

# Opera Omnia

## Volume X Philosophy and Theology

*Part One*  
The Rhythm of Being

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ORBIS  BOOKS  
Maryknoll, New York 10545

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

μελέτατο πᾶν  
“Cultivate the whole”<sup>1</sup>

### A. All or Nothing

*Cal fer pura a tot o re  
la jugada, com si ho fos:  
qui no mori d'amorós,  
l'amor no el prendrà a mercè.*

You've got to play the game  
for keeps, all or nothing:  
If you won't die for love,  
love won't lend you its wings.<sup>2</sup>

—Carles Riba

These lectures represent both daring and danger. Either they will convey a wisdom that has been gestating for millennia and assimilate the insights of our ancestors by extracting their *rasa* (sap, quintessence), which still retains its fragrance for our world, or else they will fail to achieve this aim and will be nothing more than interesting *doxai* (opinions).

It is also true, however, that every tradition has warned us not to pretend to unravel the mystery of the universe, not to search for things above ourselves or beyond our powers.<sup>3</sup> Teachers of all sorts have repeated the refrain that one must curb—or, as they may prefer to say, educate and train—the enthusiasms of the best students. In short, the untrodden path is a contradiction in terms. If it is a path, it is not untrodden; if it is untrodden, it is not a path. Yet, as the

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<sup>1</sup> Periandros of Corinth (although other interpretations are possible).

<sup>2</sup> Charles Riba, *Salvatge cor* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1974), XXVI.

<sup>3</sup> V. gr. *Sirach* III, 22.

*Dhammapada* says, “there is no path in the sky,”<sup>4</sup> or as San Juan de la Cruz writes, “on the summit there is no way,”<sup>5</sup> because at that level the very idea of way is inapplicable. There is no way, not because it is untrodden, but because there is nowhere to go once the goal has been reached, or rather, once way and goal merge. The ultimate *upāya* is *anupāya*, the last way or means [to realization] is no-way; there are no means, as Abhinavagupta says.<sup>6</sup> The same insight also reverberates in chinese wisdom and among christian, muslim, and many other mystics. Life as rhythm needs no way.

On the other hand, practically all masters say that to pretend we have reached *nirvāṇa*, that we are realized souls, that *satori* is already behind us, is yet another contradiction. The very fact of affirming it proves that we have not yet attained the realm of the ineffable. No realized person would ever say so.

This is the challenge of the “all or nothing” voiced above by the catalan poet, who invokes a multisecular wisdom: The enterprise may fail. It will certainly fail if we do not dissolve the dilemma, overcome dialectics, and convert logical contradiction into an experiential polarity wherein the “all” is the other “side” (*alter*, not *aliud*) of “nothing.” *Śūnyatā*, emptiness, is not Non-Being interpreted as the contradiction of Being. Here, the english word “nothingness,” unlike the spanish *nada*, may be misleading. We should be able to overcome (not deny) the “mental,” to speak and think in symbols instead of only using concepts, and to some degree unfold qualified tautologies in order to reach wholeness together and enjoy its radiance. The *metanoia* of the Gospels means more than a “change of mind”; it means to “overcome the mental.”

This risk of all or nothing is real and concrete to me. After a lifetime of study, after an effort to assimilate the honey of wisdom (the *madhu* of the Upanishads) from as many human phyla as I could, dare I now present a vision that is not a system? Am I able to offer a real symbol and not merely a sterile sign? Will this meditation bear a fruit that stems not from me but from the very Life of Being?

An immediate response, not totally convincing, is that this enterprise is not so new or daring after all, but simply an effort to bring about a certain harmony in the human experience. This would be fair justification. I claim no more than to continue tradition, to reinterpret the traditional wisdoms of our ancestors from the extraordinary vantage point of our times. It is easy to criticize Plato and to find fault with Śankara, but this is possible not only because we are heir to centuries of decantation, but also because they are thinkers on whom we still lean in order to overcome their own philosophical schemes.

Yet this response, if not wrong, is not totally convincing for those, at least, who are aware of the myth of history. We are historical beings, but we are more (not less) than history. I mentioned the idea of a *creatio continua*, as the radical newness of each “moment”—not only of time but also of space, and

<sup>4</sup> *Dham* XVIII, 20.

