



**TOWARDS A GLOBAL, POSTSECULAR,
CONVIVENCIA THEOLOGY**

The Ways of Wisdom

Anthony Mansueto

THE WAYS OF WISDOM

Towards a Global, Postsecular, *Convivencia* Theology

Anthony Mansueto

SPICKWICK *Publications* • Eugene, Oregon

THE WAYS OF WISDOM

Towards a Global, Postsecular, *Convivencia* Theology

Copyright © 2016 Anthony Mansueto. All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical publications or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher. Write: Permissions, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3, Eugene, OR 97401.

Pickwick Publications
An Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers
199 W. 8th Ave., Suite 3
Eugene, OR 97401

www.wipfandstock.com

PAPERBACK ISBN: 978-1-4982-0026-4

HARDCOVER ISBN: 978-1-4982-8717-3

Cataloguing-in-Publication data:

Mansueto, Anthony E.

The ways of wisdom : towards a global, postsecular, convivencia theology / Anthony Mansueto.

viii + 288 pp. ; 23 cm. Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-4982-0026-4 (paperback) | ISBN 978-1-4982-8717-3 (hardback)

1. Metaphysics. 2. Philosophy, Modern. 3. Theology. I. Title.

BR118 .M34 2016

Manufactured in the U.S.A.

03/15/16

Contents

1	The Desire to Be God	1
2	Theology <i>Is</i> Intercultural Engagement	27
3	Being and Dependent Origination	56
4	The Way of Justice and Liberation	94
5	The Way of Harmony	139
6	God's Work of Redemption	155
7	The Engine of Divinity	186
8	The Solution to the Riddle of History	208
9	The Way of Ways	240
	<i>Bibliography</i>	275

The Desire to Be God

The Quest

*H*umanity is the desire to be God (Sartre, Jean Paul. *Being and Nothingness*, 1943/1993: 556). Being finite, we are aware of the infinite and seek to be without limit. Being contingent, dependent on other beings for our existence, we seek the power of *Being as such* and seek it absolutely. It is this *Being* that, as something set apart, because we seek it but do not have it, we call the *sacred*. It is the condition for and horizon of any possible world we might inhabit, apart from which such worlds are groundless and lack meaning.

The mere fact that we *seek Being* does not, to be sure, imply that such Being *is*. But it does mean that the struggle for existence that we share with everything else in the material universe, whether extended, elemental, mineral, vegetable, or animal, takes on a new dimension. We seek Being not just *objectively*, in the form of our own survival and reproduction, but *subjectively* as an autonomous generative power. And we suffer from its absence. Our very existence is a longing for Being which is, in the end, insatiable. And everything that we do, no matter how mundane, is infused with this longing. Everything we do is not just an encounter with, but a reaching for, the sacred.

Human beings, furthermore, have a definite strategy for seeking Being, both objectively, as their own survival and reproduction, and subjectively, as an object of knowledge and desire. Some things, such as mathematical objects, exist only *in potentia*, as categories defined by operations on and relations between hypothetical elements which are, in turn, defined by these operations and relations. Some *mathematicals*, in turn, exhibit properties, such as dimension and extension, which make more complex forms of organization possible, giving rise to fundamental forces governed by mathematical laws, and to *elements* and *compounds* formed in accord with these

laws. Some *elements* and compounds, which we call *minerals*, seek Being by exploiting the Boltzman Order Principle or some other thermodynamic law to conserve, however temporarily, their form. More complex compounds (*plants*) seek Being by nutrition, growth, and reproduction, or by sensation and locomotion (*animals*). But we humans seek Being by cultivating the ecosystems we inhabit in order to make higher, more complex forms of being possible. Our encounter with the sacred is, in other words, from the very beginning, an encounter with ourselves as *laboring being*.¹

Human history is fundamentally the history of our search for Being, and of the distinct *ways* of being human to which it has given rise. Seeking *to be*, we proliferate throughout diverse ecosystems, create increasingly complex technologies, centralize and allocate resources for production, build and exercise power, and create imaginative, conceptual, and trans-conceptual artifacts which articulate and embody our quest and its specific forms.

In the beginning, human beings sought *to be* by means of hunting, gathering, and cultivation: by participating in the cycles of death and life and nurturing the organized and meaningful *cosmos* into which they had been born. The universe was transparent to its ground and all acts were understood as sacred: as a participation in Being. At the same time, the boundary between contingent and necessary Being, finite and Infinite, was recognized as impermeable. While human beings might *participate* in Being more fully than minerals, plants, and animals, there was no question of becoming divine, however much we might want to. Indeed, the divine properly understood, while ever present as ground and aim, was rarely if ever fully thematized as such. The divine was our Mother, a womb from which we only ever partly emerged.

1. It was ironically Marx who, in extending Feuerbach's critique of religion, first established *scientifically* the specific quality of human spirituality (Marx 1844/1978, 1846/1978) as *labor* or what we prefer to call *relational transformative generativity*.

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life (Marx 1846/1978).

This should not, to be sure, be understood to exclude the other characterizations of the sacred which define the sociology of religion. Because labor always and only involves collaboration, it is also always social, the activity of a supraindividual collective reality (Durkheim 1911/1964). The *sacred* is thus the *social*. And because labor is always already an intellectual act, consciously ordered to an end, it is also always constitutively *meaningful* (Weber 1921/1968). The *sacred* is the ground and horizon of any possible meaning.

Being aware of *Being as such*, however dimly, we could never be satisfied with mere participation. At first, to be sure, we had no choice. But eventually metal technologies made it possible to enslave and instrumentalize others and live off their labor (Childe 1851, Lenski 1981), and so to imagine ourselves as ends rather than means, as indeed *the end itself* which we sought, as *Being as such*. We became as gods, recipients of great public liturgies centered around the sacrifice of the human: where not literally, then figuratively, as the human labor which makes life possible.

The conquest and sacrifice of the human was also, always, the conquest and sacrifice of the feminine. This is not because women have no drive to conquer or lack the ability. It is, rather, that women found themselves bound by their own generative power to the bearing and rearing of children (Firestone 1970/2003). On the one hand they already participate in *Being* to a higher degree than men (through childbearing), and perhaps saw less reason to conquer and exploit the generative power of another. And they would have felt more immediately the loss of authentic generativity which conquest implied. It was there in the face of the children they would have had to abandon to go off to war. On the other hand they soon found themselves the object rather than the subjects of the new *way* of conquest and exploitation. The advent of warfare as a strategy for economic development—and deification—was the world historical defeat of the female sex (Engels 1884/1948).

It could not have been otherwise. Had we not made war there would likely have been no significant organization above the village level, and certainly nothing beyond the pre-urban ritual centers at places like Chaco, Stonehenge, and Gobekli Tepe. And besides, we are the *desire to be God*. Thus was born the *way* of the Master, the *sacral monarchic way of conquest, exploitation, and sacrifice*. This was the first manifestation of what we are calling the *Saeculum*, the attempt to achieve divinity, or at least transcend finitude and/or contingency, by means of instrumentalizing others.

Conquest gave birth to the first urban civilizations—Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Huang He, and (with some differences) the Indus Valley, a world of warlords and walled cities and pyramids of sacrifice. We thought ourselves great *ba'alim*, lords and masters. But we were not. Lord Death was our master then and we were *his* slaves. Conquest itself creates nothing, and the conquered are never particularly creative. And being finite and contingent, all that is old eventually disintegrates, decays, and dies. It should thus come as no surprise that throughout the Afro-Eurasian “Old World” where it was born, this *way* suddenly collapsed sometime around the end of the Bronze Age, between 1200 and 1000 BCE, giving humanity a chance for a new beginning.

That new beginning took the form of what Karl Jaspers (Jaspers 1953) has called the Axial Age—the period which gave birth to Judaism, Hellenism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. Over a period of about six hundred years (800-200 BCE), in each of the principal centers of Afro-Eurasian civilization, specialized agriculture and crafts production and petty commodity production transformed humanity's *way* of being. Comparative advantage based on ecological niche and human value-added rooted in *techne* now competed with conquest as strategies for growth and development. The emergence of first regional and then global trade networks brought competing *ways* into contact with each other, rendering meaning problematic for the first time. Humanity found itself in a world of formal relations (the market) which created the basis in experience for formal abstraction, the rise of abstract mathematics, and ultimately of philosophy. Image and story give way, at least partly, to concept and argument. Those formerly bound to serve the aristocracy of warlords and priests began to struggle for the right to enjoy the fruits of their labor, to govern themselves, to participate fully in both deliberation around questions of meaning and value and to claim for themselves the *theosis* (deification) which was previously reserved for the aristocracy.

This is the point of origin of the three great *ways* of which what are ordinarily called the “world religions” are ultimately variations: *the way of liberation and justice* (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), *the way of the search for Being* (including Hellenism, Hinduism, Buddhism, the Jaina tradition, and their peripheries), and *the way of harmony* (Taoism, Confucianism, and perhaps some other Chinese traditions). The first of these we can call *the way of the Slave* proper, of those who, defeated by the warlord, are reduced to pure labor power, and discover therein the power of Being as such (Hegel 1807/1993), something which gives them the vantage point of Being prior to any dialectical ascent. The second two, the *way of the search for being* and *the way of harmony*, we call *clerical ways* because reflect more nearly the perspective of *intelligentsias* which, in the wake of the late Bronze Age collapse and the failure of the sacral monarchic project, and even more so with the development of petty commodity production, sought to develop new strategies for *theosis* which did not fall into the trap of the Master, or for living in harmony with a universe in and from which *theosis* was impossible.

What these great axial ways did *not* call into question, at least not radically or consistently enough to make a difference, was the patriarchal expropriation of female generative power. Even when born of a peasant revolt, like ancient Israel (Gottwald 1979), one led in part by women (Judges 5), and even when devoted to the *Magna Mater*, *Prajnaparamita*, *Tara*, the *Mahavidya*, or *Guan Yin* (Stone 1976) the emerging axial ways remained

overwhelmingly attempts by men to liberate men. This left more of the old sacral monarchic dynamic intact than anyone understood or imagined.

And with the underlying dynamic of patriarchal expropriation intact, it should thus come as no surprise that new empires arose—the Hellenistic and Roman, the Mauryan and the Qin being the most important—which exploited not so much direct production, but rather the global trade in luxury goods (silk, spices, porcelain, wine, oil, slaves, and precious metals). known as the great *Silk Road*. This strategy proved far more effective than the earlier sacral monarchic project and resulted in empires large and powerful enough to imagine themselves as global in character. Though none were really more than regional hegemony, they were far more powerful than their Bronze Age predecessors. Where the *ba'alim* had proven vulnerable to relatively small scale revolts by poorly armed marginalized peasant communities of the sort which brought Israel into being (Gottwald 1979) or to the combination of ecodemographic collapse and the withdrawal of villages back into subsistence agriculture which is the most likely explanation for the sudden “disappearance” of so many early proturban and urban civilizations around the planet, the great Iron Age empires, while they might periodically lose some territory to an uprising like that of Maccabees, were ultimately beyond the reach of most revolutionary popular forces, except where these forces were themselves (like emerging Islam or the Chinese peasant revolts which created new dynasties) emerging *Imperia*. This is why it seemed to many Silk Road Era critics of *Empire* that they were struggling not with human beings but rather *directly* with angelic/demonic/asuric “powers and principalities” of which the earthly *Imperia* were simply agents (Eph 6:12). This was the second manifestation of the *Saeculum*.

Sometimes these empires attempted to repress the axial traditions, as in the case of the Qin (Collins 1998) or early Roman responses to Judaism and Christianity. Ultimately, however, the new empires co-opted them and used them as forms of legitimation. This in turn meant that the fundamentally exploitative character of these empires was softened and transformed, sometimes very significantly, by the influence of the axial project (the Tang and the Song, the Mauryans, and the Abbasids and Fatimids are probably the best examples in this regard) (Mansueto 2010a). The result was the protracted war of position between competing *ways* of being human that we often identify as the Middle Ages, though it is, more properly characterized as the great Silk Road Era (200 BCE–1800 CE).

During this period the great Axial *ways* worked out their own internal implications and contradictions. For the *way of justice and liberation* this meant ascertaining what *justice* might mean in a world of resurgent empire. Could *Empire* be defeated as it was in the Late Bronze Age, and a new

era of justice and peace ushered in (Jewish Messianism, including earliest Christianity and then later Islam)? Or was empire inevitable, at least for the foreseeable future? If so, how could the just act effectively at the margins to catalyze struggles for justice (Pharisaism and Rabbinic Judaism)? Or was the struggle for justice more a spiritual than a political discipline, something which stretches us beyond the merely human, towards the divine (most later Christianity)? For the *way of the search for Being* this meant asking whether or not dialectics terminate in a first principle in terms of which the universe can be explained and human action ordered (Hellenism and most Hinduisms) or, rather, in a recognition of that *everything* is empty of inherent existence and dependent on everything else (Buddhism). For the *way of harmony* this meant determining whether or not the *way* itself could be captured in language and in law (Confucianism), or whether or not this was itself the point of origin or all forms of oppression (Taoism).

But the axial *ways* also engaged each other, not yet globally, but piecemeal, along the intercivilizational frontiers crossed by the Silk Road. Hellenism engaged Judaism and its offspring, Christianity and Islam. Buddhism, which was born in India, found its most complex expressions in Southeast Asia, China, and the Himalayan Plateau. And an Islam already transformed by its interaction with Hellenism engaged the complex of ways which we now (perhaps incorrectly or at least anachronistically) call Hinduism along a broad frontier reaching from Persia across the Indus Valley and the Himalayan foothills well into the Indo-Gangetic Plain (Khan 2004).

