rest. He lacked the absolute authority of an “I.” He was sorry that he could not do better than that.⁸⁵

Kornberg: (*unexpectedly*) Yes. Ideas need to be tested.

Benedict: The categories we have to explain -- “who we are” -- are not adequate. Who is God -- for Derrida?

Merton: I think: the *Wholly Other*, who can demand absolute obedience.

Adam: Absolute obedience! (*He is unhappy about this phrase.*)

Benedict: But Derrida was against the “absolute” in philosophy. (*Class time is nearly up, but she goes to the blackboard to write:*)

The Absolute: The End of Time

Merton: Derrida agrees with Kierkegaard. Absolute responsibility causes an individual to transcend social ethics. The sacrifice of one’s self at death is the highest calling.

Burns: Jesus listened to the Absolute. God said to give his life as a gift -- to us.

Kornberg: NONSENSE! Beware of the Absolute! (*He speaks so forcefully that everyone is taken back.*) Look at what happened at the “People’s Temple.” James Jones claimed to have listened to God—the Absolute—and nine hundred people went to their death.

Parsons: Look at the suicide bombers. They think they will go to heaven. They offer themselves as a gift to Allah. (*He speaks sarcastically at first, but not wanting to put down Muslims, he continues more temperately.*) Each nation has a collective ego. (*He pauses.*) Look at what has been done in the past in the name of one group of people or another: The Soviet Union under Stalin -- 23 million dead. Hitler -

-12 million murdered in concentration camps. Turkey -- over a million Armenians killed. Pol Pot in Cambodia -- well over a million slaughtered. Mao Tze-Dong in China -- I can't count how many millions were massacred there... *(He is angry.)* Each nation feels "it" is the Absolute—power, authority! Atheism (Communism), or God (Christians), or Allah (Muslims)...⁸⁶ *(There is greater respect for Kornberg after that explosion of anger. Everyone feels his anguish over genocides, but nobody has a solution. Parsons looks at Professor James, who is in philosophy, to give an answer in his language.)*

James: Derrida might call it "exclusivity." *(He tries to connect what he says with the language of the religious scholars.)*

Burns: Exclusivity. Derrida believed that every structure that organizes our experience is exclusive. By creating anything, something gets left out. *(He looks to James for support.)*

James: Yes. "Exclusive structures" can become repressive. But what is repressed never disappears. It always returns to unsettle every belief, every construction, no matter how secure any one of them seems. *(He looks to Herschel.)*

Herschel: Derrida was an Algerian Jew in France. He knew about totalitarianism. He saw Fascism with Mussolini on the "right;" and Communism and Stalin on the "left." He saw the danger of absolute beliefs

that divide the world into such opposites: right vs. left; red vs. blue; good vs. evil. You are right about his view on “exclusive structures.”

Parsons: But Derrida did not think sociologically. He thinks of the human conscience as a “self-evident authority.” It makes personal decisions not collective ones. It draws on secret intimacies. He does not see society as shaping the individual in an objective sense. For him, “conscience” is a mystical encounter with oneself and the “wholly other.”⁸⁷

Merton: Derrida quotes the Gospel of Matthew: "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee". Here we see the invisible, spiritual nature of the reward – in contrast to earthly rewards. God is "seeing in secret".⁸⁸ (*She looks to Burns. Benedict is aware of the profound divergence growing between Parsons and the religious scholars, secular-sacred differences.*)

Kornberg: Secrecy is dangerous. Science is against secrecy. Scientists demand transparency.

Benedict: (*Looking at her watch.*). We have so little time left. Let’s be clear about these two views before we stop. Be brief. Professor Parsons, we want to include you before we must close: what do sociologists think about religion? (*She goes to the blackboard and writes:*)

Secular/Sacred: Evolution

Parsons: Religion is an expression of society. Karl Marx saw religion as a dream of the oppressed. Sigmund Freud saw God as a projection of the image of a father in a family -- with all his personal attributes. Emile Durkheim saw religion as a system of rites and beliefs, dividing the sacred from the profane. Max Weber studied the interaction between society and religion. Weber called 20th century society the “iron cage” of modern life.⁸⁹

Herschel: Secularism is a “cage of objectivity.”

Parsons: Religion is a “cage of subjectivity.”

Benedict: *(She is sad. A battle at this last minute in the Dean's class: not if she can help it!)* Wait! You need to explain yourselves... above all for students.

Parsons: Émile Durkheim was born into a family of rabbis and became the founder of sociology in France. He saw society as shaping the individual mind and its conscience.⁹⁰

Watson: Interesting.

Parsons: What people think is “good” in their conscience varies from society to society. Society – not God -- creates the rules of ethics that bring an individual to self-sacrifice or to suicide. Subjectivity is the problem.⁹¹

Benedict: In our discussion on sociology, we talked about how Robert Bellah built his theory from Durkheim's research.

Parsons: Yes. Bellah saw the way in which nations create a "civil religion." As an example, he looked at Lloyd Warner's analysis of what happens in this country on Memorial Day. He saw a collection of beliefs, symbols, and rites based on what people feel to be most sacred. They would die for their nation.⁹²

Benedict: Die for their nation. But religion has become an institution in our society. Could a religious institution be evolving? Could a concept of God be evolving in society -- as a collective conscience? (*She looks back to Herschel.*)

Herschel: Well. (*He retreats back into his professorial shell.*) The Hebrew Bible shows the evolution of God as an idea. Look at the transformation of Yahweh from a thunderous -- almost corporeal figure -- into a more abstract and finally a transcendent one, inside... that "still small voice." That latter vision has become part of Jewish mysticism. But it does not represent the view of all Jews today.

Parson: The concept of God in society keeps evolving. Remember: We talked about how, in the 19th century, Comte studied the evolution of religion. And Robert Wright has just written a book on how religion evolved from hunter-gatherers, chiefdoms and tribes into the polytheism of the Israelites and into monotheism. He thinks that religious creeds change and evolve “to be more inclusive,” not exclusive. The circle of believers expands. Or, a greater number of people are seen to be worthy of the same moral rules.⁹³

Benedict: *(She wants other scholars to speak.)* What about Islam, does it evolve? Are there still sacrifices and blood-covenants?

Ghazzli: The big one is the Feast of Sacrifice held at Mecca. Moslems make a pilgrimage to Mecca from all over the world: from Tangier and Timbuctoo to Bombay and Bokhara ... *(Merton starts to say that many Christians likewise make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but Parsons interrupts.)*

Parsons: Comte was talking about an overall evolution in religion since ancient times. We talked in class about the ancient sacrifices of the Aztecs. Remember? *(Looks to Benedict.)*

Benedict: Yes. The Aztecs thought of sacrifice as a way of paying their debt to the gods. They practiced human sacrifice as a *gift*. Hmm. I wonders whether this Aztec type of sacrifice might be applied to Derrida's concept of "The Gift of Death"? And is the act of "giving" itself evolving in society? (*Continuing, she looks to Singh.*) The Aztecs also bred dogs, eagles, jaguars and deer for the purpose of sacrifice. Has this tendency for human sacrifice evolved from being external to internal?⁹⁴

Singh: A Vedic proverb runs: "Sacrifice is the navel of the world". In the ancient East, the gods were outside us, not inside like for Derrida's "gift". There was a feast for them -- giving the gods food (cakes, milk, butter, meat, and the *soma* drink). Their food was set on holy grass before an altar. The high priests -- Brahmins -- were entrusted with the divine rites. Yes, we have evolved.⁹⁵

Wilson: (*He has a bent for interdisciplinary thought and speaks in a friendly, pointed tone, smiling.*) Have you been absent? The essence of religion began with animals. We talked about how ants labor for the good of their community; birds sacrifice to keep the flock from starvation. The flock, the herd—say, of buffalo), the school—of fish—is their group, their "nation" so to speak. It is all about group identity.

(He looks at Parsons.) Collective identity. (Benedict looks at Tom, who is majoring in biology, to add something.)

Tom: Do you all remember? Kropotkin said the struggle for survival was not based on competition, but on “mutual aid.” Dogs adopt orphan cats. Dolphins swim under injured animals in the sea -- and push them to the surface to breathe. Mother squirrels sacrifice their lives to save their children.⁹⁶
(Kathleen’s hands cover her eyes. She gave up her child for adoption. That was a terrible sacrifice. The baby was part of her.)

Benedict: We “think” about sacrifice, as an idea in class. But in talking about it, we are separate ourselves from its reality.

Professor Britten: We talked about the *feeling* of sacrifice expressed in Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*.

Britten: Yes, and the sound blew away the audience. In this work, Stravinsky was portraying the sacrifice of precious young girls.

Derek: But why? Why sacrifices like this? Why sacrifice those who are most precious?

Wilson: I can see this tendency evolving through from animals into the human stages. We talked about the sacrifices of mother squirrels to save their young... and then the sacrifices made by the Aztecs to the sun god were meant to *preserve* life... then to Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son. Abraham had to have been following a primitive custom; but then reportedly, by a leap of faith, he substituted a lamb for his son. Is there a progression here?

Singh: The story of Abraham itself is an example of faith existing in all three monotheistic traditions. Muslims consider Abraham to be the first Muslim, because the word "Muslim" signifies a complete surrender to the will of God.