<sup>5</sup> San Juan de la Cruz, *Subida del monte Carmelo*, Frontispiece.

<sup>6</sup> Abhinavagupta, *Tantrāloka* I, 45.

ultimately of reality. Reality has no inertia, like a body moving in an empty space and along a neutral time, because space and time already belong to reality. Passing from time  $b$  to time  $c$  is as mysterious and “new” as coming to time  $b$  from time  $a$ .

Speaking in the language of our times, we may say that we are at a crossroads not only in human destiny but in the very history of reality. These are the “signs of the times” that I will attempt to understand by standing under the spell, the beauty, the truth, and also the burden of that selfsame Destiny which I am trying to detect under the metaphor of rhythm. Or is it more than a metaphor? Rhythm may perhaps lead us further up (*meta-phorein*), but further than Being? Or is Being itself a metaphor? For Nothingness? *All, or Nothing? This is the issue: to overcome the dilemma!*

### 1. *The Choice of the Topic*

The most excruciating decision for me has been choosing the topic, the *topos*, the place from where to say “it.” Closely tied to this is the method of approach and exposition. I am aware that the etymology of choice discards whim, even my own will, but suggests taste and enjoyment (*gustare, jusate*). I have to choose what I “perceive” as the most important topic objectively (I need a clear insight) and subjectively (I must have a pure heart). No minor challenge indeed.

*Our topic is about the very meaning of reality*, but to ask about the “meaning” of a thing is different when asking about reality because we cannot make reality an object that would leave the (asking) subject outside it. The solution to the question about reality is bound to dissolve, to disappear as a question, and to reach a “new innocence.” So our question has to emerge from reality itself through us, who are also real. If reality is not to become a mere abstraction, we need to incorporate our vision of the concrete reality we perceive, especially when that reality is human. How do we see it?

In a world of crisis, upheaval, and injustice, can we disdainfully distance ourselves from the plight of the immense majority of the peoples of the world and dedicate ourselves to “speculative” and/or “theoretical” issues? Do we not thereby fall prey to the powers of the status quo, which, in some countries at least, are willing to leave intellectuals in peace provided they do not upset the System? Can we really do “business as usual” in a world in which half of our fellow beings suffer from Man-made causes? Is our theory not already flawed by the praxis from which it proceeds? Are we not puppets in the hands of an oppressive System, lackeys to the powers that be, hypocrites who succumb to the allure and flattery of money, prestige, and honors? Is it not escapism to talk about the Trinity while the world falls to pieces and its people suffer all around us? Is this not merely regression to a pre-scientific and pre-critical attitude? Is indulging in speculation about such seemingly impractical ideas not a betrayal of those who still expect some saving power from humanistic studies? Is, for instance, the Trinity any help in the planetary ecological crisis?

I expect to demonstrate that the *importance* of this topic relates directly to the *urgency* of our present human and earthly predicament.

The question of science and technocracy, which has been occupying my thinking for many years, may seem more urgent, but in the final analysis the problem of the Divine is synonymous with the ultimate meaning of Life. The topic is not theological quibble or merely conceptual lucubration. It stands for the final question of Man when confronted with a challenge to the very meaning of being human, real, and alive—in other words, when confronted with the problem of Being and its survival.

All of us would do well to recall the protests of the powerless against the powerful for their silences, complicities, and outright crimes. We are all co-responsible for the state of the world. Today's powers, though more anonymous and more diffused, are quite as cruel and terrible as the worst monsters of history. What good is a merely intellectual denunciation in countries where we can say anything we like because it is bound to remain ineffectual? Our nominalistic world drowns words in the sea of its own technobabble. There is little risk in denouncing provided we do not move a finger. Is it not sheer hypocrisy just to "denounce" in order to tranquilize our conscience?

Do we really take the peoples of the world into consideration? Have we seen the constant terror under which the "natives" and the "poor" are forced to live? What do we really know about the hundreds of thousands killed, starved, tortured, and *desaparecidos*, or about the millions of displaced and homeless people who have become the statistical commonplaces of the mass media? In this just elapsed century of "civilized Man" and "planetary civilization" there have been over a hundred million people slaughtered in wars. We have *not* progressed—not even economically. We live in a world in which during the 1980s there were over three million deaths in warfare (over two thousand every day), two and a half million of whom were civilians. In the same period, the GNP of Africa and Latin America *decreased* by 15 percent—which, if we discount the wealthy elites, probably means a 30 percent decrease for most of the people. At present, after more than twenty years of "technological progress," the situation is even worse.