It is this engagement between *ways*, we will argue, which is constitutive of a specifically *theological* discourse, and which gives birth to the great synthetic ways which were the highest achievement of the Silk Road Era: the Catholic synthesis and its progenitors in Judaism and Islam, the higher Mahayana and Varjayana Schools, the “Neo-Confucian” (but actually also profoundly Buddhist and Taoist) *dao xue* and the diverse complex of *ways* including a range of later developments of the Ismaili tradition, Sufi currents, the Sikh tradition, and at least some of what was eventually classified by colonial authorities (and came to understand itself) as Hinduism along the western frontiers of the Indian subcontinent (Khan 2004).

These synthetic ways represent an enormous achievement, mapping out for humanity a process by which, if it cannot transcend finitude and contingency substantially, becoming God in *essence*, it can, nonetheless do so accidentally, taking on the form of God in increasing degrees by means of a protracted process of intellectual and moral self-cultivation, ethical conduct and active engagement in the struggle for justice, and the spiritual practice necessary to harvest the fruits of this engagement. It also created an infrastructure of institutions—academies and synagogues, temples and

monasteries, the Papacy, and the Caliphate or Imamate, which supported humanity in its struggle for *thesosis*. We call this complex of institutions and the project they carried *Sanctuary*.

At the same time, the failure to address the patriarchal expropriation of female creative power left the sanctuaries which were created darkened and undercut the full realization of the axial project. The Great Silk Road Era was, ultimately, a period of stalemate in which *Sanctuary* and *Saeculum* held each other in balance. *Sanctuary* softened and humanized *Empire* and limited instrumentalization; *Empire* instrumentalized *Sanctuary* as a means of legitimation and ensured that the problematizing, rationalizing, and democratizing dynamics of the axial project were held in check.

This stalemate has now been broken and the *Saeculum* has become globally hegemonic. Breaking this stalemate was, historically, the work of one particular group of warrior tribes—the Germanic peoples, and especially the Normans—whose movement into Europe set in motion a process which, by way of the Norman conquests, the Crusades, the Reconquista, and their prolongation into the conquest of Africa, the Americas, and much of Asia, led to the scientific and industrial revolutions, and eventually to the hegemony of Global *Capital* under which we live today (Mansueto 2010a). At first this process was legitimated as a way of advancing the sovereignty of the Christian God, and of participating in His creative activity by means of ever more advanced technology and ever more efficient exploitation of human labor. This *way* found its expression in the diverse forms of Protestant Christianity, and its highest expression in the evangelical (but prefundamentalist) and liberal variants of the Reformed Tradition (Heimart 1966, Howe 1966, Hatch 1977, Marsden 1980). We call this *way* *theistic secularism* (Weber 1920/1968). But soon humanity's conviction of its own potential and power grew to the point that many began to believe that they could actually *build* God, or at least transcend finitude by means of scientific and technological progress and the economic development they make possible. This is the *way* that we are living today, the *way* of *technocratic secularism* (Tipler 1994). We are chained to this *way* by industrial technology and proletarianization and we live it whether we embrace it or not.

Over the course of roughly the same period the democratic impulse which had always been part of the axial tradition, but which had been eclipsed during much of the Silk Road Era by the reality of stalemate with the *Saeculum*, began to reassert itself, especially in Europe. Peasants, emboldened by the rising value of labor power and the demographic collapse that followed the Black Death fought to liberate themselves from feudal obligations. Cities governed by guilds of artisans and merchants demanded and won self-government from the Holy Roman Empire and the Church

(Anderson 1974a). These movements almost always articulated their emerging understanding of what it means to be human in terms derived from the axial traditions. Joachism (de Lubac 1979, Leff 1999, Reeves 1969, 1976), which proposed to replace the rule of priests and kings with a sort of monastic communism led by the spiritually most developed², and Radical Aristotelianism³, which began to give political content to the ancient ideal of the philosopher king (Dahm 1988, Crone 2004), are typical in this regard.

2. Drawing on the work of Gillian Rose (Rose 1984), John Milbank (Milbank 1990, 2014) has argued forcefully that the univocal metaphysics which defines the *Saeculum* is ultimately derivative from the Franciscan movement. This is based, of course, on the defense of the doctrine of the univocity of Being by John Duns Scotus. The argument has considerable merit, especially considering the implication of the Franciscans in the Augustinian Reaction of the thirteenth century, which was in every sense a run-up to the Reformation. What this analysis misses is 1) the distinction between a univocity like that of the Spirituals which treats all Being as necessary, i.e. as immanently divine and one which, like that of much Protestantism, does not even recognize the difference between the necessary and the contingent, and thus fails to actually rise to the idea of Being as such. 2) the fact that Francis' original charism was interpreted in radically different ways within the order from the very beginning and that as a result of the influence of Joachism and the Spiritual controversy the movement was, effectively dismantled and rebuilt under the control not even of its own Right wing but of tendencies much further to the Right than even the Conventual tendency. This is apparent from the fact that when many Franciscans today defend the doctrine (Rohr 2015) they are clearly defending the participation of phenomenal reality in the life of God, in much the way that Dominicans would using a doctrine of the analogy of Being, with perhaps a bit less sensitivity to the distinction between "participation" and "identity," and a resulting tendency to constantly reproduce the radical immanentism of Joachim and the Spirituals. We will consider this question in great depth in a later chapter.

3. There is, similarly, a much longer standing tendency, based on the work of Etienne Gilson (Gilson 1952) that it was only Thomas who final developed a coherent doctrine of Being and that earlier Jewish and Islamic Aristotelianism, especially the thought of ibn Sina, was dominated by a marked tendency towards essentialism. While there can be little doubt that Thomas' doctrine of Being is more developed than that of his predecessors, a careful reading of the ibn Sina's only major philosophical work in Persian the *Danish* (ibn Sina c 1025/2001) shows a clear distinction between necessary and contingent Being and a clear identification of God with the former. What defines Radical Aristotelianism, and especially Latin Averroism, is above all a tendency to invest phenomenal being, at least in its totality, with the characteristics of Being as such, resulting, again, in a radical immanentism. While we will argue that this radical immanentism is mistaken, and that this mistake is responsible for many of the errors of later humanistic secularisms of both the left and the right, it is quite different from the univocity which conceives God simply as an infinitely powerful instance of the kind of being we are, stripping the universe entirely of the creative and generative power of Being as such and creating a metaphysical zero-sum game in which the only spiritual alternatives are submission or radical depravity. It is also quite different than the technocratic secularism which denies the existence of such an infinitely powerful being but aims to create one by means of scientific and technological progress, or at least to approach such technodeification as closely as possible.

Similar movements emerged in China, India, and Dar-al-Islam. While most Chinese peasant revolts were inspired by Taoism and Buddhism (Ter Haar 1992), there is some evidence of an esoteric Confucianism with revolutionary tendencies (Lai 1977). Tantric and related movements in the Indian subcontinent were quite explicit both in mobilizing subaltern spirituality and in popularizing and radicalizing the philosophical monism of the *advaita vedanta*. The most important of these movements was almost certainly the Mahavidya trend, which focused on the veneration of low-caste and even *dalit* female manifestations of the divine (Kinsley 1997). The devotion to Kali in particular has a long history of association with movements of popular resistance. The Nizari Ismailis, meanwhile, who taught a synthesis between the Islamic variant of the *way of justice and liberation* and Hellenic dialectics completed and enriched by contemplative practice, emerged as a revolutionary force with *Dar-al-Islam*, which resisted the Turkic invasions which eventually imposed an Asharite Sunni consensus (Darfatary 1992, 1994, 2005).

These revolutionary tendencies were soon crushed by a series of reactions across the planet. The most important of these was the Augustinian reaction which accompanied the formation of sovereign, absolutist states in Europe as a result of the Norman conquests, the Crusades, the Reconquista, and the Conquest of the Americas. But the Turkic and Mongol invasions had similar consequences, marginalizing not only the Ismaili Imamate but the more advanced schools within the Sunni tradition, and transforming the *dao xue* from an elite reformism into an ossified doctrine of imperial legitimation. The result, at least in Europe, was an intensification of their immanentist orientation and a tendency to assert the already “divine” character of the human and even of the material in general. It took 700 hundred years, but the popular messianisms of Joachim of Fiore and Sabbatzi Zvi (Scholem 1973) on the one hand and the and idealist and materialist mysticisms of Amalric of Bena and David of Dinant (Dahm 1987) on the other eventually became, by way of Gersonides, Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel, together with countless movements of resistance and revolution by peasants, artisans, and the emerging proletariat, the dialectical and historical materialism of Marx and Engels and Lukacs. This *way* we call *humanistic secularism* of which we will identify liberal, democratic, socialist, and populist variants.

Understood properly, modernity *is* secularism, but not in the sense of a rejection of the spiritual aim of humanity, which remains constant and which cannot be anything other than deification. Rather, modernity is defined by the conviction that deification can be achieved, if at all, through innerworldly civilizational progress: either scientific, technological, and economic (what we call technocratic secularism) or through the construction

of a political subject (the rationally autonomous individual, the *demos*, the proletariat, the *ethnos*) capable of making humanity the master of its own destiny, transforming contingent into necessary Being.

Theistic, technocratic, and humanistic secularisms were doomed from the beginning, but for very different reasons. Theistic secularism was unable to reconcile the Jewish and Christian (and in some later variants Muslim) story on which it was based with the imperative to exploit and accumulate. The First and Second Great Awakenings in the United States can be understood in large part as movements of resistance to liberal tendencies to assess election on the base of "usefulness to society." The resulting Evangelical movement focused as much on social reform as on individual conversion. It was only when the Civil War ushered in not the millennium but rather industrial capitalism that evangelicals abandoned their historic commitment to social justice and focused their efforts on preparing for an divinely initiated (but still very worldly) return of Jesus as messianic king (Marsden 1980). Liberals, meanwhile, struggled to reconcile their profound attachment to secular concepts of "progress" with efforts to ameliorate the injustices of industrial capitalism in a way that rendered it compatible with the Christian story. Their failure in this regard (not for lack of creativity, but because the task is inherently impossible) is, more than anything else, the reason for their decline, an issue to which we will return later in this work.

Technocratic secularism was doomed because it radically misunderstands the nature of the sacred and thus seeks to build something (a being of infinite power) which is itself ultimately unsatisfactory. The Being we long for is not the Infinite but rather the creative and generative power of *Being as such* and no increase in our ability to accumulate contingent beings will quench that thirst. Unlimited accumulation, as we are discovering, degrades the creative expressions of being at the mineral, plant, animal, and rational/social levels.

Both theistic and technocratic secularism are, furthermore (whatever the role of technology in liberating women) ultimately the most radical possible expressions of the patriarchal expropriation of female generative power. Theistic secularism requires the radical submission of women to a God conceived in a way which cannot but resonate psychosexually as male and patriarchal. Even radical institutional reforms, such as the ordination of women to positions of leadership, cannot change the fact that the feminine dimension of the divine has been banished utterly from theistic secular movements.

Technocratic secularism, through the medium of industry, seeks to find another way of creating. Rather than tapping into the immanent creative and self-organizing potential of matter, which is a reflection

of its participation in Being, and which we humans experience first and foremost in our generation from the womb, it breaks down existing forms of organization by means of combustion and uses the energy released to do work. Where the sacral monarchic and imperial projects rendered the feminine captive and subject; industrial Capital attempts, at least, to make it redundant.

Humanistic secularism, on the other hand, seeks Being authentically, and seeks it in an authentic locus of its self-disclosure, i.e. the human, but it fails to recognize that the boundary between contingent and necessary being is impermeable and that *no* political subject can render us the masters of our own destiny. Marx's critique of liberal and democratic humanism is quite correct. Capital makes both individual rational autonomy and authentic democracy impossible. But socialism has its own contradictions. Merely "organizing and directing the historical process," does not carry humanity across the boundary between contingency and necessity, especially in a universe which physics tells us may eventually become inhospitable to complex organization, life, and intelligence. It would be necessary, at the very least, to "organize and direct the entire cosmohistorical evolutionary process." Thus the necessity of technological god-building, of the sort advocated by Bogdanov and Gorky and Lunacharsky (Rowley 1987). But once we make this move we are back on the terrain of technocratic secularism which is the terrain of univocity and terror. It should thus come as no surprise that when, after liquidating its philosophical advocates, Stalin made technological godbuilding into his principal strategy for socialist construction, the result was a complete liquidation of socialism's humanistic aims and transformed socialism into an *alter-imperial* development strategy, and ultimately, as the constraints which socialism placed on development beyond a certain point became apparent, just a regional strategy for primitive *capitalist* accumulation.

But avoiding the technocratic turn does not solve the problem. The truth is that any collective political subject coherent and disciplined enough to act as the unique subject-object of the cosmohistorical evolutionary process would also, inevitably, be incompatible with meaningful individual rational autonomy (the liberal form of the humanistic ideal) or internal democracy (the democratic form) which were nonetheless integral to what humanists from Marx through Lukacs were trying to accomplish through socialism. Attempts to make socialism something other than a strategy for building industrial capitalism on the periphery of the world capitalist system, such as that undertaken by Maoism during the Cultural Revolution, by abolishing *selfishness* before the abolition of *scarcity*, thus inevitably result in totalitarian nightmare.