Merton: But then look! There is the sacrifice of Jesus himself for humanity: That's the highest stage. That was a decision made between himself and God. *(She pauses. She cannot articulate the preciousness she feels for Jesus in her life. Her voice breaks, and there is a moment of tense silence.)*

Herschel: *(breaking the silence with humor)* Well, you cannot get to heaven through philosophy. *(Everyone laughs in relief.)*

Benedict: We've done our best to stretch the time,

but now it's run out. (*Her watch shows that they are up to the hour. In the back row, a few students are already trailing out, heading for their next class.*)

Does that mean the Dean was wrong? What happens to all those binaries? What about the connection between the secular-and-sacred? And what about subjectivity-objectivity, individual-community, freedom-order? The Dean said, "Evolution is about finding a synthesis."

Burns: The most Holy -- is hidden in the subjective life.

Benedict: Yes, let's do recall the presence of the Dean before we leave today. What would *he* say? What was sacred to *him*?

Kornberg: Truth! Life!

Singh: Mahatma Gandhi put these concepts — experiences, really — together. He invented a new word for their combination: *Satyagraha*. It means bringing the whole truth into your life -- a synthesis of love and truth.⁹⁷

Burns: The most Holy is hidden. (*More students are leaving.*)

Parsons: (*Professor Hawking is getting up to leave.*)

If you think only in terms of a subjective mind, you cannot see society. Mercea Eliade was the world's top expert on "the sacred." Look at what he did!

Burns: What?

Parsons: He became a fascist. And don't forget that the greatest philosopher of the mind, Martin Heidegger, became a Nazi. He did not understand the power of a society. For him, the state and its ideology became sacred.

Burns: But Kierkegaard...

Parsons: (*Interrupts*) ...was an idealist.

Individualism was in the culture of his day. (*Pause.*) But if you look for what is sacred only in the individual -- you will not see what is held sacred in a nation.⁹⁸ If you think of "spirituality" in terms of the individual alone, for example, you will *not* see nations stockpiling nuclear weapons.

Burns: Do you remember Father Drinan? (*Parsons nods.*) He was a Jesuit and a world federalist. He said we must build an international community, support global law -- develop "world government."

Herschel: Do you remember Norman Cousins? He was a Jew -- an advocate of liberal causes, and editor of the *Saturday Review*, President of the World Federalists. (*Benedict has seen some students leaving. But others are staying, so she does not stop the class yet, hoping to end on a high note.*)

Mowrer: I knew Cousins. He told me: "It took rivers

of blood in World War I to create the League of Nations, but that body was not strong enough to stop World War II. So after World War II we organized a *confederation*, the United Nations. It was stronger than the League had been, but not strong enough to stop terrorists and holocausts.⁹⁹

Benedict: So, the United Nations is *not* a federation. It is not strong enough to stop a World War III.¹⁰⁰

Parsons: (*standing up.*) What it will take, a “suitcase nuclear bomb” blowing off in Washington D.C.? ...Slaughtering all the members of Congress, all sitting Justices of the Supreme Court, not even sparing the President of the United States? There would be nothing left of this nation... nothing but a lot of radiation ... (*His statement shocks everyone. Benedict saddens at the loss of a positive ending for the class.*)

Merton: (*Breaks the silence.*) Oh! Such terrible thoughts! Most importantly, don't forget: Our relationship to the Supreme Being is personal.

Parsons: But we are equally part of a community -- even though each action is personal, that of an individual!

Merton: In the eyes of God, each individual is precious.

Parsons: Without building a new system for governing nations, we will destroy everything that is

precious. We lose everything.

Hopkins: (*Concerned at the last minute.*) People can find God alone -- apart from society.

Benedict: (*s Glancing at her watch unhappily past the hour, nevertheless she cannot stop.*) Not before society had sufficiently evolved. Civilization first had to have developed the civil norms that allowed people to find their humanity. We are no longer in the Paleolithic Age.

Singh: That level of society must have evolved by the time the Buddha was born -- four hundred years before Jesus.

Benedict: As well as Lao-tse. We must bring these different worlds together... The Dean said: "Find the synthesis."

Mary: Who are "we"?

Parsons: "We" ... out there?

Merton: "We" -- in here, inside each of us. (*She points toward her own heart, and then to his heart.*)

Kornberg: People on earth cannot all say "we" *from the heart*. We are over six billion people.

Benedict: (*She looks at Burns to conclude.*) Who were those Catholics- who loved and acted from the heart -- Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez... the Berrigans...

Singh: And Toyohiko Kagawa in Japan.¹⁰¹

Tillich: And Baptists -- Martin Luther King.¹⁰²

Singh: And Hindus -- Gandhi... And Buddhists like

Thich Nhat Hanh and Aung San Suu Kyi....

Benedict: *(She looks to Burns and Merton.)* I think they are all “Knights of Faith”. *(Singh thinks: But how can you tell the level of their inner consciousness by their behavior? He says nothing.)*

Parsons: And those teachers in Norway who stood up to Hitler and won against the worst odds, facing death in concentration camps. Hundreds were ready to sacrifice their lives.¹⁰³ *(Everyone has left the class except a couple of clear groupings of students. But Benedict is too upset to notice.)*

Mowrer: Nonviolent revolutions are evolving. Look at the nonviolent revolution in Guatemala in 1944. Thousands of people overthrew a dictator without violence.¹⁰⁴

Perry: And those Velvet revolutions!¹⁰⁵

Kornberg: *(He is now more involved.)* People who sacrifice their lives for humanity are rare. Maybe they could be “knights of faith.” *(Benedict is shocked at his positive reference to Kierkegaard.)* Empires fall—the Persian, Mongolian, Egyptian, Incan, Aztecan, ... the Roman and British Empires. They all fall...eventually. *(Benedict stands looking at him, amazed. Then she hears.)*

Ghazzali: Who is in the position of empire today?

(Tension mounts at the implication in his question. Emotions rise.)

Benedict: Help! We need to stop. We must finally end this seminar, though a few of us still might like to linger. What can we say? *(The remaining new attendees, who have been signaling to each other, stand up en masse to go.)*

Kornberg: *(calling to new attendees on the way out:)* Live out your ideals! *(He points to the guest scholars.)* “You have the last word!” *(Benedict is further amazed at his support.)* Speak your ideal...in one sentence!

Merton: Love your enemy! *(also calling to students.)*

Singh: Meditate with love in your heart! *(more quietly.)*

Ghazzali: Satyagraha! Act in truth and love. *(He shouts. Students and professors in the hallway cannot hear him over their chatter. Benedict waves goodbye and moves to pick up her coat to leave, disappointed. Suddenly, she notices that the original members of the class have not yet budged.)*

Benedict: OH! Look who has stayed with us beyond the hour! Our seminar devotees! Thank you all! *(Throws a kiss. The honor students raise their hands and call out: “THANK YOU!” (Mary, Jerry, James, Ann, Barbara, Alice, Tom, Derek, Bob, Harry, and*

Kathleen -- all shout again

“GREAT”...“WONDERFUL!” *They go over to hug Professor Benedict and shake hands with Professor Kornberg.)*

Jerry, Derek, Mary, Alice, Harry, James: *(speaking all at once)* **We don’t want this seminar to end...**

It’s the best. *(and)* We want a *sequel!* *(ecstatic grins all around.)*

Benedict: It’s finished. Now go out into the world! *(raising her arms)* JOY TO THE WORLD! *(She goes to stand by her partner, Professor Kornberg.)*

Kornberg: *(putting his arm around her.)* This is just the beginning. *(Students turn and notice how close they look. Then, each person walks out.)*

* * * * *

Professor Kornberg *(speaking privately to his honeymoon partner)* “Good job!” *(Squeezing her hand reassuringly)* “This was a great class. Students will remember this session for the rest of their lives.” *He speaks of how the seminar has changed his life.*

Professor Benedict *smiles, says nothing. Then she thinks silently.* “Ah! Well. Yes. Hmm. I will start to tell him more about Tantra tonight.

The Scholars: *The four guest scholars walk down the campus path, talking about secularity. This was their first chance to talk with general faculty about*

religion. They give a “thumbs up” to one another as they part.

Professor Tillich turns a corner on to the street where he lives. Once inside the door of his house, he goes to a particular bookshelf in his study/library, takes down the book by Kierkegaard entitled *Either/Or*. He reads: “But what, then, is this self of mine: If I were to define this, my first answer would be: It is the most abstract of all things, and yet at the same time most concrete—it is freedom.”¹⁰⁶ Then Tillich thinks to himself: *Jesus found total freedom.*

Professor Singh heads to his office to prepare for a class that starts at the top of the next hour. He wonders how much students could understand the concept of “ideals.” Ideals must be realized through experience and meditation. The “real” and the “ideal” are not opposites in the final count. How could he explain this complex idea to students in a single seminar?

Professors Burns walks with Professor Merton and says: “Jesus was absent in Derrida’s work. Derrida replaced the sacrifice of Jesus with ‘Gnostic mystery.’ I do not think he understood the real life of Jesus, the Christ.” What do you think?

Professor Merton replies: “Yes. I agree. (Pause.)”

Now what do you think of the Buddhist notion of ‘Nothing’? Why not say, ‘God is ‘Everything’?’
Pausing, she adds: “Kierkegaard was saying that life is irony. We keep transcending contradictions.”