The problem is urgent. Our good intentions are not enough, and these very intentions are not without presuppositions. Rather, we must assume that the role of the philosopher is to search for a truth (something that has saving power) and not to chase after irrelevant verities. We must assume, moreover, that the ivory tower mentality is an escapism, and that intellectuals ought to be incarnated in their own times and have an exemplary function. This further implies that the task may not be merely rational, and that the elaboration of an overall vision of reality is relevant for human life because we are more than rational animals and we are certainly more than mere machines. As Nietzsche says, "Because you lie about that which is, you do not catch the thirst for that which should be."<sup>7</sup> If

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<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche, *Grossoktavausgabe*, XII, 279: "Weil ihr über das, was ist, lügt, darum entsteht / euch nicht der Durst nach dem was werden soll."

we are too comfortably seated on our social privileges, our intellectual inertia will prevail and we just will not see the real situation. We do not want to see it because we are living a lie, as Christ said<sup>8</sup> long before Nietzsche.

Without this thirst for “living waters” there is no human life, no dynamism, no change. Thirst comes from lack of water. We have all kinds of soda pop, which may satisfy our immediate taste for superficial explorations, but they cannot quench our existential thirst for the reign of justice. Without this thirst we simply do not see the real predicament of the world nor do we realize the drastic changes (the radical *metanoia*) we must undertake both inside and outside ourselves. We are dealing with something that is more than an academic challenge. It is a spiritual endeavor to live the life that has been given us.

Now the foremost way to communicate life is to live it, but this life is neither exclusively public domain nor merely private property. Neither withdrawing from the world nor enmeshing ourselves in it is the responsible human attitude, although obviously we must respect individual options. How then do we answer to the cries of the peoples that our present “cybernetic” civilization tries to keep away from the public eye by isolating them into “third worlds” of all sorts? I ask this in spite of well-intentioned friends who advised me to spare such reflections in a respectable academic work.

Neither an accurate analysis of the ills of the world nor a violent attack against the unjust status quo will be truly effective. Need we say that all the saints and prophets have failed? If they preached an earthly paradise, it has not come to be even after at least six thousand years. No Messiahs sacred or profane have delivered the goods. This past century has been, in the evaluation of many thinkers of the right and of the left, one of the worst periods in human history. Evil offers neither religious consolations nor unconscious excuses. If those prophets preached otherworldly compensations or offered *karma* explanations, such teachings have lost credibility for the majority.

History shows that when good management is too successful, a positive reform too drastic or a just victory too glamorous, then almost automatically abuses, exaggerations, and injustices set in. Christians know what happened when the Cross of Christ became the hilt of a victorious sword. Could it perhaps be that the message of the sages was directed not toward bringing back a historical paradise, but toward helping us to open a “third eye” by which we could see and live another dimension of reality? The experience of this third dimension, without alienating us from the world, allows us to live a full and realistic life in this world of ours. It liberates us from the despair of impotency and the anxiety of a barren existence. It does not prevent us from shedding tears, but as the spirituality of the *bodhisattva* and the Sermon on the Mount assure us, tears are not an obstacle for experiencing joy and peace. Furthermore, this experiential vision, liberating us from all fear, empowers us to work for the enhancement or perhaps transformation of the human condition. As the Jewish legend says, only

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<sup>8</sup> Jn VIII, 44.

a handful of saints sustain the world. This book does not want to be an exercise in futility or a display of information. We shall still return to its aim.

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Thinking through the topic, I have often wondered whether I was trying to cover so much ground that I would be obliged to treat everything superficially. How can one dispatch monotheism in a single chapter, for instance? I was tempted to abandon such an ambitious project and to concentrate instead on a single sub-topic, thus seemingly gaining in depth what I would lose in breadth.