The attempt, finally, to substitute the *people* as *ethnos* for the proletariat as the locus for the self-disclosure of Being, already well developed in the nineteenth century and articulated most fully by Heidegger (Heidegger 1934/1989) has proven itself to be a catastrophic dead end. While it *does* matter whether the *ethnos* in question is engaged in empire building, like the NAZI Germany of which Heidegger aspired to be *the* philosopher, or a struggle for national liberation, like the anticolonial struggles which form the background for most poststructuralist and deconstructionist “left” Heideggerianism (Chiesa and Toscano 2009), the internal dynamics of postcolonial societies, especially those which claim to be revolutionary, have looked strikingly like soft fascism, with national, popular and religious traditions used to mobilize the people in a way which leaves little room for rational autonomy or democratic process. In both cases, as with socialism, the technocratic turn seems all but inevitable as the realities of state-building in a world dominated by *Capital* and *Empire* assert themselves. Prioritizing difference rather than the “event” of Being (Millerman 2013) does nothing to guarantee either a spirituality or a politics which is authentically liberating. Both are just substitutes for an assertion of ethnic identity in which the line between the *anti-imperial* and the *alter-imperial* is always a fine one at best. And as for socialism, competing with the dominant *Imperium* meant embracing the very practices of technopolitical control which the philosophers of this trend, such as Heidegger (Heidegger 1977) so decried.

The long epoch between 1848 and 1989 was dominated by two principal dynamics. On the one hand, in the metropolises, there was a struggle between technocratic and humanistic secularism and within the humanistic camp between liberal, democratic, socialist, and populist tendencies. Meanwhile, on the peripheries, peasant and sometimes artisan and clerical sanctuaries resisted vigorously the penetration of capitalist relations of production into their “countrysides” and the incorporation of their homelands into rival *Imperia* among which the American *Imperium* was ultimately victorious (Hobsbawm 1958, Wolf 1969).

This struggle was won decisively by technocratic secularism not because it was able to deliver on its promise to transcend finitude by means of scientific, technological, and economic progress, but rather because it delivered *enough* technologically and economically to defeat the other alternatives in a protracted war of position and because, as we have seen, humanistic secularism had to make massive concessions to technocracy in order to even compete, concessions which echo the earlier concessions of the axial movements to patriarchy and empire. The result is the decisive victory of the *Saeculum* and the reduction of *Sanctuary* to a dwindling number of marginal enclaves.

This is a defeat and in many ways it is a decisive one. Even more so than in the case of the great Iron Age manifestations of *Empire* the *Saeculum* has constituted itself as an autonomous power, acting through *Capital* and *Empire* but quite independent of anything which might be called a “ruling class.” The bourgeoisie which created *Capital*, for which *Capital* was the vehicle of a great spiritual and civilizational project, and which still, in many ways benefits from *Capital*, now finds itself at the mercy of the power it has created, unable to bring it heel or make it serve their spiritual and civilizational aims. They—and we—are truly in the grip of an *asuric* power.

But this defeat is not final and it clarifies for us the conditions for any renewed struggle to liberate and extend the reach of our sanctuaries. Not just for the individual, as Lukacs himself recognized (Lukacs 1921/1971) but for humanity as a whole, understood as either substance or as subject, alienation is irreversible. It is only by understanding Being as neither substance nor subject, but rather pure generativity, ceasing to cling to inherent existence, that either the spiritual aims of the axial traditions or the political aims of humanistic secularism can be realized. And this means going back and resuming the axial and humanistic secular projects, engaging the patriarchal expropriation of female generative power and the resultant compromises with empire. It means extending and radicalizing the problematizing, rationalizing, and democratizing dynamics of the axial project, as humanistic secularism attempted to do, while avoiding the mistake of radical immanentism. And it means discovering a new sense of *techne* (or perhaps rediscovering an older one) as cultivation of the self-organizing potential latent in matter, which will best the technological achievements of the *Saeculum* while avoiding the instrumentalization and ecological destruction the latter has wrought.

The Terrain

This is the quest. We need now to analyze in greater detail the specific terrain on which we undertake it today.

An Era of Civilizational Crisis

The victory of the *Saeculum* is, we will argue, ultimately Pyrric in nature. This is because, even as the *Saeculum* approaches total hegemony, it is entered a period of profound and unprecedented crisis, a crisis which threatens civilizational retrenchment perhaps on the scale of the late Bronze Age collapse (Cline 2014) and at least on the scale of the partial collapse which affected

some of the great Iron Age empires (such as Rome) during the more recent Dark Ages (Anderson 1974, de Ste. Croix 1982, Frank 1998).

There are several dimensions to this crisis. We are, first of all, in the early stages of a profound ecological crisis which will, at the very least, result in major traumas to essentially all major civilizational centers and which, at worst, could lead to complete civilizational collapse. *Industry*, which is the technological expression of the *Saeculum*, relies on combustion which breaks down existing forms of organization to release energy and do work. Unless significant progress is made very soon in developing renewable and thus fundamentally nonindustrial energy sources, we will eventually deplete the fossil fuel sources on which the industrial regime depends, undermining its material basis (Hubbert 1956, Campbell 2007). The same principle applies to all of the other mineral inputs required by an industrial civilization.

Meanwhile, the by-products of industrial production are significantly altering our ecosystem. The most important such effect is the climate change induced by increasing carbon dioxide levels, the most important direct effect of combustion. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change “warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global average sea level (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007: 5).” Furthermore, “for the next two decades a warming of about 0.2°C per decade is projected for a range of SRES emission scenarios. Even if the concentrations of all greenhouse gases and aerosols had been kept constant at year 2000 levels, a further warming of about 0.1°C per decade would be expected (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007: 12).” And these averages are deceptive. Climates are complex, nonlinear systems and even small fluctuations can have large effects. Some analysts, for example, have claimed that melting of the polar ice caps for example, could desalinate the Atlantic Ocean, undermining the Gulf Stream and depriving Europe of its mild climate (McGuire 2003).

Resource depletion and climate change are, furthermore, only two dimensions of the emerging ecological crisis. There is broad evidence that the pollution of the environment and food supply with the byproducts of industrial production is contributing significantly to rising cancer rates and other health problems. Far from allowing us to transcend the limits of material finitude, industrial civilization may well bring us crashing up against those limits in an unprecedented way.

Capital, meanwhile, which is the economic modality of the *Saeculum*, is holding back both the development of new technologies which might resolve the crisis of industrialism, largely because they are not easily

monetized. It was precisely the relative scarcity of fossil fuels which made investment in them attractive, as a source of mineral rents. The sun, wind, and even hydrogen, which are abundant, might yield profits of enterprise, but they will yield no monopoly rents. And the technologies which capitalism *has* developed (the information technology revolution) are coming close to rendering all routine human labor (including all but the most innovative intellectual labor and a cluster of boutique “artisan” practices) redundant. And even in advance of this development, the emergence of a global market in capital is leading to a convergence in wages which is rapidly undercutting the privileged status of workers in the old “First World.” As even more regions of the planet are incorporated into this global market, the supply of labor, including of skilled labor, will so far exceed the demand that both the value and the price of labor power will decline (towards zero), creating a permanent condition of structural underconsumption which is increasingly difficult to ameliorate by means of corrective regimes of accumulation such as the welfare state, military spending, obscene luxury consumption combined with easy credit, etc.

Capital has also, effectively, undermined the state as an authentic institution of governance. The nation state, for all its failures, provided the people with the leverage they needed to wrest concessions from their ruling classes which were, ultimately, stabilizing for the system as a whole. But when *Capital* can simply redeploy to evade measures designed to protect the ecosystem, workers, or the social fabric, the nation state becomes impotent not only as an instrument for structural reform or social revolution but even for stabilization. The only effective global political authorities exist to create an hospitable global framework for *Capital* whether through economic regulation or deregulation or through military intervention to protect the interests of *Capital*. This global political authority which, while exercised through nation states and their governments is actually independent of and superior to them, we call *Empire*. And *Empire* has local expressions in the form of the repressive state apparatus. As recent events in the United States show, even where elected leaders are benign or better, *Empire* ensures that the growing surplus population is kept in a state of subjection and terror.

The most profound sign of crisis of the *Saeculum*, however, is the fact that people have ceased almost entirely to *believe* in the ideal to which it is ordered. There are, to be sure, pockets of transhumanism, the most radical of which center around Frank Tipler’s Omega Point Theory, which revives Bolshevik godbuilding but strips it of its humanistic ideals (Rowley 1987, Tipler 1994), reducing intelligence, life, and complex organization to simply degrees of informatic complexity. But the scientific evidence has not been kind to the *Omega* tendency, especially since the Higgs Boson weighed in

well below the levels Tipler's theory requires (CERN 2012). More modest transhumanisms, which promise radical extension of human life and capacities and an end to human drudgery through advances in biotechnology and robotics are failing to speak to the majority of the planet's population, who see little prospect of access to life extending and enhancing technologies and who experience the redundancy of routine labor as the redundancy of their very existence. For the *Saeculum* everything that exists exists to be exploited. Universal "employment"—the goal of even most progressive economic policy—is essentially universal exploitation. This seems like a good alternative only because we know, in our heart of hearts, that redundancy could easily mean annihilation.

This is not to say that the apocalyptic nightmare visions of cyberpunk fiction are inevitable or even likely, but rather that the *Saeculum* is spent and that only a new *techne* grounded in a new science and new vision of what it means to be human can give birth to a new, truly human future. People are, quite simply, tired of being turned into batteries. They are tired of having every aspect of their lives regulated and controlled. And they are tired of being told that the *only* thing that is meaningful about their lives is their contribution to the accumulation of capital or to the scientific and technological progress which it makes possible.

The Current Conjuncture and the Configuration of Forces on the Terrain

Within this broader context of civilizational crisis, it might be useful, finally, to analyze the configuration of forces which define the current conjuncture. We are, broadly speaking, still within the third conjuncture since the collapse of the Soviet bloc. The first of these conjunctures was dominated by the aftermath of this collapse and the wave of growth and development made possible by the information technology revolution and given scope, in part, by the collapse itself and the subsequent formation of a global market in capital. This conjuncture lasted from roughly 1989-2001. The second conjuncture was defined by the collapse of the "dot.com" bubble, which marked the limits of the new "information economy" as a force for driving growth and development. The collapse of this bubble led to the resurgence of reactionary, resource based economies—and the conflicts between them, which took the form of the "clash of civilizations" and the "war on terror." This configuration of forces was already emerging in 1999-2000 and was dominant from 2001 until sometime between 2006 and 2008. The third and still dominant configuration of forces has been defined by the global

“Great Recession” which began in 2007 and from which we have not yet fully emerged. This recession was catalyzed by the collapse of the speculative bubble created by easy credit, the principal means used by *Capital* to spark a recovery from the “dot.com” bust, but has been so recalcitrant largely because of the underlying technoeconomic changes noted above: the declining demand for human labor as a result of the advance of information technologies, which drives down the value of labor power, ultimately towards zero, and creates a situation of structural underconsumption. The resistance of the recession to ordinary modes of stimulus (at least those considered ordinary within the framework of a global neoliberal outlook which takes the market as the ultimately, long term allocator of resources) is gradually beginning to expose the underlying structural and civilizational contradictions which define our period and epoch.

In our last major work (Mansueto 2010a) we argued that the present conjuncture would be characterized by serious but modest efforts to address global challenges. And this was clearly the intent of the Obama government. These efforts have been hindered by the underlying resistance of the global economy to traditional means of stimulus (coupled with the refusal of most European regimes to even attempt such methods). At the same time, the Democratic Party, as the party of the advanced, progressive, information-technological sector of *Capital*, *cannot* put forward proposals which would seriously compromise the hegemony of *Capital* itself. Where it *has* undertaken initiatives, as in the case of health care reform, immigration reform, and climate change, they are largely within the scope of the program of the progressive sectors of *Capital* themselves, which favor rationalization and mobility and which are not especially dependent on mineral rents. This has left its own base dissatisfied and demoralized, while increasing the anger of those in the hinterlands who do not see themselves as benefiting from continued expansion of the information technology sector and who have gravitated to a Republican Right so radical that it has left even core sectors of finance capital frightened. Similar dynamics are apparent in Europe, where efforts to streamline the welfare state in response to demographic inversion and open up labor markets have led to a shift among working class voters from social democratic to neofascist and protofascist parties. India has just elected a Hindu nationalist government and the principal beneficiaries of the Arab Spring seem to have been moderate Islamists. Even China, which has long seemed to be the stronghold of technocratic secularism, is experiencing a bit of a populist and fundamentalist reaction, as Xi Jiping revives elements of the old Maoist cult of personality (*The Economist*, 2014.09.24)

This is not to suggest that a global turn to the right is inevitable. More likely we will see a continued swing between “progressive” secular

governments backed by the more advanced sectors of *Capital* and “conservative” populist governments, sometimes with a fundamentalist veneer, based in the extractive sector, with the people becoming more and more disillusioned with each in turn, as neither tendency acts to address either global challenges or the aspirations of the increasingly redundant masses.

We have argued elsewhere (Mansueto 2010a) that the current civilizational and structural crisis can have four possible outcomes:

- civilizational collapse, probably due to the inability to address ecological challenges within the context of existing civilizational ideals and social structures
- a transition by decadence, during which new a new civilization or civilizations will gradually emerge as the old one decays,
- a transition by reform, in which an alliance between the carriers one or more of the dominant civilizational ideals (technocratic or humanistic secularism) collaborates with carriers of a new ideal to resolve the most critical global challenges and the carry out a transition to a new civilizational pattern which integrates significant elements of both old and new, or which allows diverse forms to exist side by side, or
- a transition by revolution, in which the carriers of a new civilizational ideal systematically reorder human civilization to a new ideal over the course of the relatively brief period of a few centuries.

Obviously these are ideal types; outcomes combining one or more are certainly possible, but our assessment has been and continues to be that the forces for transition by decadence are strongest. *Capital* and *Empire* are ultimately unable to solve the principal challenges facing humanity, but they are not utterly incapable of or unwilling to take action with respect to the gravest problems, such as climate change; forces carrying a new civilizational ideal are just barely beginning to emerge. The current global political stalemate between the technocratic consensus and the conservative populist opposition suggests that this assessment is, indeed, correct.