***Professor Herschel** remembers how Martin Buber wrote that he was “halfway” between Whitehead and Kierkegaard. He says that the antithesis of “God objective and apart from us” and “God subjective and a part of us” can be overcome. It is overcome in a deeper synthesis of Buber’s I-Thou relationship.¹⁰⁷*

The Students

***Ann** walks with **Bob** to the coffeehouse on campus, and as they enter the door she says: “Hegel put Reason above Faith. Right? And Kierkegaard put Faith above Reason. Right?” Bob says, “Right in both cases.” Bob pauses, then remarks, “Kierkegaard says that Faith cannot be explained.” Standing at the counter, Ann speaks to the guy serving, “I’ll have my coffee black.”*

***Jerry** heads for his dormitory. He remembers the abundance of buoyant feeling at the end of this last class, this welling up in waves inside him. “Wow! WONDERFUL!” he repeats, remembering Isaiah.¹⁰⁸*

***Harry** walks to his class on Differential and Integral*

Calculus and thinks. “Kierkegaard’s knight of faith is like infinity. Infinity is not based on real numbers. The knight of faith gives up on being with those he loves in this life.

***Kathleen** is slow to leave. She looks back at the doorway to their classroom. She can still see the Dean standing there, looking at her. He is smiling! She is excited to see him and starts to tell Jane. But she stops. She would not dare say a word of what she is seeing. Too embarrassed. The figure must be an illusion, a wishful thought.*

***Jane** feels blessed. She’s spoken straight out in class several times. This seminar has allowed her to become more assertive. She looks at Kathleen, whose face appears puzzled. “Yes,” she says to herself: “It’s okay. I’m on track now.”*

***Mary** remembers when she talked about metaphors as “tropes” in the field of literature. Metaphors bring different images together, as a synthesis. Two different images, when joined, create a new image. The metaphor, she thinks, brings more space in the mind for the continuing evolution of language and human consciousness.*

How far can consciousness evolve by this principle of synthesis? She becomes aware of something new in her mind.

This same synthesis among different things happened after the Big Bang, when particles were created and atoms joined to create molecules. Atoms created more physical space in building a complex molecule -- and it created a higher unity. Could scientists now talk with religious scholars about how this process of synthesis is at the foundation of evolution?

She says to herself, "Jesus kept talking to people in parables." Parables are elaborate metaphors, like similes and allegories. Do parables work like tropes in making possible the highest development of consciousness? Is the parable based on the same principle that started with the Big Bang?"

She thinks: "Parables were the way Jesus brought his followers toward a supreme level of consciousness -- beyond humankind -- like atoms to molecules, and molecules into cells, all the way through animals to homo sapiens.

Does the appearance of a "Buddha" or "Christ" consciousness -- bring all human differences to a conclusion? Is their reported discovery of a higher unity, the Absolute? Is this new human-to-divine consciousness -- the end of

evolution? Is this Divine consciousness at once imminent and transcendent?

She remembers how the philosopher Mark Taylor wrote about the “self” when he thought he was going to die and pass on to the other side.¹⁰⁹

Is a greater “Self” evolving, inside humans? When we go to the other side, will we find our souls evolving at a higher level, a knowing on a different time scale?

Perry, the graduate student, goes to his laboratory and thinks: *“If some Great Being made the sun and the earth, it is a great gift to us. We must have a lot of power hidden in our bodies. All that energy that preceded us is now channeled and transformed into our blood and bones and brain. What a gift!”¹¹⁰*

The Regular faculty

Professor Adams goes home to read the words of his favorite book. It reminds him of the seminar, as he reads: *“Deep within us all there is an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continually return. Eternity is at our hearts, pressing upon our time-torn lives, warming us with intimations of an astounding destiny, calling us home unto Itself. Yielding to these persuasions, gladly committing*

*ourselves in body and soul, utterly and completely, to the Light Within, is the beginning of true life."*¹¹¹

Professor Mowrer goes home facing a nameless terror. He sits down depressed, sick unto death for no reason. No one is home. Suddenly he belts out loud sounds of an inner nausea that has no meaning: Oooh Oaaah! Argh! He is in a rage, at nothing! Nothing! There must be some purpose! Slumping suddenly, exhausted, he opens the book of Job.

Professor Watson walks along by a lawn and privet hedge thinking. "Singh is right. Everything decays and disappears into its elements. But what for?"

Professor Whitehead does not like what he has heard in this session: the denial of reason. At home he writes: "Evolution has two opposing tendencies. One is the slow decay of things, and the other is the yearly renewal of nature in the spring, and by the whole upward course of biological evolution. Reason is about the relation between these different sides of evolution."¹¹²

Professor Matisse heads for his art studio and turns on the light. It illuminates portraits he painted long ago. He thinks: "All the people I've painted have changed so much. These are just masks."

Professor James goes back to his office in the philosophy department and sees a quote from Nietzsche posted on his wall: "I fear we still believe in God because we still believe in grammar."

Professor Hughes stops by a tree for a moment and ponders: "Why didn't Kierkegaard write in poetry? Poetry brings together the real and the ideal. It points to itself—that is, its actual and ideal self—at one and the same time. A poet invents in the realm of all that is possible."

Professor Adams stops to wait for a red light before crossing Main Street. He thinks, "Who is this Kierkegaard? Absolute faith! A lot of people have killed other people because they believed that "God" spoke to them, and what they thought he said."

Professor Britten goes home to relax. He sits down before the piano and thinks: "The difference between religion and science is between 'knowing with the mind' and 'knowing with the heart.' Ah! It is reflection versus passion. Then within a second, he pounds the piano keys and opens Beethoven's Fifth Symphony -- three quick Gs and a long E-flat."

Professor Wilson walks back to his laboratory: We are still in the category of hominids -- like apes.

When will we see a new species evolve?

¹ Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles, pinpointed a region of the brainstem they called the preBötzing complex. It is the command post for generating “breathing” in mammals. Human brains can compensate for up to a 60% loss of preBötC cells, but the cumulative deficit of these brain cells disrupts breathing during sleep. They are not replenished as people age. And as people lose them, they grow more prone to “central sleep apnea.” Central sleep apnea presents a risk in older people, whose heart and lungs are already weaker due to age. Such people often have breathing difficulties during sleep, and the researchers believe their bodies eventually reach a point where they are unable to rouse themselves from sleep when they stop breathing. See *Nature Neuroscience* 8, 1142 - 1144 August, 2005. Also see: Leanne C McKay, Wiktor A. Janczewski, & Jack L. Feldman, “Sleep Apnea Related To Death and Loss of Brain Cells.” *General Health News*, August 08, 2005.

² In the 1940s, physicist George Gamow worked out a theory that fit with earlier proposals in which the universe expanded from a hot, dense state. In 1950 astronomer Fred Hoyle referred to Gamow's theory as a mere "big bang," and the name stuck. Physicist Stephen Hawking says that the actual point of creation lies outside the scope of the laws of physics, as they are presently known. Cosmologist Alan Guth of MIT says that the "instant of creation remains unexplained."

Alan Guth is Professor of Physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and originated the inflationary universe theory in *The Inflationary Universe: The Quest for a New Theory of Cosmos Origins*.

³ The notion of "substance" in philosophy is complex. The British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) would not accept the older philosophy of *substance*. Substance theory proposes that a *substance* is distinct from its properties. Substance, according to Spinoza, is one and indivisible, but has multiple modes; this would refer to what we ordinarily call the natural world, together with all the individuals in it. Immanuel Kant argued that all substances must possess attractive and

repulsive forces. He attributed these forces to souls and implied that they also possessed the same material nature as the physical monads out of which material bodies are composed. Kant held that “souls” fully penetrate human bodies in the sense that one’s soul and one’s body are located in the same volume of space at the same time. Souls and bodies can interact only if they are both in our world, but this is true only if both types of substances are impenetrable and incapable of existing in the same space at the same time.

Immanuel Kant, *Immanuel Kant: Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Paul Guyer. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.)

⁴ Benedict is talking about how the sources of life and humankind began in an atmosphere that allowed the physical senses to evolve and determine what is “out there” in the universe. The class talked about this in earlier sessions. The first gases of the Earth were stripped by solar wind until the atmosphere began to develop water vapor, carbon dioxide, hydrogen-sulfur, and small amounts of nitrogen, carbon monoxide, hydrogen, and methane. The class talked in particular about the argument of biologist Lynn

Margulis that the first organisms were microscopic droplets of water containing a few genes and enzymes surrounded by a membrane. They fed on organic molecules that had been produced earlier in the earth's history by various nonliving chemical processes. Benedict's point, coinciding with Kornberg's, is that reliance on one's own "senses" -- as the basis for determining "facts" -- is due to a chance development in the earth's atmosphere.

⁵ The concept of time has no meaning before the beginning of the universe. This was first pointed out by St. Augustine. When asked, "What did God do before he created the universe?" Augustine said that time was a property of the universe that God created, and that time did not exist before the beginning of the universe. [Noted in Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam, 1988), p. 8]

⁶ Other timelines can be found on the Internet.

⁷ Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (NY: Free Press, 1996.) Behe says:

"By *irreducibly complex* I mean a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning. An irreducibly complex system cannot be produced directly

(that is, by continuously improving the initial function, which continues to work by the same mechanism) by slight, successive modifications of a precursor system, because any precursor to an irreducibly complex system that is missing a part is by definition nonfunctional. An irreducibly complex biological system, if there is such a thing, would be a powerful challenge to Darwinian evolution. (p. 39)

Another biologist, Kenneth Miller who is Catholic, disagrees. Miller argues that Behe's "irreducibly complex cycles" could have resulted through a series of modifications to less complex sequences. Kenneth Miller, *Finding Darwin's God* (NY: HarperCollins, 1999).

⁸ Schroeder conveys a lot of scientific information in a series of chapters that describe the nervous system, the brain, and the distinction between the brain and the mind. The brain is the platform for the mind, but the mind is a new, emergent property that cannot be squeezed into the limits of scientific materialism. He cites the example of a chess-playing computer to illustrate the difference. See Gerald Schroeder, *The Hidden Face of God* (New York: Touchstone, 2001).