Three motives have sustained me against yielding to the demon of discouragement. One is very personal. If in the sunset of my intellectual and spiritual life I still have to renounce the Whole and be satisfied with partial achievements, there must be something wrong—either with myself or with the very method for discovering the meaning of life as a whole. When are we to come of age? Or, christianly speaking, for when and whom have we reserved the Resurrection?

The second motive is intellectual; it contests the validity of the facile simile regarding depth and breadth. Philosophical activity is not like scientific inquiry; everything is interconnected. You cannot investigate a portion of reality without being involved with all of it. In a word, the vision of the whole is not the sum of its parts. It is another type of vision. Yet, in spite of all the delays and complications in preparing the ground, and irrespective of the difficulty of putting my message into languages that are so unaccustomed to *śabdabrahman* (ultimate words), what I have to say is relatively simple. There is farsighted wisdom in Lord Gifford's will in which he called for delivering popular lectures. He was encouraging us to say things that will truly be significant for people's lives.

The third motive is political. Consciously and/or unconsciously, the status quo can be maintained more easily if the citizens of the world are kept busy with their own specializations and are deprived of the intellectual instruments and political means to challenge the present state of affairs. We are allowed to complain in our specialized fields and even to suggest changes, but the power of the dominating culture discourages and makes it almost impossible to have a view of the Whole. Reforms are welcome, but transformation is mistrusted.

Our present-day civilization cynically asks: How can anybody have the ambition of knowing everything? I reply: How can anybody resign oneself to going through this life without knowing what is to be known in order to be a full person?

I would like to help awaken the dignity and responsibility of the individual by providing a holistic vision. We are not ants. To use an old initiation formula, each of us is a "king, a prophet, and a priest"—which could be interpreted as saying that freedom is our personal calling.

In short, *the choice of the topic* is determined by the need to overcome the inertia of the mind, the laziness of our heart, and the fear in our lives, thus contributing to the freedom of our being. The choice of the *topic* is not prompted by a desire simply to defend the individual freedom on which our responsibility

rests, but rather to inquire about that selfsame *freedom of Being* on which our human and cosmic dignity is grounded.

## 2. *The Context*

The “nuclear threat” should not be minimized and the human predicament cannot be ignored; a “business-as-usual” mentality is irresponsible. In choosing an apparently theoretical topic, however, I am not in the least departing from the concrete human condition of our times. Yet, we should have no fear of either individual or collective death.

The Trinity, as we shall see, is immediately relevant to the political, economic, and ecological predicament of the earth. Which world is being menaced? What is this world that we inhabit? Who is being threatened? It is no excuse to say, “All these are theoretical questions, but the bomb and the poor are real whether we care about them or not, whether we believe in them or not.” One may equally well retort that God is as real as the bomb, or that the *brahmaloka* (world of Brahma) is as much of a fact, for believer and unbeliever alike. We should not present world problems from the perspective of only one worldview.

I am too conscious of the “concordant discord” of our times to assume that I speak only for myself in an individualized way. I am an inheritor of and a speaker for multitudes of fellow beings living through the same modern predicament. I am not claiming that the *nous poiētikos* of Aristotle, the *illuminatio* of Augustine, the *intellectus agens* of Thomas Aquinas and Ibn Rushd, the transcendental imagination of Kant, the *esse intentionale* of the neo-thomists, the *Dasein* of Heidegger, and so on, are all the same notions or respond to a similar problematic. However, I am saying, first, that these apparently abstruse theories have a practical relevance for our lives; second, that there is a “discordant concord” in all these *homeomorphic equivalents*; and third, that this continuous discontinuity of traditions might constitute a symphony if we could “hear” the ideas of these thinkers in a creative way.

Already in the fifth century BC Heraclitus wrote: “invisible harmony [is] more powerful than the visible.”<sup>9</sup> This greek idea was also widely accepted by the latins and continued during the Renaissance preceding the humanistic theme of the *concordia discors*.<sup>10</sup> This is a pertinent idea now that the enthusiasms of the self-appointed “Enlightenment” have subsided, and we may be better able to entertain the idea that what we call *the* “world” is not all that there is to it.

I join here the *philosophia perennis*, not in any sectarian sense, nor as an immutable interpretation or monopolistic appropriation, but by joining the voices of tradition in a critical attitude of listening to what has gone before and

<sup>9</sup> Heraclitus, *Fragm. 54*: ἀρμονία ἀφανὲς φανερώς κρείττον.