Here we add to this standing analysis the fact that on the civilizational battlefield we have analyzed we find arrayed, broadly speaking, three principal forces:

- The party of *technocratic consensus*. This includes the entire mainstream of *Capital* together with its supporters among the technocratic middle strata and those sectors of the working classes (mostly in the old “Third World”) which still believe that they are profiting from globalization and the information and biotechnological revolutions. For

the most part the outlook of this alliance is one of a much sobered technocratic secularism, though it includes *transhumanists* at one extreme and *liberal theistic secularists* (mostly liberal Protestants) at the other. It shares the consensus that “there is no alternative” to global capitalism but there are significant internal differences regarding the extent to which markets can and should be regulated and the extent to which states should invest in promoting scientific and technological progress and cultivating new comparative advantages. It understands the need to address “global challenges” such as climate change, the growing redundancy of labor, the need for effective global governance, etc., but drawing from the “best and the brightest” though it may, it has few solutions which are both technically and politically credible. As Daniel Bell’s new book *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy* (Bell 2015) suggests, despite its experimentation with Neo-Maoism as a strategy for social control, all dominant sectors of the Chinese leadership are ultimately in this camp. The same is almost certainly true of India, despite its experimentation with conservative populist strategies of control.

- *Conservative populism.* This camp is controlled largely by the extractive sector of *Capital* and secondarily by low wage, low technology industry and what remains of agrarian capital, with support from those sectors of the middle strata and working classes which feel “left behind” by globalization and technological change. While it includes elements which are authentically oriented by axial and theistic secular ideologies, its ideological dynamics are ultimately driven by populist secularisms for which religion defines identities which support resistance to globalization. This is true, as we will show, both for theistic secularisms such as Christian and Sunni Islamic (especially Wahabi) fundamentalisms and for conservative ideologies with roots in authentic axial traditions (such as the Catholic *Communio* trend and the Islamic Republicanism of Iran). The tendency is defined above all by its commitment to patriarchal pronatalist policies and by resistance to the liberation of women, which is seen as threatening the viability of low technology “r” strategies and the survival of threatened European identities. Russia, with some qualifications, may actually have located itself in this camp.
- *Multitude.* This is what currently exists in the way of a “left” opposition to the technocratic consensus. It draws its support from the humanistic intelligentsia and those sectors of the working classes which, while they may feel “left behind” also feel threatened by the authoritarian

and patriarchal tendencies of the conservative populists: women and ethnic and sexual orientation and gender identity minorities, together with what remains of the old proletarian and peasant movements of the previous epoch. This camp is currently oriented by a range of radical humanistic secularisms, though some elements embrace axial (religious) left ideologies. I have taken the name for this trend from the recent work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (Hardt and Negri 2001), but it also includes, in addition to “autonomist” communists like them a broad range of critical theorists and left Heideggerians, especially those engaged in what might be called “atheology,” such as Žižek, Agamben, the late Derrida, Raschke, Massimo (Chiesa and Toscano 2013), etc. who serve as a kind of bridge to both the small religious left intelligentsia and to working class and peasant communities which articulate their resistance to *Capital* and *Empire* in religious terms. *Multitude* lacks a grand strategy, and looks a great deal like left wing communism without the party.

As we have noted, all three camps include elements which are located where they are largely by the absence of credible alternatives and by their own inability to create them. Liberal theistic secularists and liberal and democratic humanistic secularists based above all in the philanthropic and non-profit/nongovernmental sector, including academia, tend to ally themselves with the technocratic consensus but find less and less support for their interests and initiatives there and occasionally defect to one of the other camps. Authentic religious conservatives based in religious institutions often align with conservative populists but have a very different economic base and core ideological orientation. The religious left tends to support the *Multitude* but to the extent that it has not accepted the reduction of its spirituality to “religion without religion” or “weak theology” it can never find a real home there. There are also elements of the conservative populist right which, even though based in extractive economies, have opted, largely for geopolitical reasons, to align themselves with *Multitude* and in fact represent the anti-statist *Multitude*’s few bases of state power. This is especially true of the Bolivarian tendency in Latin America.

Our Trajectory

This is a time of crisis, but it is also a time of opportunity. While the *Saeculum* has achieved an unprecedented hegemony, it is also in a state of unprecedented crisis. *Sanctuary* has the opportunity to recover the terrain it has

lost over the course of the past three decades and position itself to develop and advance a new spiritual and civilizational ideal as the *Saeculum* decays or collapses. But to do this we need a *theory* and a *strategy*.

The Ways of Wisdom is first and foremost an effort to theorize *Sanctuary*. *Sanctuary* itself is nothing new. It is as old as humanity itself. It is the distinctively human *way*—or rather the distinctively human complex of *ways*—of *Being*. But it has not hitherto been adequately theorized. Primal traditions were pretheoretical and thought themselves through the medium of image and story. The great axial *ways* theorized particular forms of *Sanctuary*, but they were brought only partly into dialogue with each other during Silk Road era, so that a global deliberation regarding either what it means to be human or what was involved in resistance to the *Saeculum* was never really possible. Nor did the axial *ways* ever fully come to terms with the problem of patriarchy, which is the constitutive “original sin” behind the *Saeculum* and the reason why so many sanctuaries are themselves darkened. The axial *ways*, finally, never had either the challenge or the opportunity represented by the third and final form of the *Saeculum*, that represented by the contemporary fusion of *Capital* and *Empire*, nor did they ever fully and adequately locate themselves *collectively* in relationship with the various humanistic secularisms.

Any adequate theorization of *Sanctuary* must be *theological*. This is true for four reasons. First, as we have suggested above and as we will argue at length in the next chapter, theology is the discourse constituted by intercultural encounter between competing *ways* of being human, and any theorization of *Sanctuary* must, at this point in history, be a comprehensive, global encounter of all *ways* with each other. Second, as we have already suggested and as we will argue across all of the chapters which follow, humanity is *naturally* ordered to an end which transcends our natural capacities. We are finite and contingent and seek the infinite and necessary. We are human and want to be God. Any theorization of this attempt thus necessarily draws on transconceptual as well as conceptual and imaginative resources, and is thus theological in the classical sense of engaging “revealed” or mystical wisdoms as well as a rational dialectics. Third, any theorization of *Sanctuary* is a practical as well as a theoretical discipline. As Thomas points out (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I:1:a4), this is yet another way in which theology differs from philosophy (though it might be argued that materialist dialectics, as an attempt not just to interpret the world, but to change it (Marx 1846/1978) is in this sense, as much theological as philosophical). Fourth, in a pluralistic society in which competing *ways* contend openly in the public arena, even claims which transcend the limits of a rational dialectic must defend their reasonableness, and explain and interpret themselves, to those

who do not share them, by means of a rational dialectics. And so a purely imaginative or mystical religious discourse would be inadequate.

The Ways of Wisdom is theological in all these senses. First and foremost, it defines a new way of doing theology, what we call a “world,” “global,” or *Convivencia* theology, which engages questions of meaning and value across as well as within traditions, primal, axial, and secular, and which addresses claims made on the basis of supra-rational forms of knowledge as well as those made on the basis of reason alone. This will entail developing a radically new way of looking at such key questions of theological method and fundamental theology as the possibility and nature of supra-rational or transconceptual knowledge and its relationship with both imagination and reason, the relationship between theology and science (including the social sciences), theology and philosophy, and theology and hermeneutics and the sacred texts and other artifacts of which theology is, in part, an interpretation, and the nature of specifically theological reflection itself. More specifically, we will treat these methodological questions, and ultimately theology itself, as encounters between spiritual and civilizational traditions, i.e. between competing *ways* of being human. This will involve us in extending the Silk Road dialogue between the axial traditions, so that Jewish, Christian and Islamic claims are brought fully in to dialogue with, for example the claims of various Hinduisms, the Higher Mahayana and Vajrayana schools and the *dao xue*. But we will also show that the question of religion and science is fundamentally about the encounter between the axial traditions and theistic and technocratic secularism, that between theology and social theory about the encounter between the axial and theistic and humanistic secular traditions, and the questions of hermeneutics which have so dominated Protestant theology in particular about the engagement between the axial traditions and theistic and populist secularism. Throughout we will be laying the groundwork not only for a more systematic elaboration of our *theoria* in later works, but also for a spiritual and political *practice*. Finally, we will show how our claims are credible, even where those which are based on transconceptual insights cannot be rigorously demonstrated, by means of a rational dialectics which builds on the application of hermeneutic and social scientific methods to the understanding of the sources of our discourse.

Substantively, *The Ways of Wisdom* argues that the issue between *Sanc-tuary* and *Saeculum*, is ultimately, ontological. Following Milbank (Milbank 1990, 2014) I will argue for an analogical metaphysics of participation as against the univocal metaphysics which dominates theistic and technocratic secularism. But I will dissent significantly from Milbank’s analysis and argue that *all* of the axial *ways* ultimately embrace an analogical metaphysics, even if it is not the Thomistic metaphysics of *Esse*. Thus an analogical metaphysics

may be stated in either positive, cataphatic, or negative apophatic terms. We can say with Thomas that not everything exists in the same way—that in particular for anything to exist in the way we do, as contingent beings dependent on others, *something* must have the power of Being in itself. In order to exist we must participate in this Being. But we cannot, no matter what we do, actually *become* Being, at least not in essence. The best that we can do is to become partly or wholly connatural with it by growing in wisdom and acting justly. But we can also say with the Higher Mahayana and Vajrayana that *nothing* has inherent existence. We live in each others' embrace. That which allows existence is the very negation of self-possession or substance of any kind. Becoming connatural with this nonself-existent embracing, or enlightened compassion is the very essence of Buddhahood. Or, better still, we can attempt a synthesis of the cataphatic and apophatic *ways*, following Zhou Dunyi (Zhou c1050), the *advaita vedanta* (Sankara c 750/1890), the cluster of Sufi and Ismaili ways which developed along the borderlands between India and *Dar-al-Islam* (Khan 2004), the kabbalists (Silberman 1998) or Meister Eckhardt (Kelly 2008), recognizing that such a synthesis is almost certainly beyond not only image and story but also concept and argument.

Saeculum, on the other hand, is predicated on what I will argue is the false claim that all things exist in the same way: that Being is univocal. But here as well I will dissent significantly from Milbank's analysis, arguing that there are two very different forms of univocal metaphysics. The dominant form sees only contingent being, and then asks whether or not there is already one of these beings which is infinitely powerful Being to which the only reasonable response is one of absolute submission. Those that answer yes comprise what we call the *Theistic Saeculum*, which includes most Protestantisms and at least some Asharite Islam. Those who answer no and then dedicate themselves to building God (or getting as close as the laws and constants of physics will allow us) comprise the *Technocratic Saeculum*.

But it is also possible to recognize the conceptual distinction between contingent and necessary Being but then confuse *participation* in the power of Being as such with *possession* of that power—to mistake contingent being for *Being as such*. This error is a particular danger for those who, intensely aware of how many sanctuaries have become darkened return to secular activity and seek—and find—the sacred there. This is the way of most Silk Road revolutionary millenarianisms (culminating, especially in Joachism and the Franciscan Spirituals), as the project of creating “heaven on earth” presupposes the claim that the boundary between contingent and necessary being can, in fact be broken. It is also the way of the *Humanistic Saeculum*, the way of the great liberal, democratic, socialist, and populist revolutions.

We will argue that radical immanentism of this sort is mistaken in all its forms. There is no solution to the riddle of history, no resolution of the conflict between existence and essence (Marx 1844/1978), and attempts to find one or force one lead to “final solutions” marked by terror and repression. At the same time, I will argue, radical immanentism must be engaged for two reasons. First, it is a protest against the axial compromise with *Patriarchy* and *Empire*, the metaphysical signature of which is a hierarchical metaphysics and an emanationist cosmology. This may seem like metaphysical hair-splitting to some, but we will attempt to show that the criticisms raised by the radical immanentists from Joachim and David of Dinant through Marx and Engels *can* be addressed in the context of an analogical metaphysics if we begin by reversing the patriarchal expropriation of female generative power and what I will argue is the associated incorrect identification of Being with Substance and Subject. Once we have rectified this error, it will be possible to show how the great axial ways, authentically distinct though they are, can be reconciled with each other and the axial project completed in a way that fully answers the objections of humanistic secularism. Second, because humanistic secularisms seek *Being* in its authentic form as relational, transformative, generativity, except where humanistic secular projects have been hegemonized by *Capital* and its technocracy, they are objectively part of *Sanctuary* in the sense that they seek to defend and advance an authentic humanity in the face of advancing capitalist instrumentalization.

The resulting ontology will position *Sanctuary* decisively to the left of both perennialism and Radical Orthodoxy, with which it otherwise shares common ground. Specifically, it will avoid the danger both run of being hegemonized by conservative populisms—Radical Orthodoxy as a defense of European Christendom in a time of demographic and spiritual crisis, and perennialism as an *altercosmopolitanism* of the Right. But it will also differentiate our position clearly from that of *Multitude*, grounding an argument for authority and conscious spiritual and civilizational leadership⁴, institutions, civilization and even tradition against the soft anarchism and leftwing communism of thinkers like Negri, Agamben, Vatimo, and Žižek. My posi-

4. These are, I know, extraordinarily controversial terms, given their political association with both the “authoritarian” right and the “totalitarian” left. And I will grant, up front, that they follow necessarily from my option for an analogical rather than a univocal metaphysics of participation. But I will show how, in the context of such a metaphysics, where the patriarchal expropriation of feminine generativity is transcended and the recognition of participation is authentic, the result is a “mixed polity” or *politea* (as opposed to either tyranny, oligarchy, or democracy, monarchy or aristocracy) at both the metaphysical and the political levels. It is possible to recognize conscious leadership and authorities independent of popular will *without* constituting ideological monopolies or monolithic hierarchies.

tion is closest to that of Merton (Merton 1968) and Cardenal (Cardenal 2000) and can be read as an attempt to carry their lineage, including their engagement with Buddhism and communism, to a new level under vastly different social and historical conditions.