⁹ *The Essential Rumi*, ed. Coleman Barks. (NY: Harper, 1995). Translated by A. J. Arberry.

¹⁰ String theory is an extension of General Relativity. It posits that the electrons and quarks within an atom are not 0-dimensional objects, but 1-dimensional strings. The strings can move and vibrate, giving the observed particles their charge, mass, and spin. The strings make closed loops unless they encounter surfaces, called D-branes, where they can open up into 1-dimensional lines. The endpoints of the string cannot break off the D-brane, but they can slide around on it. The overarching insight is the holographic principle, which states that the description of the oscillations of the surface of a black hole must also describe the space-time around it. Joseph Polchinski, *String Theory*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

¹¹ During the next few years, a series of battles were fought between various tribes of Makkah and the Muslims of Medina. In A.D. 628, the Treaty of Hudaibiyah was signed between the two parties. Truce was declared for ten years. Mohammad moved towards Makkah with 10,000 men, and the battle was won without a single bloodshed. Mohmmad died in A.D. 632 at the age of 63 in the city of Medina. His disciples could not believe that Mohammad had left them forever. Abu Bakr was chosen as the first *Caliph* (leader). Before Bakr's death in A.D. 634,

Umar ibn ul Khattab was appointed as his successor.

¹² This is a quote from a paper presented at the Symposium on Islam and Peace sponsored by Non-Violence International and The Mohammed Said Farsi Chair of Islamic Peace at the American University Washington, D. C.. *Fasad* means creating disorder on earth by following a path other than God's. True peace and happiness emanate only through the observance of God's commands and a conscious effort to see that His laws are implemented in every sphere of life. What is meant by *fasad* is also expressed in verse 205 of the second *Surah*.

¹³ See *Qur'an* (59:23; 89:30) Muhammad's companions wrote down much of the Qur'an while he was alive but it was mostly an orally related document. The entire written compilation of the whole Qur'an was not completed until many years after the death of Muhammad. William Montgomery Watt, *The Cambridge History of Islam*; see also *Muhammad in Mecca*, Oxford University Press.

¹⁴ "Hinduism: Doctrine of Atman-Brahman," *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* (2007).

¹⁵ When $n = 4$, the set of all such locations is called fourth-dimensional Euclidean space, such space differs from the more familiar three-dimensional space. This fourth dimension is a concept distinct from the space-time dimension, since time is functionally different from any of the spatial dimensions.

¹⁶ The *Majjhima Nikaya*, or a *Collection of Middle-length Discourses*, is a Buddhist scripture. The *Nikaya* consists of 152 discourses attributed to the Buddha and his chief disciples. Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.), *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya*, (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 1995.)

¹⁷ For more, see June McDaniel, *Offering Flowers, Feeding Skulls: Popular Goddess Worship in West Bengal*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. David Gordon White, *Kiss of the Yogini: Tantric Sex in its South Asian Contexts*, University Of Chicago Press, 2003. Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*, Columbia University Press. 2003.

¹⁸ Walpola Sri Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (NY: Grove Press, 1959 p. 26.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁰ Reginald Ray, *Your Breathing Body: Beginning Practices for Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Fulfillment*, Volume 1. Reginald Ray teaches within the dharma and meditation lineages of the *siddha* Chögyam Trungpa in the Tibetan tradition.

²¹ Kierkegaard's concept of repetition arises in reference to self-development. Repetition concerns the "earnestness of existence" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 131). It tries to resolve the dilemma of selfhood: how does one reconcile the fact that the self changes over time, yet maintains apparent unity? As Kierkegaard says, in Greek terms this is "the relation between the Eleatics (a group of pre-Socratics in Greece) and Heraclitus" (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 148). Heraclitus maintained that nothing "is" and that all changes into its opposite. Plato's response was the doctrine of *anamnesis*, or recollection: the soul is immortal; over the course of its life it has traversed the cosmos, and hence knows everything. Therefore truth is a matter of recollection, finding out what we already know. In the doctrine of *recollection*, the changing self is anchored in the eternal, which can be immanently recollected.

²² Paul Tillich, *The Theology of Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1964)

²³ The term *transtheism* has also been applied to Jainism and Buddhism. The polytheistic gods of early ages still exist for people but become less important; they remain in daily life but become transcended by *moksha*, which refers to the liberation from the suffering. So the gods remain as ideals but not representing the highest level of spiritual life. In Christianity, the gods might be comparable to the angels. Paul Tillich. *Theism Transcended* (Yale: New Haven, 1952) 185-190. David Novak, “Buber and Tillich,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 29, 1992 (reprinted in *Talking With Christians: Musings of A Jewish Theologian*, 2005). Heinrich Robert Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, ed. Joseph Campbell (1953).

²⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). Paul Tillich, *Theism Transcended* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 185-190.

²⁵ In his work on *Logic*, Hegel avoided the term “synthesis” because it recalls an external unity and combination of outside entities. For Hegel,

“relationship” is internal and essential. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, contends that “relationship” is external and accidental. Opposites are synthesized through an individual’s free conscious activity, and so a resolution overcomes the dissipation of the individual. G. W. F Hegel, *Science of Logic*, A.V. Miller, translator (Prometheus Books, 1989).

²⁶ Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* (NY: Vintage, 2004).

²⁷ From the Gospel of Thomas. See Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospel* (Vintage Books, 1979).

²⁸ These passages can be found in the New Testament: (Luke 10:15), (Matt 5:44f), (Matt 13:33), (Matt 13:44).

²⁹ Peter Smith, "Seven Valleys." *A concise encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000.

³⁰ Bahá'u'lláh lived from 1817 to 1892. He was the founder of the Baha'i Faith and claimed to be the prophetic fulfillment of *Babism*, a 19th-century outgrowth of Shi'ism. But in a broader sense he claimed to be a messenger from God fulfilling the expectations of Islam and other major religions. The Bahá'í writings refer to the gradual development of the individual soul as "spiritual progress." Spiritual

progress means acquiring the capacity to act in conformity with the Will of God and to express the attributes and spirit of God in one's dealings with one's self and with other human beings. Bahá'u'lláh taught that the only true happiness for human beings rests in the pursuit of spiritual development. He said that humanity is one single race and that the age has come for its unification in a global society. His claim to divine revelation resulted in imprisonment by Ottoman authorities. His confinement in prison lasted for 24-years; eventually he died there. Members of the Baha' faith are now seen as apostates of Islam and may face imprisonment or death.

³¹ Matthew 25: 35.

³² Other sources can be found in Ezekiel 18:16, Second Timothy 1:16, and Isaiah 55.

³³ There are many different outlooks in Judaism. Members of the Conservative and Reform movements interpret the deification of Jesus as the work of Christians. Many view him as a faithful Jew, but those in the Orthodox tradition see him as a false messiah. John D. Rayner, *A Jewish Understanding of the World* (Berghahn Books, 1998).

³⁴ On the mustard seed and the loaves, see the Bible, Mark 4:30-32; Matthew 13:31; Luke 13:19-41;

Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20-32. -

³⁵ The *Cloud of Unknowing* documents techniques used by the medieval monastic community to build and maintain a contemplative knowledge of God. Scholars date the anonymous authorship of *Cloud of Unknowing* to 1375, during the height of European monasticism. But Professor Tillich is raising serious theological problems with the traditional theistic notion of God. First, his namesake *Paul* Tillich criticized traditional theism because it places God in the subject-object dichotomy. Epistemologically speaking, God cannot be made into an object, since God is beyond the grasp of the human mind. If God were made into a subject (The Ultimate Subject), then it follows quite obviously that the rest of the existing entities would then be subjected to the absolute knowledge and scrutiny of God. This would deprive people of their own subjectivity, their own ability to create meaning existentially. Paul Tillich said that the kind of traditional theism that presents a biblical God has provoked rebellions against a belief in God, such as atheism and existentialism. People should no longer tolerate the idea of being an "object," completely subjected to the absolute knowledge of God. See James Luther Adams, *Paul*

Tillich's Philosophy of Culture, Science, and Religion. (New York: New York University Press, 1965); and Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

³⁶ The whole poem has more content. See Timmoth Freke, "Rumi Wisdom – Daily Teachings from the Great Sufi Master."

³⁷ "All the faithful, both clerical and lay, should be accorded a lawful freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought and freedom of expression." *Gaudium et Spes*, no 62; *Canon Law* no 212 § 3.

³⁸ Scripture records: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host [stars, nebulae, planets] by the breath of his mouth" (Psalms 33:6). See also *Canons on God the Creator of All Things*, Canon 5.

³⁹ Pope Pius XII declared, "the teaching authority of the Church does not forbid that, in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology, research and discussions . . . take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution, in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter—[but] the

Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God" (Pius XII, *Humani Generis* 36). The human soul is specially created; it did not evolve; it is not inherited from our parents, as is the case with human bodies.

⁴⁰ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) was a Jesuit and a paleontologist who ran afoul of the Catholic hierarchy on his interpretation of evolution. The Church forbade him from publishing his work and exiled him to China in 1922 where he participated in the discovery of the Peking Man, a major discovery that advanced the theory of evolution. Teilhard never wavered in his faith.