<sup>10</sup> Seneca in the first century wrote: “Tota haec mundi concordia ex discordibus constat” (“The entire harmony of the world consists of discordant elements”). Seneca, *Naturalium quaestiones* VII, 27, 4.

of participating in “handing over” (*tradere*) the accumulated wisdom of bygone ages. Man, like a plant, also has roots. An uprooted philosophy is all too easily carried away by the weakest winds of fashion. *Perennis* does not mean everlasting or immutable. The very word (*per annus*) suggests, like the “seasonal course of the stars” of Cicero,<sup>11</sup> an accommodation to all the seasons, the rhythms of the year. Nor should we forget the image of a revolving and passing thing contained in the very word *annus* (year).

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We have to overcome the assumption that anything important should be complicated. On hearing an updated version of the ptolemaic system, the thirteenth-century king of Castille, Alfonso X el Sabio, said that if he had been the dear God, he would have made things a good deal less complicated. Modern science, however, consciously or unconsciously, cultivates a sort of *disciplina arcani*, only for the initiated. You cannot pretend to understand anything of molecular biochemistry, for instance, if you are not well trained in at least three disciplines.

Human wisdom is not like that. It is like the Gospel, understandable to all because it concerns all. Of course, this does not mean that strenuous work is not needed before formulating or transmitting it, or that it can easily be received by hearts and minds stuffed with egotism and vanity. Nor does it mean that words are not necessary or that many of the present-day languages have not undergone a considerable impoverishment which makes them unfit for dealing with metaphysical and spiritual matters.

Many of those people who busy most of their time with the rich technocratic complex of modern culture have lost a sense of the cosmic and mystical dimensions of life. Modern Man is mainly *homo habilis* (skillfull Man), and the intellectual *homo sociologicus*, or at most *politicus*. Most discussions among “educated” elites revolve around political events as presented by the mass media. People will attack or defend the present-day system, but the horizon within which the very problematic is viewed will be the sociopolitical (economic) context, perhaps with a fringe of ethical nuance. But there it stops. At a more intimate level, the modern mentality recognizes personal problems with metaphysical overtones every day, but these retain only individualistic interest. It is a telling paradox that the universal God (if he exists) has been tolerated as a private concern.

Perhaps people interested in metaphysical questions have always been a minority. The difference, however, is that not so long ago these speculative problems were seen to be intimately connected with practical and political questions. Today they seem only a luxury for unoccupied minds. When the women in the marketplace were discussing the *filioque* in the fourth century in Asia Minor, they might not have understood the intricacies of trinitarian theology, but they sensed very clearly that those theoretical issues had a direct bearing on their own

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<sup>11</sup> Cicero, *Natura Deorum* II, 56: *perennis stellarum cursus*.

lives. The “heresies” of centuries past were also political problems. We should be aware that we always speak from within a given context, and that we must stand somewhere in order to “under-stand.”

*Our context is the overall situation of contemporary Man in our world.*

### 3. *The Aim*

In a more academic mood I would have written “The Pretext.” A transparent hermeneutic of a *text* needs to know not only its *context* but also its *pretext*. What is our aim?

*Archaic Man* had an orientation in life. Life was not easy or at the service of the individual. The world was perhaps even more a “vale of tears” than for some of our contemporaries, but it all had a meaning, a coherent narrative, an intentionality. This meaning was cosmic, indeed theocosmic. Everything was part of a cosmic cycle, the result of *karma*, past actions, the will of the Gods, the *daivāsūram* struggles (of good and evil spirits), the destiny of Heaven, the decree of Providence, or the like.

*Historical Man* has tried to put human destiny into human hands. For a long while now, people have lived under the myth or “spell” of history, which is seen as the unfolding of the highest intelligence, the field of *dharma*, the anteroom of the city of God, the manifestation of the Spirit, or even the triumph of the fittest. Human life is seen as a struggle for the future, as a search for a place in history (even if in a low key). Today history is becoming democratized; it no longer depends theoretically on the whims of *brahmins* and *kṣatriyas*, priests and nobility, or even of the Deity. Anyone can become not only president of the republic but a voter in the universal human poll, or a big player in the great mass media spectacle. History is this screen where the “divine” and/or “human” comedy is being played out.