This theological and ontological argument has, furthermore, definite practical implications. *Sanctuary* is a form of rule and a way of life. Ecologically and demographically it argues for a *k* strategy which invests in a small number of offspring and ripens their capacity to Be and against an *r* strategy which turns wombs into factories and generates as much raw labor power as possible. Technologically it nurtures matter's immanent drive towards complexity and organization (hortic and alchemical technologies) rather than breaking down existing forms of organization to release energy and do work (industrial technologies). Economically it invests in service of human development rather than in service of accumulation, capitalist or statist. Politically it cultivates the power to do and to Be, not command and control of the Other. Psychosexually it respects the generative power of women and regards sexuality as sacrament, wiping from our lips forever the claim of the *ba'alim* to own and use this power (Hosea 2).

This said, *Sanctuary* includes many different *ways*, many trends, and many tendencies. *The Ways of Wisdom* represents a specific position within the broader camp of *Sanctuary* for the simple reason that as a *way* it has a specific starting point and a specific trajectory. These are, in significant measure, autobiographical. I write as a North American man who is, on my father's side the grandson of a Trapanese immigrant with deep roots in both the Franciscan Spiritual tradition and the Latin anticlericalism which was the popular form of Latin Averroism. My grandfather was profoundly devoted to the *Magna Mater* in the form of the Dark Virgin and profoundly committed to the international workers movement. I was raised as a Catholic and continue to regard the Catholic Church as my home. But I have continued my grandfather's tradition of socialist politics and my criticism of socialist humanism is in many ways a work of self-criticism. I am also an academic with roots in both the humanities and humanistic social sciences on the one hand and theological faculties on the other. I am, in other words, both a humanistic and a clerical intellectual. And on my mother's side I am descended from (very much decayed) English gentry and German-American yeomen. While I was raised within the Catholic Church, I was also raised with the *Protestant Ethic* which Weber analyzes so powerfully. Finally, while my journey has presented me with the opportunity to learn deeply from friends (and adversaries) from many different traditions, certain of these intercultural encounters came earlier and were more fundamental. I grew up with and around Jews and understanding the Jewish critique of Christianity and finding a way to

affirm my Catholic identity while rejecting Christological claims which are inherently antisemitic was fundamental to my process of spiritual and theological maturation. And my first deep immersion in a radically “Other” cultural reality took place during extended periods spent during my childhood in Theravada Thailand. My most powerful *altermaternal* figures were young Thai and Khmer women who introduced me to the *dhamma* and planted the seeds of what has become a thriving contemplative practice.

What this means in terms of the way in which I have chosen to write this book is that I write as a Gentile, who approaches life with a “Greek” problem: I want to transcend my finitude and contingency. I write from a vantage point which is close enough to real privilege to understand the temptation of pursuing this aim by means of conquest and exploitation. I write, in other words, from the vantage point of the *way of the search for Being* and its prolongation in to secular and specifically socialist humanisms. But I also write as someone for whom the answer to this question, both in the sense of (at least one of) the broader historical stream(s) of which I am part (Catholicism) and in terms of my own personal journey has come from the people of Israel: we know (and become) God in and only in the just act. And both my “Greek” question and the Jewish answers I have found to this question have been transformed profoundly by the gradual awakening to the Dharma I began to learn nearly half a century ago from the young Thai and Khmer women who cared for me: that nothing has inherent existence, that we all live in each others’ embrace. Being is neither Substance nor Subject, but relational, transformative, generativity.

And so our journey beings. First we will show that theology is, in fact, intercultural engagement. We will then look in some depth at both the original axial *ways* and their internal development and engagement with each other, making the argument that once we reject the idea of Being as Substance the difficulty in reconciling these *ways* (as well as feminist and deconstructionist objections to them) are largely overcome. The result will be a preliminary synthesis and an agenda with which to approach the challenges posed by theistic, technocratic, and humanistic secularism. We will then address these challenges both methodologically and substantively in the forms in which they have presented themselves theologically in the secular era: the challenge of science, social theory, and hermeneutics and show that by leaving behind the idea that Being is Subject we not only overcome secular objections to the axial ways but also the patriarchal residues which affect even most humanistic secularism. This will, finally, set the stage for a systematic explanation of *Sanctuary* as a way of being human centered on seeking wisdom, doing justice, and ripening Being understood neither as substance nor as subject, but as relationship, generativity, and creation.

Theology *Is* Intercultural Engagement

In the previous chapter we said that *Sanctuary* needs a theory and a strategy and that the theory and strategy it needs is a *theology* and indeed a theology of a very specific kind: a theology understood as an engagement between competing *ways* of being human. We now need to explain in greater detail what such a theology might consist in, and show that it is, in fact, possible.

We will proceed by answering first the principal and obvious objection to our approach. Theology has historically been understood as *fides querens intellectum*, and therefore as operating within the context of commitment to a particular religious tradition. This is a consequence of the fact that theology, as distinct from philosophy, consists in the attempt to understand, explain, and/or demonstrate the reasonableness of a wisdom which, by its very nature, transcends discursive reason or dialectics, so that engaging the wisdom in the first place presupposes a prior faith commitment. We will show, however, that engagement with suprarational wisdom does not by itself generate *theology*, and that the efforts to understand, explain, and justify such wisdom which constitute theology in fact emerge only when competing *ways* encounter each other. With this task complete we will proceed to analyze in some depth the various approaches to intercultural engagement which have defined humanity's great *ways*, both historically and in the present period. In the process we will discover that we have been reflecting on the question of theological method all along. We will then situate our approach in relation to these, arguing both for its continuity with the great synthetic and syncretic movements and for its superiority to the existing contemporary alternatives.

Primal and Sacral Monarchic Societies

We begin then by demonstrating that nothing which meets the description of theology is possible prior to intercultural encounter and that theology is, in fact, precisely what happens when competing *ways* of being come into contact with each other.

The most straightforward way to proceed in this regard is from a comparative historical sociological perspective, looking at each stage in the development of human civilization to see whether and in what sense something like a theological discourse is discernible. There have never been claims that anything like a strictly theological discourse is present in primal societies. At this stage human beings participate in Being largely through the modality of hunting and gathering, cultivating and husbanding plants and animals, through the construction of increasingly complex kinship and cross kin village structures, and by assigning meanings to these activities, meanings which are expressed through the medium of image and story as totemic symbols and rituals of collective effervescence, creation stories and legends about founders and culture heroes, and eventually in the widespread cult of the *Magna Mater* (Durkheim 1911/1964, Stone 1976). There is no reason apart from confessional presuppositions to deny that the wisdom achieved at this stage is, at least partly, transconceptual, though formal abstraction has not yet emerged as a differentiated activity, so very little distinction is made between insights which are empirical, those which are rational, and those which are mystical in character. What *is* absent is any attempt to *understand* supra-rational insights in terms of a rational dialectics for the simple reason the latter has simply not yet emerged. To the extent that intercultural engagement takes place, the approach to such engagement tends to be integrative. We know, for example, that among the Hopi, when new clans wished to join a village, they were asked what new ceremonies they might bring. The decision on whether or not to admit them depended on the perceived value of their rituals (Waters 1963). Integration between different *ways* was clearly possible, but by no means assured.

This orientation persists today in the form of the “fourth world” movement, where this term is used to describe native and indigenous peoples who historically rejected the development of urban civilization and even, in some cases, settled villages (Griggs 1992) and is represented by organizations such as the *Center for World Indigenous Studies* (www.cwis.org).

For primal societies the principal form of discourse generated by humanity’s encounter with the sacred—or rather by its own inherently theotic project—is that combination of image and story we call myth. Carried into action as a way of producing and reproducing collective effervescence, myth becomes

ritual. Both can be sources for theology but neither by itself is theological in character.

In sacral monarchic societies the vast majority of human beings continue to participate in Being as they did in primal societies, while the warlord class undertakes a project centered on conquest and sacrifice, attempting to divinize themselves by means of exploitation and accumulation, by building (rudimentary) empires, and by assigning meanings to these activities through, once again, the modality of image and story (Mansueto 2010b). Once again, there is no reason to deny the possibility of suprarational wisdom here. Indeed, if we do, we will have to do without key concepts such as sacrifice which, in more spiritualized form, are essential to axial and post-axial *ways*. Once again, though, since formal abstraction and rational dialectics have not yet emerged as differentiated activities, theological reflection on supra-rational wisdom is not really possible. Where intercultural engagement takes place it tends, as in the case of primal societies, to be integrative in character, albeit with the addition of a hierarchical element, so that the gods of conquered peoples were subordinated to those of the conqueror.

This trend is reflected in the present period in the integral traditionalist movement which emerged around Rene Guenon (Guenon 2007) and Julian Evola (Evola 1995). This movement, which is often associated with but different in certain fundamentals from the *perennialist* trend which we will discuss later, advocated a restoration of a sacral kingship which joined warrior and priestly functions. Below such sacred priest-kings ranged what he regarded as inferior castes: degenerate feminized priests, desacralized warriors, money-makers, and laborers concerned with nothing but sustaining organic vitality. The political valence of the doctrine gives reason for concern, in so far as many of its adherents inclined, at least for a time, to support fascism during its apogee in the 1930s. This was, at least, true of Evola.

The root of this error resides ultimately in their response to the crisis of industrial capitalism which first became apparent in the middle of the nineteenth century. Far from fulfilling the promise of the technocratic secular ideal (transcending finitude and contingency by means of scientific and technological progress) capitalism was in fact beginning to hold back these processes and could be sustained only by means of renewed militarism and empire building and by the exploitation of the peoples of the Latin, Celtic, Slavic, Asian, African, and American peripheries. One option, that taken by the communists (Marx 1844/1978), was to resist capitalism and imperialism in the hope that socialism would eventually end the instrumentalization of human creative power. Clearly this option eventually ran into its own contradictions. But the alternative—alliance with emerging imperialism in the hope that it would restore an “heroic” ethos—the option chosen by

Schelling, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Jung (Lukacs 1953/1980), was much worse. It helped pave the way for fascism.

Integral traditionalism is one variant of this later option. It differs from the core tradition of Germanic romanticism and authoritarianism in being far more ecumenical in the range of cultures from which it drew its inspiration and far less inclined than Heidegger and his followers to imagine that it had invented something radically new. Eventually most of the integral traditionalists recognized the fascists for the techno-thugs that they were. But it was much, much, too late.

As with primal societies the principal form of discourse generated by the sacral monarchic project is that combination of image and story we call myth. Carried into action as a way of producing and reproducing collective effervescence, myth becomes ritual. Both can be sources for theology but neither by itself is theological in character.

The Axial Age and the Silk Road

The Axial Age brought significant changes in the forms of religious discourse, but still nothing which could properly be called a theology. As old stories cease to make sense under new circumstances and are retold they become *literature*. Hellenic drama and the revised and retold epics of Greece and India and the prophetic discourse of the sort found in ancient Israel might all be regarded as special cases of this broader form of discourse. Struggles for justice lead become crystalized in legal traditions and eventually legal codes, as well as in histories. The emergence of formal abstraction, itself a reflex of petty commodity production, leads to the supplementation of image and story by concept and argument as ways of engaging questions of meaning and value, and eventually to the emergence of philosophy. Somewhere in between the prophetic oracle and the philosophical treatise lies the “saying” of the Sage, of which the works of Lao Tzu and Kung Fu Tze are the best examples, though many of the pre-Socratics look similar in form (Mansueto 2010a).

Intercultural engagement increases during this period, but it is not of the sort that yields a specifically theological discourse. On the one hand, as the emergence of specialized agriculture and crafts production and, along with them, petty commodity production and the creation of regional trade networks brought peoples into ever closer communication with each other in the context of a broader dynamic of religious rationalization, there was a tendency towards not just integration of cults but actually towards synthesis and syncretism, a dynamic we see, perhaps for the first time, in Hesiod’s

Theogony (Hesiod c750 BCE/1988). On the other hand, the emergence of a rational dialectics led to conceptual refinement and to differentiation and to what eventually became sharp polemics between otherwise quite close philosophical schools (Collins 1998).

The great Iron Age empires which emerged at the close of the Axial Age alternated between exclusivist cultural programs of the sort implemented by the Seleucids, the Qin and the Late Roman and Byzantine Empires and what eventually became a more hierarchically integrative norm in which many *ways* were patronized, with tendencies which served imperial interests favored and those which presented a real or perceived threat subject to persecution.

It is only with the Silk Road Era that theology as a well defined mode of discourse first emerges. This is true for the simple reason that it is in this period that we find the large scale encounters between competing *ways* of being human which makes such a discourse necessary. It is worth looking at each of these principal encounters in greater depth.

The first of these encounters, and the one which defines the actual trajectory of development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is that between *Athens* and *Jerusalem*. This encounter is, in turn, set up by the unique character of the religion of earliest Israel, which, as Norman Gottwald has demonstrated (Gottwald 1979), emerged from a Late Bronze Age peasant revolt, so that *seeking wisdom* and *doing justice* become fully convertible with each other as Israel meets here God on the battlefield of the revolution. The *ba'ālim* which Israel rejected were the heavenly reflex of the earthly warlords and rejection of the *ba'ālim* was the condition of any possible liberation.