⁴¹ Schroeder writes: "A grain of sand contains the slightest hint of the skyscraper of which it is to become a part. Do the very elements of the brain, the carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, have within them the barest trace of consciousness, which will combine and emerge as the complexity of a fully functioning brain?" Gerald Schroeder, *The Hidden Face of God* (Touchstone Books, Simon & Schuster: 2001. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (in French, 1955; English transl by B. Wall, Harper Torchbooks: 1961)

⁴² Teilhard De Chardin: *In Quest of the Perfection of Man: An International Symposium*. Geraldine O. Browning, Seymour M. Farber, Joseph L. Alioto, and the San Francisco Medical Center of the University of California (Hardcover, June 1973).

⁴³ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (Harper Perennial, [1959] 1976); Mary and Ellen Lukas, *Teilhard* (Doubleday, 1977); Robert Speaght, *The Life of Teilhard de Chardin* (Harper and Row, 1967).

⁴⁴ Lonergan draws a parallel between the incomplete human knowing that heads towards fuller knowing and an incomplete Cosmos that is heading towards fuller being. While there is such a thing as finality, it is not “some pull exerted by the future on the present,” but is an affirmation that the Cosmos “is not at rest, not static, not fixed in the present, but in process, in tension, fluid.” Lonergan does not explain what might constitute the ultimate end of this process of “ever fuller realization of being.”

Anthony Kelly, “Lonergan, Emergent Evolution and the Cosmic Process,” *Quodlibet Journal*: Volume 8, 2009.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth and Mark Morelli, (eds.) *The Lonergan Reader* (University of Toronto Press, March 15,

1997). Lonergan proposes that people would have to understand “everything about everything” to understand God. Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 3, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1992), p. 74.

⁴⁶ See Joakim Garff, *Soren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, (Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁴⁷ Soren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. R. Thomte and A. Anderson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980)). *Johannes Climacus*, trans. H. Hong and E. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1958). *The Journals of Kierkegaard, 1834-1854*, ed. and trans. A. Dru (London: Fontana, 1958). *Also Repetition*, trans. H. Hong and E. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁴⁸ Kierkegaard's strategy was to challenge Hegel's dialectic by making the process of rational understanding more difficult. Instead of seeing scientific knowledge as the means of human redemption, he considered reason and science the greatest obstacle. Instead of making God and Christian faith intelligible he emphasized the absolute transcendence by God from all human categories. Instead of setting himself up as a religious authority,

Finally, Kierkegaard used textual devices to undermine his authority as an author. This placed responsibility for the meaning of his texts with the reader.

⁴⁹ See Kevin Newmark, “Sylviane Agacinski, “Kierkegaard to Keep Intact the Secret” published in *Kierkegaard's Influence on Philosophy*, Volume 11 (Francophone Philosophy), ed. Jon Stewart, Ashgate Press. Newmark recommends readings on Agacinski as follows: “An Aparté on Repetition,” in *Feminist Interpretations of Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. by Céline Léon and Sylvia Walsh, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997, pp. 131-146. *Aparté: conceptions et morts de Søren Kierkegaard*, Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1977. (reviewed by Jacques Colette in *Critique*, 377, 1978, pp. 947-972.) *Conceptions and Deaths of Søren Kierkegaard*, trans. by Kevin Newmark, Gainesville: Florida State University Press, 1988). (In English as *Parity of the Sexes*, translated by Lisa Walsh, New York: Columbia, 2001) (In English as *Time Passing – Modernity and Nostalgia*, translated by Jody Gladding, New York: Columbia, 2003). “On a Thesis in Søren Kierkegaard,” ed. by Harold Bloom, New York/Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1989 (Modern Critical Views), pp. 117-148. “We Are Not Sublime:

Love and Sacrifice, Abraham and Ourselves," in *Kierkegaard. A Critical Reader*, ed. by Jonathan Rée and Jane Chamberlain, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, pp. 129-150.

⁵⁰ This discussion is from Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and Repetition*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁵¹ That which is hidden within the individual needs an environment as superficial and transient and full of contradiction, with the "frothing foam of words that sound without resonance." The stage is that kind of setting, as it is particularly suitable for the shadow play of the hidden individual. Constantin sees the theater a kind of virtual reality that involves a constant experimentation with one's own identity. *ibid.* pp. 154-156)

⁵² *ibid.* p. 161

⁵³ *ibid.* p.186. Marcus Pound argues that the Kierkegaardian concept of repetition arises in the context of self-development. Kierkegaard makes repetition a creative opening to transcendence, Marcus Pound, "Lacan, Kierkegaard, and Repetition." *Quodlibet Journal: Volume 7 Number 2*, April - June 2005

⁵⁴ What makes "farce" so important to Kierkegaard is its imperfection, which is like everyday life. Children

love the theater of farce and the comic effect.

ibid.157-158.

⁵⁵ Kierkegaard says that, in Greek terms, this is ‘the relation between the Eleatics and Heraclitus (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 148). Plato’s response was the doctrine of *anamnesis*, of *recollection*: the soul is immortal; over the course of its life, it has traversed the cosmos and hence knows everything. Therefore truth is a matter of recollection, finding out what we already know. In the doctrine of recollection, the changing self is anchored in the eternal, which can be immanently recollected.

⁵⁶ Constantius’ first conclusion is that repetition is impossible. He radicalizes this conclusion later by his remark that “the only repetition was the impossibility of repetition.” (Kierkegaard, 1983), p. 170).

⁵⁷ ibid. p. 148

⁵⁸ Kierkegaard defines three stages of existence: 1) the aesthetic, 2) the ethical, and 3) the religious. The *aesthetic* is a stage in which the individual is interested in pleasure and enjoyment. It is the life of “felt experience,” ranging from lust to a sublime appreciation of art. At whatever level of refinement, it is the life of the single individual living out his or her own experience. But this aesthetic stage is not characterized by the passionate engagement and

personal commitment that are characteristic of the higher stages of existence. The *ethical* is a higher stage of personal commitment, and the *religious* stage is the highest stage of personal commitment. Inwardness includes the ethical, ethical-religious, and religious stages of existence. The ethical life transcends the personal, and is based in what Hegel calls the "Absolute Mind." This life sees as its highest interest the common good of all people; it abandons individual pleasures or desires in favor of the universal. The religious life, like the aesthetic life, works on the level of the single individual. But here, the individual is in a direct relationship with God. Because the religious life is a personal matter, it cannot be explained or justified on an ethical level. There is no adequate verbal expression for the religious.

⁵⁹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. Edited and Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Faith is a category of decision-making in which an individual confronts an "either-or" situation, either accepting or rejecting subjectivity. Kierkegaard argues that the false nature of objectivity may be revealed by a lack of need for personal commitment,

and by a lack of need for decision-making. The truth of subjectivity may be revealed by a need for personal commitment, and by a need for decision-making. The speculative thinker attempts to stand apart from his or her own existence, and attempts to view existence objectively. In contrast, the subjective thinker realizes that he or she cannot stand apart from existence, and that the truth of one's own existence is found in his or her own subjectivity.

⁶⁰ Ibid. According to Kierkegaard, the objective point of view regarding the nature of truth is taken by speculative philosophy, while the subjective point of view regarding the nature of truth is taken by religious faith. Kierkegaard describes Hegel's philosophy as representing a speculative mode of thinking. While Hegel describes truth as a continuous world-historical process, and as the becoming of an absolute reality, Kierkegaard describes truth as a leap of faith, and as the becoming of the individual's subjectivity. While speculative thinking reflects on concrete things abstractly, subjective thinking reflects on abstract things concretely.

⁶¹ Anthony Kelly says that Jaynes's ideas are applied

to the pre-logical Hebrews notably by Rabbi James Cohn in his article “The Minds of the Bible: Speculations on the Cultural Evolution of Human Consciousness” (2007). Cohn regards the Biblical Abraham as pre-logical, saying: “Abraham is not a model of faith. . . . He is a product of his times. He hears and obeys. He cannot *not* obey the voice once he hears it.” Anthony Kelly, “Lonergan, Emergent Evolution and the Cosmic Process, *Quodlibet Journal*: Volume 8, 2009 (2007, 21). The *Quodlibet Online Journal of Christian Theology and Philosophy* is designed for articles that address theological and philosophical issues from a Christian perspective, and for articles from any perspective that deal critically with the theological and philosophical credentials of the Christian faith. See also Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness* (Pelican, 1982).

⁶² *ibid*, p. 205. Kierkegaard admits that subjectivity becomes comical when it is misplaced; i.e., when it is misinterpreted as objectivity. The subjective thinker may become either comical or tragic when he or she tries to achieve an objective certainty (or the highest possible degree of probability) concerning an aspect of truth that can only be known by faith. The same is true when a subjective thinker tries to achieve an

objective certainty by means of faith, which is defined by objective uncertainty. Finally, the subjective thinker may also become comical or tragic when he or she falsely pretends to be infinitely interested in attaining eternal happiness.

⁶³ *ibid*, pp. 197-99. "I need you, a man who knows how to complain so loudly that he is heard in heaven....One who has lost his beloved has in a sense lost sons and daughters...he, too, has in a sense been stricken with malignant sores."

⁶⁴ See Stuart Dalton, "Kierkegaard's Repetition as a Comedy in Two Acts," *Janus Head: Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature, Continental Philosophy, Phenomenological Psychology, and the Arts*.

⁶⁵ Having lost his queen, and seeing his hopes turn to ashes, the bitter Macbeth now comments on life in caustic words.

The rest of the quotation:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,

To the last syllable of recorded time,

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle!

*Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.*

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, Act 5, Scene 5, lines 22-31.