Both myths have collapsed. Eternal returns, *kalpa*, cosmic liturgies, *axes mundi*, and the like become less and less plausible, even for those who still live in such cultural universes. The manifestation of God in History, the universal democracy, the value of the individual, and the meaningfulness of history are no longer readily credible. Marxism may have been the last intellectual effort to rescue human optimism in history. Spartacus, in the slave war against Rome in the first century BC, was defeated; for one victorious David there were hundreds, if not thousands, of victorious Goliaths; 85 percent of the indigenous populations of America was wiped out—if not by guns, then by the biological and cultural viruses that the conquerors carried with them. There have been many slave rebellions before and after Spartacus, and plenty of atrocities before and since the conquistadors, but the consciousness of this recurring pattern is relatively new. These crimes were not the exceptions but the rule. Even today. No need to go back to witch-hunts and the slave trade: Auschwitzes, Gulags, repressions, and “sanctions” of all kinds, from both the right and the left, the massive presence of two billion of our fellow beings eking out their lives today in sub-human conditions (at a time when we boast of being able technically to solve all

their problems), have so thoroughly undermined the belief in the saving power of history—whether as the will of God, the manifestation of Absolute Spirit, or the dawn of a utopian Future—that the very idea of Christendoms, Sacred Empires, World Democracies and global Orders as the collective construction of a better future has lost appeal and credibility. Its last bulwark seems to be the promised paradise of globalization, which finds increasing resistance and may soon be abandoned.

In any case, technocracy is still the prevailing myth. It promises immediate gratification of immediate needs, even if these are artificially created. Technocracy, however, is not a Messiah for the future, but a Santa Claus for the present—and for the majority of people it does not deliver the goods. Ecological consciousness, genetic engineering, science fiction, and escapist drugs, heterogeneous as they may seem, all have in common this disenchantment with history and the dream of taking our destiny into our own hands, but the ground is shifting beneath our very feet. In brief, an orientation does not seem to come from above nor are we able to orient ourselves from below.

What, then, is a plausible narrative for humanity today?

My first aim would be to contribute to such an orientation, but my fear is that today we need something more; the very Orient has faded away for many. The dawn does not chase away the clouds, and when a certain light appears we know neither where it has come from nor where it leads. Things are visible, we analyze and even enjoy them, but we do not see the sun, even if we have powerful telescopes.

The original title of these lectures was “The Dwelling of the Divine in the Contemporary World,” but the problem is that God has become a superfluous hypothesis for the prevalent modern civilization. The trains run, the planes fly, the skyscrapers stand, telecommunications work, independently of whether or not God exists.

Obviously, I cannot disperse the clouds or change the course of the sun. Nor is my aim to preach resignation or rebellion. We need first to describe the *topos*, the locus where this Orient may shine. This Orient is neither merely outside nor exclusively inside us. The dwelling place of the Divine is no-where, perhaps because it is now-here.

I could try to express the same aim in a single word: *hope* !

What our contemporaries most lack is hope. Everybody has faith—in one thing or another. Love, of all sorts, is also present everywhere. We believe in so many ideas and love so many things, but our culture has little hope. Most people drag their feet along without much enthusiasm and need a variety of stimuli to go on living with a certain joy. Existence, for many has become boring, when not a burden. Here we need to dispel a misunderstanding: hope is not of the future. Hope should not be confused with a certain optimism about the future which only betrays a pessimism about the present. Hope is not the expectation of a bright tomorrow. *Hope is of the invisible.*

Love is more directly related to the first eye, the sensitivity of senses, although it can soar up to the *amor Dei intellectualis* (intellectual love of God)

of a Spinoza. Faith is closer to the reality opened to the second eye, the intellectual aspect of reality. Hope has a deeper relationship with the third eye, the inner dimension of the real. Hope opens up our vision of this third dimension which has been so undeveloped in recent generations. The shift in meaning in the common use of the word is related to a lack of contemplation and is highly significant: hope has gone from a discovery of a hidden meaning of the present, or of an otherwise invisible aspect of the real, to an expectation of change for the better in the future; from a plunge into the present to a projection into the future. The world in which we live seems to make us believe that the visible and rational universe is the only reality. These lectures aim at communicating an effective hope in the deepest dimension of our world.