As *Empire* reasserted itself during the Iron Age, this revolutionary posture became more and more difficult to sustain. Broadly speaking three options were available. The first, gradually developed by the Pharisees and eventually consolidated in the dominant rabbinic form of Judaism (Neusner 1975/1998), accepted that the Jews were and would remain an ethnoreligious minority incapable of re-establishing an independent polity, much less of systemically remaking the world, at least for the foreseeable future. There was also a growing sense that the legal and prophetic traditions needed to be reinterpreted for the new conditions represented by the Silk Road, in which Jews were as often craftsmen and merchants as they were peasants and the place of both the land and that of the Temple were radically relativized, a trend which became even more marked after the destruction of the Second Temple at the end of the Jewish War. Finally, especially after the Jewish War, there was no longer any central teaching or governing authority and the priesthood no longer had a well defined function, so that there was no authority left except that of a good argument. The result was a focus on

serving as a “light to the nations,” a catalyst for justice in an unjust world, in a context where all decisions were regarded as having spiritual significance and in which deliberation around just what constituted justice became near as important as the just act itself. Much of this deliberation took place in the context of Talmudic legal scholarship, but as Jacob Neusner points out, the dominant legal hermeneutic within Judaism was always rationalistic, focusing on extracting the principle behind the law and applying it critically and creatively in the present period, something which puts all Jewish jurisprudence well to the “left” of even the most liberal Muslim *fiqh*, such as that of the Jafari tradition, which stresses *ijtihad* and *aql*, analogical reasoning and intelligence. And the absence of any centralized religious authority, creating an environment in which there was no authority but a good argument, introduced into later “western” appropriations of Hellenism a critical element much stronger than that present within the Hellenic tradition itself, paving the way for Marx’s *Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing* (Marx 1843a/1978).

The second alternative was messianism and armed struggle. There were many such attempts, culminating in the Jewish War of 66-70 CE and the Bar Kokhba revolt in the second century of the common era. Christianity probably emerged from such a movement, though just how far along the path to armed struggle that movement traveled remains contested (Eissenman 1997, Tabor 2006). But when messianism failed, at least in the context of Christianity, it gave birth to an entirely new spiritual *way*. The struggle for justice, specifically in its *failure* as represented by the cross, became as a spiritual discipline which stretches us, helping us grow towards God. This new *way* was articulated almost from the beginning in the language of the Hellenistic mystery cults as Jewish solution to a Greek problem, and it is thus all but impossible to isolate in “pure form.” Rather, it exists *between* the two broader *ways of justice and liberation* and the *search for Being*. This allowed, ironically, for a rapid accommodation with *Empire* as the new Christian ideal displaced Hellenism and the principal form of legitimation for the Late Roman and Byzantine states as well as the Germanic and Slavic states which surrounded and partly succeeded them and eventually emerged as the Holy Roman and Russian Empires (Theissen 1982, Kyratits 1987). But it also made *internal* to Christianity the question of the relationship between Athens and Jerusalem, so that this question *constitutes* Christian theology. On the one hand, core Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation could never even have been formulated apart from the categories such as *being*, *essence*, and *hypostasis* drawn from Hellenic philosophy. On the other hand Christianity has always been marked by a profound tension between the Greek problem it tries to solve (finitude and contingency), the

Jewish answer that it offers to this problem (*da'ath 'elohim* in the supernaturally just act). What might justice mean for a *failed* messianism? How is the failure of this messianism *divinizing*? It from this half-hidden complex of questions that the surface Christian debates around the Trinity and the Incarnation, nature and grace, sin, atonement, justification, and sanctification all emerge and for which they are all ultimately just a code.

The result has been the development within Christianity of a theological spectrum which reaches from Tertullian (Tertullian c 197/1956) on the “right,” through Augustine (Augustine 426/1972), up to the central Orthodox and Catholic tradition represented by the majority of the Greek Fathers and, in its fullest form, by Thomas Aquinas (Aquinas 1927/1952). Thus we have from Tertullian the oldest rejection of any engagement between Athens and Jerusalem.

Whence spring those “fables and endless genealogies,” and “unprofitable questions,” and “words which spread like a cancer? From all these, when the apostle would restrain us, he expressly names *philosophy* as that which he would have us be on our guard against. Writing to the Colossians, he says, “See that no one beguile you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and contrary to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost.” He had been at Athens, and had in his interviews (with its philosophers) become acquainted with that human wisdom which pretends to know the truth, whilst it only corrupts it, and is itself divided into its own manifold heresies, by the variety of its mutually repugnant sects. What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? what between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from “the porch of Solomon,” who had himself taught that “the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart.” Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief (Tertullian *De praescriptione haereticorum* 7).

This methodological rejection of engagement between Athens and Jerusalem is associated, from Tertullian on, with an option for a univocal metaphysics, a strong doctrine of original sin, a tendency to emphasize God’s role (as opposed to human cooperation and self-cultivation) in the work of redemption, and a premillennialist eschatology marked by a literal return of Jesus to establish his kingdom on the Earth, doctrines which we see today on the Christian Right. But Tertullian, we should remember, was marginal

to the broader Patristic tradition and the sort of theology he advocated became normative—and then only for a trend within Christendom—after the Norman Conquests and the beginning of the Augustinian Reaction. And it is only with the Reformation, and the advent of the *Saeculum* that it really becomes dominant.

In the middle of this spectrum we find Augustine and the Augustinian tradition up to the time of the Norman Conquests. Augustine *clearly* understood Christianity as the answer to what had been a distinctly Hellenistic personal quest for wisdom and had no hesitation either in using Hellenistic philosophy to interpret Christianity or in regarding it as an authentic path towards Christianity. What distinguishes Augustine from the Greek Fathers and from Thomas is a more radical internal critique of the Hellenic *way of the search for being*, and especially of humanity's *theotic* project, which he is inclined to regard as ultimately vain and rebellious and which he associates, at least implicitly, with the *City of Man*, which is founded on the love of honor (Augustine 426/1972). This in turn leads to a tendency to give priority to the will over the intellect and to love over knowledge. For Augustine sin is the result of an act of the will rather than a failure of the intellect and it is through the right ordering of our loves rather than by taking on the *form* of God that we become Godlike. And since once we have chosen self over God we cannot choose God for any reason other than self, only God can redeem us.

There has been considerable debate in recent years regarding the extent to which this excludes a doctrine of *theosis*. Certainly the doctrine is less prominent here than it is in the Greek fathers and it has not historically been emphasized in most Protestant or indeed in most Catholic readings of Augustine. But recent scholars have argued that a more modest concept of *theosis* is indeed present in Augustine (Hallostén 2007, Persons 2010). A similar case might be made for Luther, in spite of his harsher judgment on reason and philosophy, which he regarded as the devil's whore. Recent Finnish scholarship has affirmed the presence of a genuine doctrine of *theosis* in Luther and the Lutheran tradition (Mannermaa 2000).

It is, rather, when we look especially at the English tradition from Anselm on (Anselm who became Archbishop of Canterbury after the Norman Conquest) that we begin to see the re-articulation of Augustine's theology in terms of a strict univocal metaphysics, a zero sum game struggle between humanity and God, leading to a divine command ethics, a strong doctrine of original sin and of the substitutionary atonement, and spirituality of submission. These themes are then taken up by the English Franciscans, especially Scotus and Occam (Boler 1993, Ingham 1993, MacAleer 1996, Mansueto 2011) and ultimately by the Reformed tradition which, of course,

reaches its most advanced expression in the Anglo-American domain. In this context the emerging doctrine of divine sovereignty—reflex of the emerging absolutist state and, in its more advanced form of the abstract, invisible, and utter inscrutable Sovereign which is *Capital*—excludes any meaningful concept of *theosis*.

On the “left,” finally, Christianity is understood as the solution to the Hellenic problem of humanity’s *theotic* ordering in and through the fundamentally Jewish practice of justice. This is Thomas’ solution (Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* II Q 45 a2) and even more so that of Eckhart (Kelly 2010). Here the struggle for justice remains not merely integral to the Gospel but constitutive of it, while carrying us beyond the political towards a real if nonentitative connaturality with God. This has the effect, as Milbank puts it (Milbank 2014), of democratizing virtue by rooting the highest wisdom not in metaphysical inquiry but in *caritas* or the supernaturally just act.

Islam, finally, is fundamentally about a refusal to accept the marginalization of the struggle for justice as a minority ethnoreligious current and a refusal to accept the defeat of the messianic project. Islam means “commanding right and forbidding wrong (Crone 2004),” establishing God’s rule, which is the rule of justice. But this does not exempt Islam from either the internal problems of the messianic project, which do not disappear when this project is (at least partly) successful. Nor does it exempt Islam from the problem of the relationship between Athens and Jerusalem. Islam was so successful that it paid no attention to the problem of succession and leadership before the prophet died, leaving two parties to contend with each other. The first party, that of Ali (the *Shia*), stressed the primacy of the Prophet’s lineage, traced most especially through his daughter Fatima, and the imperative that the successor of the Prophet be wise and just. The result was a doctrine of the Imamate which represented at least a partial movement towards the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. The second party, that of community and tradition (the *Sunni*), stressed the need for the unity of the *ummah* and for effective political military leadership if *Dar-al-Islam* was not to be reduced to the status of a pious but impotent sect. This fundamental contradiction was layered over by the partly—but only partly—overlapping difference regarding the extent to which Islam should draw on other traditions, particularly those of Hellenic philosophy. The Shia went furthest in their engagement with Athens with some communities, such as the Ismailis, eventually coming to regard Hellenic philosophy as the esoteric or *batin* content of the *Quran* passed on through the lineage of the Imams, while the Sunni differed widely, with some (the Mutazilites and most later Sufis) embracing Hellenism in various forms while others (the Asharites and

especially later movements such as the Wahabis) rejecting such intercultural engagement as a betrayal of Islam and *de facto takfir*.

In India the dynamic which led to the emergence of a theological discourse was driven by the encounter between Indo-Aryan and indigenous Dravidian traditions on the one hand and, encounters of both of these root traditions with Chinese *ways* which reached India along mountain trade routes through Tibet (Capriles 2003) and maritime trade routes through the Tamil and Mayalalam South on the other (Samuel 2008). The Indo-Aryan tradition contributed an understanding of sacrifice as the generative power of the universe. This understanding was rooted in the Vedic myths which recounted the creation of the universe from the sacrifice of primordial human, *Purusha* and in the rites of deification, such as the *rajasuya*, practiced by the Indo-Aryan warlords and their *brahmana* ritualists. This sacrificial complex was increasingly rationalized during the early part of the Axial Age with the creative principle of the universe understood as either *Brahman*, after the manner of the *Upanishads* or *pattica samupada*, or dependent origination in the Buddhist tradition. Physical austerity (*tapas*) and contemplative practice at least partially displaced animal sacrifice. What the borderlands contributed was above all a complex of yogic and tantric disciplines which mobilized the human body and the human mind as instruments for achieving union with—or more often realization of our identity (and that of the entire phenomenal universe) with—the divine. This was generally accompanied by both a higher degree of comfort with worldly aims and a sense of the world as itself sacred, a feature of both the indigenous, primal traditions of India and of Chinese *ways* generally.

On what eventually emerged as the “Hindu” side this encounter led to a hierarchization of spiritual aims and a pluralism of spiritual methods. *Kama*, *artha*, *dharma*, and *moksa* (pleasure, power, duty, and liberation) are recognized as legitimate aims, even if the highest remains *moksa*. There is, meanwhile, sharp debate regarding what *moksa* entails (freedom from matter, devoted union with or recognition of our prior identity with Brahman) and the best ways to attain it (*bhakti*, *karma*, *jnana*, or *raja yoga*: devotion, good works, study, and contemplative practice).

On the Buddhist side, on the other hand, the primacy of *bodhi* (enlightenment) was more resolutely upheld, but the debate around what this entailed and how to achieve it was, similarly, informed by a similar engagement with more world-affirming Dravidian and Chinese doctrines and practices. This resulted in a wide range of opinion from the austere doctrine of the *Pali* canon (especially as interpreted in the later *Theravada*), which eschewed theism and metaphysical speculation and understood *bodhi* as release from suffering, with the more expansive claims of the emerging

Mahayana and *Vajryana*, which envision and enlightenment which is tantamount to full deification in all but name, and which, especially for the *Vajrayana*, regards the entire universe as manifestation of enlightened mind and energy. (Capriles 2003).

In China, the encounter between Indian traditions in the form of Buddhism and indigenous Chinese traditions generates a discourse which is clearly theological. On the side of the indigenous traditions there was significant resistance, especially from the *ru xue* or Confucian tradition, and periods of imperial patronage under the Sui and Tang culminated in sharp repression towards the end of Tang Dynasty. Ultimately, however, Buddhism proved itself too compelling to definitively defeat, but not strong enough to best indigenous Chinese traditions. The result was a kind of functional integration, in which Taoism provided guidance for health and worldly happiness, Confucianism guidance for intellectual and moral self-cultivation and social order, and Buddhism guidance for achieving enlightenment, at least for those who chose to pursue it. It is important to remember, in this context, that even the most rationalistic of the Song Dynasty advocates of the *dao xue* (Neoconfucian) synthesis such as Zhu Xi were regular practitioners of sitting meditation in the Cha'an (Zen) tradition. This approach was mirrored in Chinese Buddhism in the *p'an chiao* (Williams 1989) system, in which the teachings of various Buddhist schools are ranked in terms of their relative completeness, with the lower ranked schools treated as skillful means (*upayakausaya*), teachings directed at the less developed, and the non-Buddhist schools ranked below that, generally with a generic Hinduism ranked below Buddhism and a generic Confucian-Taoist synthesis ranked at the bottom, but still recognized as promoting basic ethical conduct. This approach was then taken up by the various Vajrayana schools, especially on the Tibetan plateau, each of which regards the others as a "preparation" for its own higher wisdom.