In another interpretation, Cheung suggests that Macbeth suffers from Kierkegaardian “dread” — a fear of the indefinite that excites anxiety and a desire for the forbidden. King-Kok Cheung (1984) applies Søren Kierkegaard's notion of existential dread to *Macbeth*, observing the effects of an ominous, ambivalent, and indefinable fear that suffuses the drama. King-Kok Cheung. “Shakespeare and Kierkegaard: ‘Dread’ in *Macbeth*.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35, no. 4 (winter 1984): 430-39.

⁶⁶ Hamlet frequently makes comments referring to every human body’s eventual decay. He notes that Polonius will be eaten by worms, that even kings are eaten by worms, and that dust from the decayed body of Alexander the Great might be used to stop a hole in a beer barrel.

⁶⁷ The quote in the book is: “I am at the end of my rope. I am nauseated by life; it is insipid—without salt and meaning. If I were hungrier than Pierrot I would not choose to eat the explanation people offer. One sticks a finger into the ground to smell what country one is in; I stick my finger into the world—it has no smell. Where am I? What does it mean to say: the world? What is the meaning of that word? Who tricked me into this whole thing and leaves me standing here? Who am I? How did I get into the world? Why was I not asked about it, why was I not informed of the rules and regulations but just thrust into the ranks as if I had been bought by a peddling shanghaier of human beings? How did I get involved in this big enterprise.” *ibid.*, p. 200.

⁶⁸ Every general esthetic category runs aground on farce because its impact depends largely on self-activity. The viewer’s improvisation, the particular individuality comes to assert himself in a very non-scripted way and in his enjoyment is emancipated from all esthetic obligations to admire, to laugh and to be moved in the traditional way. *ibid.* 159

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 207-210.

⁷⁰ The "author" Constantin Constantius observes a young man who is passionately in love with a woman. It is a love that he had concealed for some time, but is now made known. The young man is

totally consumed in his desire for his beloved. Yet this love brings him into a state of melancholy. Constantius wonders “why this should be so.” He says that love is usually the cure for melancholy, not its cause. So the young man cannot fulfill his ethical duty by following through with his engagement.

⁷¹ This is a quotation made by the young man speaking in the story. *ibid.*, 200-201. It matches Mowrer’s own words spoken silently to himself.

⁷² *ibid.* 214.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 227. Constantius is pointing to the possibility of happiness and progress in existence but this can only be understood when one can see *Repetition* as a farce.

⁷⁴ Constantius says of the young man: “He is suffering from a misplaced melancholy high-mindedness, that belongs nowhere except in a poet’s brain.” He also seems to see comedy in the young man’s account of waiting to be struck by lightning. “It is impossible to get involved with him,” he writes, “because to correspond with a man who holds a trump card such as a thunderstorm in his hand would be ludicrous” “(*ibid.* p. 216).

⁷⁵ J. H. Keil and J. B Tucker, “Children who claim to remember previous lives: Cases with written records

made before the previous personality was identified.”
Journal of Scientific Exploration, 19(1): 91-101,
2005.

⁷⁶ This is roughly a close quotation. (Job 14:7, 19)

⁷⁷ (Psalm. 37:7)

⁷⁸ Bertrand Russell, “A Free Man’s Worship,” in *Why I Am not a Christian*, Edited Paul Edwards. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), p. 107.

⁷⁹ Albert Camus offers Sisyphus' eternal punishment as the archetype of meaningless existence. See his book, *The Myth of Sisyphus*.

⁸⁰ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*. Trans. David Wills. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995.) In deconstructionist terms, the word *Gift* suggests a *Name* for the ineffable. The *Gift* goes beyond conceptualization and underlies human nature. It escapes categorization, but it provides the context within which all philosophy and religion take place. Derrida's translations in English point to this, with other titles such as *On the Name* (Stanford Univ. Press, 1995) and *Given Time* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁸¹ Derrida analyzes the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka's *Heretical Essays on the Philosophy of History* (Open Court Publishing: Chicago, 1995). Patočka understands the development of the “mysterious” in terms of “orgiastic” religion that gave way to Platonism, which in turn gave way to Christianity. Patočka argues for the superiority of Christianity solely in terms of its understanding of the *mysterium tremendum*. Christianity's “superiority” is defined in terms of the universally accessible *tremendum*. From Patočka, Derrida sees the *mysterium tremendum* as that which produces the terrible (*tremendum*) realization that what is required (of us) is our entire being. The *mysterium* rouses us to the responsibility of making a gift of our death, that is, of sacrificing one's self in the face of God. The *Gift* is then a boundless, “placeless location,” where all deconstruction takes place and progresses.

⁸² Derrida examines Heidegger and Levinas' claim that giving one's life for “the other” is the purest demonstration of individuality, an act requiring complete autonomy and which no other can accomplish in one's stead. Heidegger's discussion of death is taken from *Time and Being*, in which the topic is incorporated into the discussion of one's responsibility over one's own death in situations calling for self-sacrifice. Here Derrida emphasizes

Heidegger's point that one cannot give one's life for another in the sense of replacing the other's death, since one's sacrifice cannot exempt the other from his or her own eventual death. Giving one's life for another amounts to giving oneself to death for some worthy reason. As he who sacrifices himself gains nothing for himself nor replaces the mortality of the other, Derrida writes, what is given "is not some thing, but goodness itself, a giving goodness, the act of giving or the donation of the gift. A goodness that must not only forget itself but whose source remains inaccessible to the donee." P. 41.

⁸³ Paul Tillich speaks critically of idolatry in terms of identity. All idolatry involves "absolutizing" holy symbols, making them identical with the Holy itself. He says we must have the courage to take meaninglessness into itself. This presupposes a relation to the ground of being which we have called "absolute faith." It is without a "special content", yet it is "not without content." The content of absolute faith is the "god above God." Absolute faith and its consequence, the courage that takes the radical doubt, the doubt about God, into itself, transcends the theistic idea of God." Paul Tillich. *Theism Transcended* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 185-190. See also *The Courage to Be*, in *The Essential Tillich: an anthology of the writings of Paul*

Tillich, ed. F. Forrester Church (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 187-190.

⁸⁴ David Novak, “Buber and Tillich”, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 29, 1992 (reprinted in: *Talking With Christians: Musings of A Jewish Theologian*, 2005)

⁸⁵ Derrida can take us to the limits of conceptual thinking, but not beyond, says, Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida, and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁸⁶ Joseph Goebbels wrote of the “Law of Sacrifice” in his “30 Articles of War for the German People.” They appeared in *Das Reich* on 26 September 1943. With the devastation of the German nation underway, he wrote in his pamphlet that the duty of the individual during war extends to “sacrificing his life for his nation.” Only such willingness to sacrifice, Goebbels explained, “transforms a collection of individuals into a people, and in a higher sense a nation.”

⁸⁷ The concern Parsons voices here has been long debated. Foucault’s attack on objectivity came in the form of a genealogical description of objectivity. He argued that the classification schemes are not universal and timeless; that there is a cultural rootedness to such classification schemes, and they

change over time. So the notion of objectivity only exists relative to our contingent schemes of classification. Derrida's critique of objectivity began with de Saussure's theory of language as a closed system of differences. Derrida went on to generalize this claim to all meaning. He then extended the concept of "text" to include everything, bridges, building, automobiles, etc. Everything became a text, which could only be interpreted according to a constantly evolving experience.

⁸⁸ *ibid.* p. 108. Derrida proposes understanding God as "the name of the possibility I have of keeping a secret that is visible from the interior but not from the exterior". "And he is made manifest... when there appears the desire and power to render absolutely invisible and to constitute within oneself a witness of that invisibility." *ibid.* p. 109.

⁸⁹ Weber said that we live in an age of "disenchantment." We are withdrawing from religion and myth and living more by fact and reason. We organize life from the top down in structures of hierarchy, specialization, regulation and control. We are "specialists without spirit, hedonists without heart."

⁹⁰ For example, Durkheim studied the causes of suicide found in the organization of society. *Egoistic suicide* resulted from too little social integration in

society. Those individuals who were not sufficiently bound to social groups (and therefore well-defined values, traditions, norms, and goals) were left with little social support or guidance, and tended to commit suicide on an increased basis. On the other hand, *Altruistic suicide* was a result of too much integration. Self-sacrifice existed among individuals who were so integrated into social groups that they lost sight of their individuality and became willing to sacrifice themselves to the group's interests, even if that sacrifice was their own life. The most common cases of the latter occurred among members of the military.

⁹¹ For Durkheim, religion is society's ideal vision of itself. Religion creates a social bond and makes social commitments through its “effervescence”; it produces individuals who are versed in sacrifice and asceticism and brings the group together around collective ritual and memory. Religion is the way societies become conscious of themselves and their history. The gods are collective forces personified. Religion is nothing more than a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things.”

Emile Durkheim, *Incest: The Nature And Origin of the Taboo* (New York: Lyle Stuart Inc. 1963). See also his other works: *Montesquieu and Rousseau:*

Forerunners of Sociology (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1968). *On Morality and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

⁹² Bellah examined American documents, like the presidential addresses, given on ceremonial occasions. He kept finding the strategic invocation of "God" and the complete absence of the word "Christ." This suggested the "transcendent, sacred nature" of the nation, while avoiding references to any particular institutionalized religious faith. Similar analyses of American civil religion developed the analogies that Durkheim had suggested, stressing the identity of "flag" and "totem." This also demonstrated the extent to which this conception of the sacred could not be opposed in a straightforward way to the secular. Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America." In *Religion in America*, edited by William G. McLoughlin and Robert N. Bellah, 3–23. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968. Also by Bellah, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Translated by Karen Fields. (NY: Free Press, 1995).