There is an urge in the human being toward beauty, truth, and goodness, which entails and demands freedom, joy, and peace. My aim is to point toward that truth that makes us free. Even after experiencing the pluralism of truth, we still strive for growth and wish to cultivate a certain aspiration for wholeness. Some “believe” that this wholeness is embodied in God, others in Being, others in Emptiness, others in humanness, others in “regional truths.” We may call this urge the very dynamism of Being, the grace of God, human nature, or just an illusion. At any rate, we all aspire to understand this urge, and we may use the word “truth” to symbolize both the dynamism and its goal. In the western tradition this was called *prōtē philosophia*, the first philosophy, or variously, theology, ontology, or metaphysics (we will not indulge in outlining all the distinctions here in this context).

What I have been saying so far cuts the Gordian knot of our historical intricacies. If Man were only a historical creature, human life would be a tragedy for a vast majority of our fellow beings who do not make it onto the canvas of history. Man is certainly a historical animal, but history does not exhaust his being, and this affirmation does not necessarily say that there is life *after* death. The mystery of human life is not just a temporal phenomenon.

My effort is not directed to a deconstruction of onto-theology or to an overcoming of metaphysics, or even to the question of Being. It is an attempt, rather, at a defense of what in the West still has no better name than philosophy. I am aware of both the ambition of this intention, and its simplicity. The ambition is plain. Thirty to sixty centuries of human experience are involved. The simplicity is equally obvious, for the intention is not (and cannot reasonably or credibly be) to build another more perfect system, but to recover the original insight of Man when confronted by the mystery of the real. *My aim is to present a possible orientation in the selva oscura, the dark wood of our present-day situation.*

#### 4. *The Theme*

After this candid declaration of intention, our theme should be simple, although difficult to explain. It purports to deal with the ultimate meaning of human life. We cannot, however, disconnect our particular lives from Life as such. This Life is lived by us human beings on Earth and under Heaven—and this has

been the prevalent human consciousness throughout the ages. Heaven, Earth, and Man are three irreducible and inclusive elements of human experience. Because the three are intertwined and correlated, we cannot isolate them, but we shall concentrate on the most neglected of the three in our times: the Divine.

After some introductory remarks on method and on various aspects of the topic I shall approach what I consider the ultimate question of a thinking being, proceeding to criticize the old answers about the Divine, while underscoring the fact that ours is a constructive critique. These preliminaries may make room for a deeper awareness of the divine Mystery. I will try to overcome a rigid monotheism by presenting the intuition of the Trinity as a more accurate representation of the Divine, but without making an explicit christian exegesis of the trinitarian God. A further target of criticism is the extrapolation of the modern scientific ways of thinking outside the scientific realm. This will make it possible to sketch some lines of a new vision of the world. Finally, I will approach the ultimate question under the perspective of the final destiny of the universe.

*Our theme is the destiny of Man*—a “being” that is neither thinkable nor does it exist without an Earth below and a Heaven above, ambivalent as the interpretations of those symbols may be. We return to our “All or Nothing.”

## B. The Method

*Caminante, son tus huellas  
el camino, y nada más;  
caminante, no hay camino,  
se hace camino al andar.*

—Antonio Machado<sup>12</sup>

Wayfarer, your footsteps are  
the way, and nothing more;  
Wayfarer, there is no way,  
you make the way while you go.

If there is no way, all the more do we need a guide. Who is going to be the Beatrice in this old yet ever-new pilgrimage in our *Divina Commedia*? The question is rhetorical because once love arises there is no hesitation about who is to be the guide. Without love no Goddess will reveal herself, but this love has to be selfless; otherwise the Beloved is only a projection of our desires. Without knowledge we shall not understand the language of the mentor. *Fides oculata*, “enlightened faith,” said the ancients, but it has to be faith because this pilgrimage is toward the Unknown. With that I have already confessed that the journey is toward the Infinite—that is, Freedom—because the Infinite is not determined,

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<sup>12</sup> Antonio Machado, *Campos de Castilla* (Madrid: Renacimiento, 1912) “Proverbios y cantares,” V.