There is, finally, one attempt at a self-consciously intercultural (and global) theological discourse which remains wholly within the framework of the axial project: *perennialism*. Perennialism (Nasr 1989) is a philosophical and religious school which teaches that, behind their diverse exoteric forms, the world's great wisdom traditions, philosophical and religious, share a common esoteric and mystical core. It advances this claim in conscious continuity with Neoplatonic attempts to unify Hellenistic and Semitic spiritual culture, the Hindu concept of *Sanatana Dharma* or universal wisdom and the Chinese Buddhist *p'an chiao*. But the term itself derives from the Catholic Humanist Agostino Steuco (Delph 2006a, 2006b), for whom it represented the great tradition of human wisdom which had culminated in Catholic Scholasticism, and which was then under assault by the

Reformers. For Leibniz the idea of a perennial “philosophy of harmony” was at the center of a strategy to heal the religious divisions of Europe (Schmitt 1966). And the idea gained popularity as Europeans became aware of the significant common ground between their own mystical traditions and those of the peoples they had colonized. Advocates of the position include Huston Smith, whose introduction to world religions (Smith 1995) has promoted a moderate version of the doctrine among an enormous number of undergraduate students studying comparative religion, the Persian Islamic scholar Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Nasr 1989), Ananda Coomaraswamy (Coomaraswamy 1987), and Fritjof Schuon (Schuon 1992). The neotraditionalist leaders Rene Guenon (Guenon 2007) and Julian Evola (Evola 1995) also identify with this trend and are often included within it, but they differ in looking back behind the Axial Age to the sacral monarchic project as their principal source of inspiration.

Substantively, the esoteric core of human wisdom is taken to center around the claim that behind phenomenal reality there lies a rationally and mystically knowable first principle: Being, the Good, the One, Brahman or Tian. Humanity’s end consists in understanding our unity and/or identity with this principle. This is achieved through any of a variety of means, usually centered on some combination of intellectual self-cultivation and spiritual discipline, though many perennialists have shown significant interest in mystery cults and have written extensively on what they regard as the degradation of the mystery tradition by Theosophy, modern day Rosicrucians, and Masonry.

This trend is, fundamentally, a reflection of the position of axial intellectuals who, in an era of globalization, now believe themselves to be in a position to complete the global intellectual synthesis which was emerging during the Silk Road Era while offering that synthesis as a remedy to the ills of secularism. Politically the movement leans to the moderate right, in that its metaphysics and cosmology, and thus its social doctrine are organically hierarchical and emanationist. Integral to this conservatism is a failure to address the patriarchal expropriation of female generative power, though some members of the trend have been devotees of various goddess cults, especially those associated with the Hindu *mahavidya*. It also reflects a failure to engage full the humanistic secular project, especially in its democratic and socialist forms, which advocate a more emergentist and less hierarchical cosmology and metaphysics.

Perennialism is by no means globally in error. There *is* significant common ground between *many* of humanity’s wisdom traditions, and especially between their mystical doctrines. This is because they represent responses, on the basis of a common humanity, to a common ultimate

reality. And, as we have argued elsewhere, humanity's *telos* is nothing other than deification, even if full deification remains always and only a horizon, drawing us forward to the connaturality with God which we have in caritative wisdom and the supernaturally just act. There is even an element of truth in the school's political doctrine. The modern world, by glorifying a "science" which unlocks the secrets of nature, telling us *how* the world works, has radically devalued wisdom, which asks *why*, unlocking, if only partially, the secrets of the divine. And the modern world hates nothing more than the authentically wise and the authentically just, regarding them as a threat to freedom and democracy. *Knowing God: The Journey of the Dialectic* (Mansueto 2010a) and *The Death of Secular Messianism* (Mansueto 2010b) explain this broad common ground between humanity's spiritual traditions—and the difficulties with the modern era—in a sociologically and philosophically rigorous way.

This said, there are also serious problems with perennialism. First, its claims regarding the underlying unity of humanity's wisdom traditions go much too far. Even among the many traditions which share a common analogical metaphysics of Being/the Good/the One/Brahman/Tian, there are significant differences in how this first principle is understood and even greater differences regarding its relationship to the universe and to humanity. While I have generally emphasized the common ground between the Platonic metaphysics of the Good, the Aristotelian metaphysics of the Unmoved Mover, and the Avicennan/Thomistic metaphysics of Necessary Being or *Esse*, there are real differences even between these. The latter in particular privileges creativity and thus has rather different spiritual and political implications than its predecessors. Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics leaves humanity little to add to the universe, and the values the contemplative life the most; Avicennan and Thomistic metaphysics make human beings co-creators with God and place more value on the active life—and on creative work of any kind, as well as on those who do such work. The differences between this Western metaphysical tradition and the doctrine of Brahman or of Tian are even greater. While the *word* Brahman probably has its origins in the Sanskrit term for a certain creative swelling, most Vedanta defines Brahman by contrast with the creative play of Maya or illusion. And the Chinese Tian (heaven) serves more as a metaphysical anchor, grounding moral claims and known as much through practice as through dialectics, than as carrier of rich metaphysical content. Indeed, there is a good case to be made that China developed a fully elaborated positive ontology centered on Tian only in response to the challenge posed by Buddhism, something which suggests that the common ground identified by the perennialists is *in part* at least an Indo-European phenomenon.

Even within the very restricted realm of Indo-European spiritual traditions, the perennialists fail to come to terms adequately with the Buddhist denial that *anything* has intrinsic existence, which seems the exact negation of their preferred Neo-Platonic/Advaita Vedanta ontology. While I have argued that Buddhism historically evolved *towards* a more positive ontology, centered on the ideas of the *tathagatagarbha* in the Mahayana tradition and the *bhavanga* in the Theravada tradition (Mansueto 2010a), the tendency is to understand the first principle in terms of Mind rather than Being or one of the other transcendentals. This, not surprisingly, privileges contemplation even more than the Platonic, Aristotelian, or even Vedanta schools.

Finally, while I have argued extensively that the univocal metaphysics which characterizes Augustinian Christianity and Asharite Islam is *wrong* (Mansueto 2010b), we cannot simply exclude them from the list humanity's wisdom traditions because failing to do so would call into question a cherished and attractive claim regarding the unity of the world's religions. And here, of course, the spiritual and political implications are *very* different: faith, devotion, surrender, submission . . .

These differences become even more apparent when we move to the question of the relationship between the first principle and the universe. Did the universe emanate from the first principle (the most common view among perennialists and the philosophers they favor), a cosmology which suggests a hierarchical and degenerating universe, or does it evolve towards it, the view of many Radical Aristotelians and modern dialecticians? This latter view, while certainly not excluding an emphasis on excellence and conscious leadership, has more democratic possibilities. Vedanta, meanwhile, to which perennialists tend to reduce *Sanatana Dharma*, is *constituted* by the debate between the *advaita*, the *dvaita*, and those in between, over whether the human soul (atman) is identical with Brahman, has Brahman immanent in it, or radically separate, a view which tends towards quasi-Protestant devotionalism.

Finally, while the main body of perennialism avoids the serious political errors of the integral traditionalists, clearly upholding the primacy of the teaching and sanctifying over the governing and warrior offices, it also argues, at least implicitly, against any possible political solution to the evils of this *kali yuga*. This is, in a sense, consistent with an axial rejection of the secular project generally, in both its technocratic and humanistic forms. But it also marks the failure of the perennialists to fully integrate into their understanding of the *sophia perennis* the *way of justice and liberation*, for which the struggle for justice, even when it fails, is constitutive of *da'ath 'elohim* and both an occasion and an effective of authentic spiritual progress.

In the context of the “long twentieth century” which lasted from 1848–1989 this cannot but be seen as an antisemitism by omission.

Saecular Theologies

The dynamics of theological discourse changes radically in the period beginning with the Norman Conquests, the Crusades, the *Reconquista*, and the European conquest of Asia, Africa, and the Americas, conquests which constituted the third and final iteration of the *Saeculum*. We have already noted that the Norman conquests coincided with a sharp turn towards Christian exclusivism and with the emergence of a well defined univocal metaphysics within Christendom, as reflected in the theologies of Anselm and later of Scotus and Occam (though it is worth noting that the Normans in Sicily and in the Slavic lands were far more integrationist in their approach to local cultures than they were in their French and British headquarters). While the Catholic powers followed the more traditional pattern of hierarchical integration, subsuming local cults within the context of the broader Catholic synthesis, and more specifically in the context of the cult of Mary and of the saints, Protestant England became the point of origin of an exclusivism previously unforeseen on the planet. The internal logic of Reformed theology, adopted in one or another degree by essentially all parties in the Church of England, left no room for the recognition of truth outside the Gospel of the crucified and resurrected Christ, even where, as in the case of some late Puritans and Early Evangelicals such as Jonathan Edwards and his followers, there was an authentic commitment to justice of Native Americans and other oppressed peoples (Heimart 1967).

This approach persists in what have come to be called *exclusivist* or *restritivist* theologies of religion, which are most common among Evangelical Protestants but which sometimes appear in Catholic and Orthodox circles as well. Exclusivist theologies (Newbigin 1969) theologies can be defined as those which reject the existence of religious truth sufficient for salvation outside of Christianity and in many cases rule out salvation for non-Christians. The argument behind such theologies generally draws on an Augustinian and or Evangelical Protestant reading of the New Testament, especially Paul, which stresses the depth and seriousness of original sin, the need for a redemption which can be effected only through the death and resurrection of Jesus understood as both Christ and divine Son of God and, finally, the necessity of appropriating this redemption through faith in Jesus (again understood as Christ and divine Son of God). The exclusivist position is dictated and follows necessarily from such the underlying univocal

metaphysics of the Augustinian/Evangelical tradition, and from the anthropology and a soteriology which follow from that metaphysics, which really do not allow *redemptive* value to be recognized in spiritual traditions which understand the human condition or the conditions for redemption in a different way (though this does not rule out recognizing that non-Christian traditions might have ethical or spiritual insights of a lesser order).

From a methodological vantage point the defining characteristic of this kind of exclusivism is the reduction of theology to hermeneutics, a position we will analyze and subject to criticism, bringing it into dialogue with the much richer hermeneutic perspectives of other spiritual traditions, in a later chapter.

While modern *Science* has historically understood itself as a force for free thought and open-mindedness, we have shown, following Duhem (Duhem 1909) that the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century actually had its roots in the Augustinian reaction of the thirteenth century (Mansueto 2012) and in the repression of Radical Aristotelianism. What we are calling the technocratic *Saeculum* is simply a logical development of the theistic *Saeculum*. On the theoretical side this is a result of the gradual realization of the fact that, as Laplace put it (Laplace 1799–1825), in the context of a univocal metaphysics, “God is an hypothesis of which we have no need.” Where all Being exists in the way in which a univocal metaphysics understands it, the problem of Being, of why there is something rather than nothing, simply disappears. Science tells *how* Being is, i.e. according to what laws it operates, and theology is, as Frank Tipler (Tipler 1994) puts it, effectively reduced to physics. Within this basic problematic there are, to be sure, a wide range of positions available, from one of sharp conflict with religion, such as that advocated by the new atheism (Harris 2004, Dawkins 2007, Dennett 2007, Kraus 2012), through an integrationist position advocated by God builders such as Tipler (Tipler 1994). We will address these positions in a later chapter. On the practical side the development from theistic to technocratic secularism takes the form, on the one hand, of technological progress which increases the weight of humanity in the universe and which ultimately begins to make god-building seem possible and, on the other hand, of the “disenchantment” of the Protestant Ethic which Weber describes (Weber 1920/1968), resulting in the “iron cage” of the technocratic *Saeculum*. It is a very short distance from superexploiting oneself and everyone else for an entirely inscrutable divine purpose to superexploiting oneself and everyone else for the sake of unlimited accumulation—or, perhaps even more straightforwardly—for no purpose at all.

Humanistic secularism, in its liberal, democratic, socialist, and populist forms presents a rather different cluster of problems. Humanistic

secularism, we have suggested in the previous chapter, argues that Being is univocal not in its contingency, with God differing from other beings only in His infinite power, but rather in its necessity, so that everything is, at least potentially divine not merely by participation or accidental connaturality, but by nature and in essence. And the humanistic secular tradition as a whole is, in this sense globally *theological* in the sense that it takes the form of a critique of axial and specifically Christian theology with the aim of demonstrating the possibility and explicating the conditions of such immanent deification. In this sense Marx spoke not just for the emerging communist movement but for all humanistic secularisms, liberal, democratic, socialist, and populist when he said that “the criticism of religion is the beginning of all criticism (Marx 1843b/1978).”

This religion-critical discourse takes two variant forms, though ultimately it is difficult to define rigorously the boundary between them. We have, on the one hand, discourse which understands itself as philosophical, which articulates the humanistic secular project of deification by means of the construction of a political subject which can make humanity the master of its own destiny. Hence Hegel:

The divine spirit must interpenetrate the entire secular life: whereby wisdom is concrete within it, and carries the terms of its own justification. But that concrete indwelling is only . . . ethical organization (Hegel, G.W.F. *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: Part Three: Philosophy of Spirit*: Paragraph 552).

And Marx, for whom communism is the

. . . the definitive solution of the contradiction between man and nature and between man and man, the true solution of the contradiction between existence and essence, between objectification and self-realization, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the solution to the riddle of history and knows itself to be that solution (Marx 1844/1978: 84).