⁹³ Wright claims (optimistically) that people have found more and more ways to interact with their

neighbors in a mutually beneficial fashion. Robert Wright, *The Evolution of God* (Little, Brown, and Co., 2009). Wright draws mostly from the history of the Eastern religions of Abraham, in historical sequence: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, with little reference to Confucianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism.

⁹⁴ Bernard R. Ortiz De Montellano, *Aztec Medicine, Health, and Nutrition* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

⁹⁵ The sacrifices took place with fire. See E. Washburn Hopkins, *The Religions of India*, Handbooks on the History of Religions, No. 1 (Boston: Ginn, 1895); E. Washburn Hopkins, *The History of Religions* (New York: Macmillan, 1918).

⁹⁶ Robert L. Trivers, "The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism". *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, 46 (1): 35. 1971.

⁹⁷ Satyagraha is a synthesis of the Sanskrit words *Satya* (meaning "truth") and *Agraha* ("holding firmly to"). In Gandhi's words:

Truth (satya) implies love, and firmness (agraha) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement Satyagraha, that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence, and gave up the use of the phrase "passive

resistance”, in connection with it, so much so that even in English writing we often avoided it and used instead the word “satyagraha”... Gandhi, M.K. “Pre-requisites for Satyagraha,” *Young India* August 1, 1925.

⁹⁸ Historians propose that modern individualism emerged in Britain with the ideas of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham. Alexis de Tocqueville described them as significant to American culture. (“Individualism”, *Brittanica, Concise Encyclopedia.*) This developed further in the middle of the 18th century when Tocqueville and Kierkegaard were writing. According to an “individualist,” the *individual* is of supreme importance. At the same time, Robert Owen invented the word “socialism” in 1835 in publications of the "Association of all Classes of all Nations." It stood in opposition to individualism.

⁹⁹ This is from the memory of the author (Severyn Bruyn) who spoke with Norman Cousins at meetings in Wellesley and Cambridge.

¹⁰⁰ Cousins made this statement to the author in Wellesley, Massachusetts. Norman Cousins also served as chairman of the Committee for Sane Nuclear Policy in the 1950s, warning that the world was bound for a nuclear holocaust if the threat of the nuclear arms race was not stopped. Cousins became

an unofficial ambassador in the 1960s, facilitating communication between the Holy See, the Kremlin and the White House, helping lead to the Soviet-American test ban treaty. President John F. Kennedy and Pope John XXIII thanked him; the latter awarding him his personal medallion. He said his proudest moment was when Albert Einstein called him to Princeton University to discuss issues of nuclear disarmament and world federation.

¹⁰¹ In Japan Kagawa led a movement based on the principles of nonviolence. He organized protests in the streets and landed in prison. He worried that Japan might go to war with the United States, and in 1937 came to the United States to talk with Christians. See J. W. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience* (London: Allen & Unwin 1922); Julian Bell, ed., *We Did Not Fight* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935); Norman Thomas, *Is Conscience a Crime?* (New York: Vanguard 1928); James Peck, *We Who Would Not Fight* (New York: Lyle Stuart 1958).

¹⁰² Paul Tillich was a great influence on Martin Luther King. He argued that faith is not simply the will to believe. Without civil (nonviolent) action and the shedding of our blood for the love of others, there is no remission of sin. It is an affirmation of “the transcendent nature of ultimate reality.” This

transcendence is achieved by an act of acceptance and surrender. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1957), p. 7. See Paul Tillich's section on "The Reality of God" from Volume I of his *Systematic Theology*. Tillich defines God as "Being Itself" and proposes that humanity "participates in being itself". See Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 38, 56. See also Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 196; *My Search for Absolutes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 37. *Political Expectation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 156; *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 9, 32, 34.

¹⁰³ The Norwegian teachers' resistance is one of these nonviolent resistance campaigns that is worthy of extended notation. It is reported in the studies of Gene Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 2005). Also, Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973).

During the Nazi occupation, the Norwegian Fascist "minister-President," Vidkun Quisling, set out to establish the Corporative State on Mussolini's model, selecting teachers as the first "corporation." For this he created a new teacher's organization with compulsory membership and appointed as its leader the head of the

Hird, the Norwegian S.A. (storm troopers.) A compulsory Fascist youth movement was also set up. The underground called on the teachers to resist. Between 8,000 and 10,000 of the country's 12,000 teachers wrote letters to Quisling's Church and Education Department. All signed their names and addresses to the wording prescribed by the underground for the letter. Each teacher said he (or she) could not assist in promoting fascist education of the children or accept membership in the new teacher's organization. The government threatened them with dismissal and closed all schools for a month. Teachers held classes in private homes. Despite censorship, news of the resistance spread. Tens of thousands of letters of protest from parents poured into the government office. After the teachers defied the threats, about 1,000 male teachers were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Children gathered and sang at railroad stations as teachers were shipped through in cattle cars. In the camps, the Gestapo imposed an atmosphere of terror intended to induce capitulation. On starvation rations, the teachers were put through "torture gymnastics" in deep snow. When only a few gave in, "treatment" continued. The schools reopened, but the teachers still at liberty told their pupils they repudiated membership in the new organization and spoke of a duty to conscience. Rumors were spread that if these teachers did not give in, some or all of those arrested would be killed. After difficult inner wrestling, the teachers who had not been arrested almost without exception stood firm. Then, on cattle car trains and overcrowded steamers, the arrested teachers were shipped to a camp near Kirkenes, in the far north. Although Quisling's Church and Education Department stated that all was settled and that the activities of the new organization would cease, the teachers were kept at Kirkenes in miserable conditions, doing dangerous work. However, their suffering strengthened morale on the home front and posed problems for Quisling's regime. As Quisling once raged at the

teachers in a school near Oslo: "You teachers have destroyed everything for me!" Fearful of alienating Norwegians still further, Quisling finally ordered the teacher's release. Eight months after the arrests, the last teachers returned home to triumphal receptions. Quisling's new organization for teachers never came into being, and the schools were never used for fascist propaganda. After Quisling encountered further difficulties in imposing the Corporative State, Hitler ordered him to abandon the plan entirely.

¹⁰⁴ This revolution was nonviolent. People overthrew the dictator Ubico who identified with Hitler. Again it is documented in the works of Gene Sharp noted above and summarized below.

With the help of the secret police, General Jorge Ubico had ruled Guatemala since 1932. Ubico was extolled in some U.S. magazines as a "road-and-school dictator" the men who had faced his political police knew better. Time Magazine called him an admirer of Hitler's 1934 blood purge, and quoted Ubico: "I am like Hitler, I execute first and give trial afterwards." During World War II many U.S. troops were in Guatemala, which had joined the Allies. The Americans there promoted ideas of democracy for which, they said, the war was being fought. These appealed especially to Guatemalan students and young professional men. Other changes were undermining Ubico's position. Seizure of German-owned coffee fincas (plantations) in 1942 removed some of his supporters. Domestic issues were causing unrest, both among workers and within the business community. The dictator of nearby El Salvador, Martinez, had fallen a few weeks previously in the face of widespread nonviolent resistance. That proved to be a dangerous and contagious example. Action began in Guatemala, mildly - at first. In late May 1944, 45 lawyer asked the removal of the judge who tried most political opponents of the regime brought before a

civil court. Ubico asked for specific charges against the judge. Surprisingly, one newspaper was allowed to publish them. On the day prior to the annual parade of teachers and schoolchildren in tribute to the dictator, 200 teachers petitioned Ubico for a wage increase. Those who drafted the petition were arrested and charged with conspiracy against the social institution of the supreme government. The teachers replied with a boycott of the parade; they were fired. On June 20 a manifesto announced the formation of the Social Democrat party and called for opposition parties, social justice, lifting of the terror, and hemispheric solidarity. Students petitioned for university autonomy, rehiring of two discharged teachers, and release of two imprisoned law students. Unless the demands were granted within 24 hours, they threatened a student strike. Ubico declared a state of emergency. He called the opposition "Nazi-Fascist." Fearful, many student leaders sought asylum in the Mexican Embassy. However, young lawyers and professional men refused to submit to intimidation, and supported the students. On June 23rd the schoolteachers went on strike. Ubico had once said that if 300 respected Guatemalans were to ask him to resign, he would do so. On June 24th two men delivered the Memorial do los 311 to Ubico's office. The 311 prominent signers risked their lives. The document explained the reasons for unrest, asked effective constitutional guarantees, and suspension of martial law. The same day, students marched past the U.S. Embassy and emphasized reliance on nonviolent means. Officials seemed surprised at the form of this demonstration. A peaceful meeting that evening demanded Ubico's resignation. Later that night, however, police beat and arrested hundreds at a neighborhood religious and social celebration. Some blamed "drunken bandits, previously coached by the police"; others pointed to clashes between persons shouting anti-Ubico slogans and the dictator's strong-arm men. The next day the foreign minister summoned to the National Palace the two men who had delivered the Memorial

do los 311 - Carbonell and Serrano. The ex-head of the secret police joined in the meeting. Simultaneously, a demonstration took place before the National palace; against it the government massed platoons of soldiers, cavalry, tanks, armored cars, machine guns, and police armed with guns and tear gas bombs. Carbonell and Serrano were asked to "calm the people." Although all meetings had been banned, the men were permitted to meet with other "leaders" of the movement to seek a solution to the crisis. That afternoon women dressed in deep mourning prayed for an end to the night's brutalities at the Church of San Francisco in the center of Guatemala City. Afterward they formed an impressive silent procession; the cavalry charged and fired into the crowd. An unknown number were wounded and one, Maria Chincelli Recinos, a teacher, was killed. She became the first martyr: "The mask had been torn from the Napoleonic pose, revealing Ubico and his regime standing rudely on a basis of inhumanity and terror." Guatemala City responded with a silent paralysis. The opposition broke off talks with the government. Workers struck. Businessmen shut stores and offices. It was an economic shutdown. Everything closed. The streets were deserted. After attempts at a new parley failed, at Ubico's request the diplomatic corps arranged a meeting that afternoon between the opposition and the government. The delegates told Ubico to his face that during his rule "Guatemala has known nothing but oppression." Ubico insisted: "As long as I am president, I will never permit a free press, nor free association, because the people of Guatemala are not ready for a democracy and need a strong hand." The possibility of Ubico's resigning and the question of succession were discussed. The delegates were to sample public opinion. The opposition later reported to Ubico by letter the unanimous desire of the people that he resign. They again demanded the lifting of martial law, freedom of the press and association, and an end to attacks on the people. Petitions and messages from important

people poured into the palace; they also asked Ubico to resign. The silent economic shutdown of Guatemala City continued. The dictator's power was dissolving. On July 1st Ubico withdrew in favor of a triumvirate of generals. Immediate and unaccustomed political ferment followed. Labor and political organizations mushroomed, and exiles returned. General Ponce, one of the triumvirates, tried to install himself in Ubico's place. In October he faced another general strike and a student strike and was ousted by a coup d'etat. Difficult times were still ahead. "Energetic and cruel, Jorge Ubico could have put down an armed attack. He could have imposed his will on any group of disgruntled, military or civilian, and stood them up against a wall. But he was helpless against civil acts of repudiation, to which he responded with violence, until these slowly pushed him into the dead-end street where all dictatorships ultimately arrive: kill everybody who is not with you or get out." The movement that brought Waterloo to Guatemala's Napoleon was, fittingly, a peaceful, civilian action; the discipline, serenity and resignation with which it was conducted made it a model of passive resistance. Extensive use of nonviolence has occurred despite the absence of attention to the development of the technique itself. Its practice has been partly spontaneous, partly intuitive, partly vaguely patterned after some known case. It has usually been practiced under highly unfavorable conditions and with a lack of experienced participants or even experienced leaders. Almost always there were no advance preparations or training; little or no planning or prior consideration of strategy and tactics and of the range of methods. The people using it have usually has little real understanding of the nature of the technique which they sought to wield and were largely ignorant of its history. There were no studies of strategy and tactics for them to consult, or handbooks on how to organize the "troops," conduct the struggle, and maintain discipline. Under such conditions it is not surprising that there have been defeats or only partial victories, or that

violence has sometimes erupted - which, as we shall see, helps to bring defeat. With such handicaps, it is amazing that the practice of the technique has been as widespread, successful, and orderly as it has. Some men and women are now trying to learn more of the nature of this technique and to explore its potentialities. Some people are now asking how nonviolent action can be refined and applied in place of violence to meet complex and difficult problems. These intellectual efforts are a potentially significant new factor in the history of this technique. It remains to be seen what consequences this factor may have for the future development of nonviolent action. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973)

¹⁰⁵ Gene Sharp again discusses this story below in the books noted above.

The Soviet leaders expected that the massive invasion of Czechoslovakia by more than half a million Warsaw Treaty Organization troops would overwhelm the much smaller Czechoslovak army within days, leaving the country in confusion and defeat. The invasion would also make possible a coup d'etat to replace the reform-minded Dubcek regime with a conservative pro-Moscow one. With this in mind, the Soviet K.G.B. (state police) kidnapped the Communist Party's First Secretary, Alexander Dubcek; the Prime Minister, Oldrich Cernik; the National Assembly President, Josef Smrkovsky; and the National Front Chairman, Frantisek Kriegel. The Soviet officials held under house arrest the President of the Republic, Ludvik Svoboda, who was a popular soldier-statesman in both Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. They hoped that he would give the mantle of legitimacy to the new conservative regime. The kidnapped leaders might have been killed once the coup had been successful, as happened in Hungary in 1957.

But the country was not demoralized as a result of military defeat, for it was a different type of resistance that was waged. Nor did a puppet regime quickly replace the kidnapped leaders. The Czechoslovak officials sent emergency orders to all the armed forces to remain in their barracks. The Soviet leaders had expected that the situation would be so effectively under

control within three days that the invading troops could then be withdrawn. This did not happen, and as a result there were serious logistical and morale problems among the invading troops. Owing to resistance at several strategic points a collaborationist government was prevented, at least for about eight months - until April, 1969 when the Husak regime came in.

Resistance began in early hours of the invasion. Employees of the government news agency (C/T.K.) refused orders to issue a release stating that certain Czechoslovak party and government officials had requested the invasion. Also, President Svoboda courageously refused to sign the document presented to him by the conservative clique. Finally, it was possible through the clandestine radio network to convene several official bodies, and these opposed the invasion. The Extraordinary 14th Party Congress, the National Assembly, and what was left of the government ministers all issued statements by the Party Presidium before the arrival of the K.G.B. - that the invasion had begun without the knowledge of party governmental leadership; there had been no "request." Some of the bodies selected interim leaders who carried out certain emergency functions. The National Assembly went on to "demand the release from detention of our constitutional representatives - in order that they can carry out their constitutional functions entrusted to them by the Sovereign people of the country," and to "demand immediate withdrawal of the armies of the five states." The clandestine radio network during the first week both created many forms of resistance and shaped others: it convened the Extraordinary 14th Party Congress, called one-hour general strikes, requested the rail workers to slow the transport of Russian tracking and jamming equipment, and discouraged collaboration within the C.S.S.R. State Police. There is no record of any collaboration among the uniformed Public Police; indeed, many of them worked actively with the resistance. The radio argued the futility of acts of violence and the wisdom of nonviolent resistance. It instructed students in the streets to clear out of potentially explosive situations and cautioned against rumors. The radio was the main means through which a politically mature and effective resistance was shaped. Colin Chapman has observed "each form of resistance, however effective it might have been alone, served to strengthen the other manifestations," and through the radio different levels of resistance and different parts of the country were kept in steady communication. With many government agencies put out of operation by Russian occupation of their offices, the radio also took on certain emergency functions (such as obtaining manpower

to bring in potato and hops harvest) and provided vital information. This ranged from assuring mothers that their children in summer camp were safe to reporting meager news of the Moscow negotiations. Militarily totally successful, the Russians now faced a strong political struggle. In face of unified civilian resistance, the absence of a collaborationist government, and the increasing demoralization of their troops, the Soviet leaders agreed on Friday, the 23rd, that President Svoboda would fly to Moscow for negotiations. Svoboda refused to negotiate until Dubcek, Cernik, and Smrkovsky joined the discussions. In four days a compromise was worked out. This left most of the leaders in their positions but called for the party to exercise more fully in its "leading role," and left the Russian troops in the country. The compromise seems also to have included the sacrifice of certain reform-minded leaders and reforms. That first week the entire people had in a thousand ways courageously and cleverly fought an exhilarating battle for their freedom. The compromise, called the Moscow Protocol, created severely mixed feelings among the people. Observers abroad saw this as an unexpected success for the nation and its leaders; an occupied country is not supposed to have bargaining power. But most Czechs and Slovaks saw it as a defeat and for a week would not accept it. The leaders were apparently doubtful of the disciplined capacity of the populace for sustained resistance in the face of severe repression. Despite the absence of prior planning or explicit training for civilian resistance, the Dubcek regime managed to remain in power until April 1969, about eight months longer than would have been possible with military resistance. The Russians subsequently gained important objectives, including the establishment of a conservative regime. The final outcome of the struggle and occupation remains undetermined at this writing. Nevertheless, this highly significant case requires careful research and analysis of its methods, problems, successes, and failures.

¹⁰⁶ *Kierkegaard's Writings Vol. IV, Either/Or, Part II*. Translated by Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton University Press, 1988) (2:218)

¹⁰⁷ Leslie Zeigler "Personal Existence: A Study of Buber and Kierkegaard", *The Journal of Religion*,

Vol. 40, No. 2 (Apr., 1960), pp. 80-94. Buber's I-Thou philosophy implies a reversal of the idealist and mystical attitude toward symbolism. See Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (NY: Free Press, 1971). Also, Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1946), pp. 90-100, 150-160; Whitehead, *Process and Reality, An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), pp. 521-532.

¹⁰⁸ Isaiah writes: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon His is shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful...of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end." (*Isaiah* 9:6-7).

¹⁰⁹ Mark Taylor says that philosophers are so abstract that they seem irrelevant to actual life. In *Field Notes from Elsewhere* (Columbia University Press), Taylor says he has been suspended between Hegel and Kierkegaard. He meditates on his personal experiences and tells of a severe illness he suffered in December 2005 when he went into septic shock and fell critically ill. He argues that it is mistaken to presuppose that "we are inherently cut off from the world." When we act, we act with our bodies, but little is "consciously articulated". It is only against an unarticulated background that "representations" can

make sense to us. Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood*. (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1980.)

¹¹⁰ Anti-Climacus, Kierkegaard's author in *The Sickness Unto Death*, argues that the "self" is composed of different aspects that must be brought into balance in human consciousness. This includes: "the finite, the infinite," a consciousness of the "relationship of the two to itself," and an awareness of "the power that posited" the self.

¹¹¹ These are the words of Thomas Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion* (NY: HarperOne, 1996).

¹¹² Alfred North Whitehead. *The Function of Reason*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1929).