Second, we have the sociology of religion, always intimately bound up with and the real font of modern social theory, which engages in empirical analysis of historical and living religious traditions from the vantage point of categories derived from one or another variant of the humanistic secular project. Weber represents an engagement first with the Reformed (theistic secular) tradition and later with other religions from the vantage point of a peculiar combination of liberal and emerging populist secularism. Durkheim represents an engagement with primal religions (and provides a

framework for engaging other religions) from a vantage point on the far left of democratic secularism. An historical materialist sociology of religion was slower to develop, given the force of the communist critique of transcendence in any form, but is now well represented in the work of Otto Maduro (Maduro 1982) Francois Houtart (Houtart 2000), and Roger Lancaster (Lancaster 1988), as well as in my own work (Mansueto 1988, 1995, 2002a).

It is worth pointing out that there seems to be a new phase in the development of this tradition with the re-emergence of a dialectical critique of religion explicitly sympathetic to the values of the religious traditions in question, a critique which often approaches what might be called an “atheology.” Of particular import here is the work of late Derrida (Derrida 2001) who clearly recovered his Jewish roots, but persisted in an essentially anti-Catholic polemic against “globolatinity,” as well as the work of Zizek (Zizek 2009, 2012) Agamben (Agamben 2011, 2013a, 2013b), Baudou (Baidou 2003), and Vattimo (Vattimo 2013). Radical Orthodoxy, which began with an argument that, Christianity and secular social theory represent fundamentally different and contradictory spiritual projects (Milbank 1990) might be regarded as a Christian response to the critique of religion which is now engaging this newest phase of the critique very creatively (Milbank 2014).

The populist variant of humanistic secularism has also generated a “theological” discourse which skirts the boundaries between philosophy and the sociology of religion. Here, we will remember, it is the people or nation which is to be the political subject which makes humanity the master of its own destiny. There is thus a sharp rejection of the cosmopolitanism of both the axial project and the liberal, democratic, and socialist variants of the humanistic secular project. The key thinker here is Heidegger, who presents himself as a critic of the entire axial and humanistic secular project, but who is in fact located squarely within the latter. It is just that for Heidegger Being manifests itself not in the rationally autonomous individual, the people as *demos* acting through the secular state, or the working class acting through the Communist Party, but rather the people as *ethnos* or *Volk*, which finds its voice through the discovery of its unique “god” (Heidegger 1934/1989:319, 398–99).

There has been considerable debate among scholars regarding the extent to which Heidegger’s own option for fascism is in fact integral to his philosophy. Millerman (Millerman 2013) argues that the key question here is whether one gives priority, as Heidegger himself did, to the “event” as defining a people or to “difference.” This is the distinction, Millerman argues, between the Heideggerian Right, with which he, interestingly enough, openly identifies, and where we would also locate the work of Pierre Krebs (Krebs 2012) and the Heideggerian left, which includes Derrida (whose lineages include

one which reaches back to Heidegger) and the other religious deconstructionists. I am skeptical of this approach, given that leftwing populisms have historically been defined as much by events (e.g. national liberation struggles and populist revolutions) as by difference. The critical difference I would argue is simply whether the people whose voice and god are being defending is in the process of building or defending an empire or liberating itself from an empire—or is, perhaps, up to something else. We will argue that there are good reasons to prefer liberation from *Empire* to its creation, but the danger of authoritarianism, as well as the co-optation by technocracy, essential to prosecute effective political struggles in the *Saeculum*, remains.

Millerman's typology also fails to define accurately the distinctive character of what might be called the populist "center," represented by Weber (Weber 1920/1968) and Gadamer (Gadamer 1960/2004), both of whom have been central to theological discourse and intercultural engagement in the past century. Here the sense that history is about "peoples" or "civilizations" defined by distinctive ideals remains, but the focus is less on constituting peoples as subjects than on understanding the ideals which motivate them and (in the case of Weber) explaining why some are more successful than others. This project can be mobilized both in the service of liberal tolerance and pluralism and in helping alterimperial or colonized powers define the conditions of their own "success." These alternatives as well must be engaged when we consider in a later chapter, the relationship between the axial projects and humanistic secularism in both its philosophical and social theoretical forms.

Theology in the *Saeculum*

We have shown that the constitutive *theoria* of the *Saeculum* in both its technocratic and humanistic forms is organically theological. In the case of technocratic secularism this takes the form of a logical working out of the implications for the univocal metaphysics which is the foundation of the theistic and the technocratic *Saeculum* alike. If all Being exists in the same way then it might, at least in principal, be possible to *build* God technologically rather than simply submitting to a pre-existent God or resigning ourselves to the ultimate meaninglessness of the universe. Humanistic secularisms, on the other hand, are directly *constituted* by the criticism of religion and specifically of Christianity, a criticism which purports to show that the rationally autonomous individual, the *demos*, the proletariat, or the *ethnos* themselves are, at least implicitly, divine. This leaves, however, the question of what form theological discourse within the axial traditions and

theistic secularism, which have by no means disappeared, take in the technocratic and humanistic *Saeculum*.

It should be apparent from what we have already said that in the *Saeculum*, theology has been almost exclusively *about* the relationship between the axial traditions theistic secularism on the one hand and the *Saeculum* on the other. Thus all of the great disputes regarding theological method over the course of the past 500 years (and even more so the past 100 years) can be reduced to differences regarding how to respond to modern secular science, social theory, and exegetical and hermeneutic techniques. There is no better argument for this claim than David Tracy's *Blessed Rage for Order* (Tracy 1975), which retains its relevance in this regard even four decades after its original publication. Tracy identifies five approaches to doing Christian theology in the present period:

- orthodoxy, which rejects any real dialogue with secularism,
- liberal theology, which looks to theology to provide a Christian justification and/or interpretation and of the secular project,
- radical theology, which, rather like the "atheology" of the religious deconstructionists affirms reads Christianity, properly understood, as itself pointing to the death of God,
- neo-orthodoxy, which provides distinctively Christian answers to the problems raised by the secular project, and
- what he calls "revisionism," which seeks to bring Christianity into authentic dialog with the secular project, by engaging Christian sources using the tools of secular hermeneutics while insisting on the existence of an authentically religious dimension to what he calls "common human experience."

The power of Tracy's analysis notwithstanding, I would suggest some amendments. First, because technocratic secularism is derivative from theistic secularism and because this derivation takes place largely within a Protestant Christian context the spectrum he describes is originally a *Protestant* spectrum. The original division, which emerged as early as the seventeenth century, and in a specifically Puritan context, was between those who focused more on the objective value of the individual's contribution to God's work of redemption (the liberals) and those who focused a person's subjective spiritual state (the evangelicals) (Heimart 1966, Hatch 1974). A *political* "united front" in support of the Anglo-American industrial capitalist project as *the* way to build the Kingdom of God on earth, remained between these two parties, which differed more in emphasis than

in essentials, up through the Civil War (Howe 1979). But when the Civil War failed to usher in the millennium those left behind by the industrial revolution largely abandoned their support for the technocratic secular project in favor of dispensational premillennialism (Marsden 1980). This too is a secular ideology, in the sense that redemption unfolds entirely within the realm of ordinary sensible reality, which is why the literalist reading of the scriptures as a body of facts reported by reliable witnesses, and the literal return of Jesus to establish his kingdom are so important. But it is a reactively theistic secularism which rejects the technocratic (and humanistic) projects as a rebellion against God.

Liberal Protestantism, on the other hand is that Protestantism which still seeks to find Christian meaning in the *Saecular* project. Even for liberals, however, the realities of industrial capitalism have been hard to swallow. Thus, while a small section of the old Anglo-American ruling classes still believes, at least silently, that their superior “usefulness to society,” as demonstrated by their economic contributions, marks them as *elect*, spiritually as well as civilizationally, there has been a tendency for liberal Protestants to become more critical of the technocratic secular project. In some cases this amounts to little more than socializing *noblesse oblige* in government welfare programs; but in other cases it has led to an embrace of liberal, democratic, and even socialist currents of secularism as better expressions of Protestant principle than technocratic capitalism.

Neo-Orthodox theologies, however much they may have understood themselves as rooted in a new and more faithful reading of the Christian *kerygma*, are fundamentally a reflection of the fact that it has become more and more difficult to find and affirm a Christian meaning for either the technocratic or humanistic secular project. Neo-Orthodoxy responds by offering an incisive Christian critique of the *Saecular* projects without actually challenging *Saecular* hegemony. Reinhold Niebuhr’s image of the *Moral Man in an Immoral Society* (Niebuhr 1932) captures this orientation quite precisely. Rather than baptizing the technocratic *Saecular* project as implicitly the Christian project, the neo-orthodox Protestant insists that the rejection of divine sovereignty generally and the attempt to build god technologically and politically represent a fundamental mistake. And yet precisely because of their rejection of the *Saecular* project they also reject any global attempt to challenge the *Saeculum*. In this sense neo-orthodox Protestants are still Liberal Protestants in the broader sense in that they find religious meaning first and foremost in an attempt to do the will of God on the basis of their justification by faith in the *Saeculum* as it actually exists. They are just rather more critical with regard to the extent to which the

Saeculum itself, in either its technocratic or humanistic forms, can ever fully embody that will.

Second, Tracy's category of "radical theology" seems to me to cover some fundamentally different options. In the case of Altizer and Hamilton (Altizer and Hamilton 1966) there seems to be an affirmation of the secular project, especially in its humanistic form, as a *full* expression of the Christian, which stands somewhere between Hegel, in that it persists in using Christian language and affirming the enduring relevance of the Christian story, and Marx or even Nietzsche, in using the language of the "death of God" and affirming what appears to be a metaphysical atheism. Altizer, in other words approaches a position similar to that of the new critics of religion or "atheologists" such as Agamben, Zizek, and the late Derrida, but from a Christian rather than humanistic secular vantage point. For Vahanian (Vahanian 1961) the death of God, on the other hand refers to a loss of the sense of the sacred in society, a perspective which might be read as within the neo-orthodox camp. For Rubenstein (Rubenstein 1966), finally, the term "death of God," is a response to the Shoah and to the sense that it is obscene to talk about God in the wake of the attempted and nearly successful extermination of His people. This is, of course, a Jewish insight, though by no means irrelevant for other traditions, and quite different from a Neo-Hegelian embrace of the secular.

Tracy wrote at a time when the original wave of Death of God theology was ebbing. The emergence of atheology, weak theology, and the like require greater attention to this current.

Third, the application of Tracy's typology outside the Protestant arena is, as we have suggested, possible, but requires some care. Even in the Catholic context there are ambiguities. Thus it is not clear that there was ever a "liberal Catholicism" in the sense of a Catholicism which affirmed the technocratic, capitalistic *Saeculum* as *the* definitive realization of the Catholic ideal. It is more useful to follow the historic divisions which developed within the Catholic Church. There have been many of these but several seem especially important. There is, first, the division between the Radical Aristotelians (Dahm 1987), the Dominican Thomistic center, and the Neo-Augustinian Right (Mansueto 2010b), which emerged in the thirteenth century and which was then followed almost immediately by the schism within the Augustinian camp first between the Franciscan Spirituals and Conventuals and eventually between the Franciscan order as a whole and the rest of the Church. The issue here was above all the reaction to the completion, or at least further radicalization of the axial project of religious problematization, rationalization, and democratization by the emergence of the urban communes and peasant movements in the high and late Middle Ages, and to the

emergence of sovereign states as a result of the Norman Conquests, the Crusades, the *Reconquista*, and eventually the conquest of the Asia, Africa, and the Americas. The political theological fissures and alliances of this period are extraordinarily difficult to trace, since advocates of radical immanence emerge in both the Radical Aristotelian and Franciscan camps and both, separately sometimes ally themselves with *one* of the emerging absolutist states (interestingly enough the least effective one, the Holy Roman Empire). Advocates of the emerging doctrine of divine sovereignty, similarly, emerge among ideological operatives of the French crown (Stephen Tempier), the Normans (Anonymous of York), and undoubtedly elsewhere, while the papacy, resisting the movement towards absolutism gradually embraces but also co-opts the Thomistic center. This latter phenomenon is, in turn, further extended and complicated in the Counter-Reformation as the Catholic powers reach some measure of detente with the papacy as they struggle to resist their emerging Protestant rivals, and the papacy gradually moves toward absolutism, a movement completed with the embrace of papal infallibility at the first Vatican Council. Cutting across all of these currents are the projects of competing religious orders, each of which takes its own distinctive approach to the emerging *Saeculum*. The Dominicans look to find a place for the secular within a renewed Christendom, while the Jesuits seek to find a place for a renewed Church in a *Saeculum* they know will be victorious, at least in the middle run of the next few centuries or millennia. The Franciscans, finally, attempt to build the Third Age of the Holy Spirit among the poor in the Americas and elsewhere, but end up largely agents of Spanish absolutist state. A bit later the principal Catholic powers, especially France, pull away from Rome and embrace a new Augustinianism rooted in the philosophy of Descartes and Malebranche (Thibault 1971) and Thomism reasserts itself in the nineteenth century as part of a movement to restore Catholic fortunes based on a new alliance with the peasantry and working classes.

None of this means that the category of "Liberal Catholicism" is meaningless. On the contrary, especially in North America, the category is an important term of self-identification. But it is a much less precise term than Liberal Protestantism and refers simply to a Catholicism which is more open than other trends within the Church to dialogue with and learning from dissident currents within the Church (though it is rarely comfortable with the radicalism of groups like the Beguines or the Spirituals) as well as from Protestantism, technocratic and humanistic secularism, and other axial spiritual traditions. It is also, perhaps, less committed to and often uncomprehending of the complex geopolitical *realpolitik* of the Papacy and the *curia* which has driven most of the actual doctrinal and pastoral decisions of the Catholic Church throughout its history than are other currents in the

Church, something which is further complicated by the fact that this *realpolitik* belongs *both* to a global power carrying a powerful spiritual and civilizational ideal *and* a rather peculiar patriarchal celibate clerical corporation.

This means that Liberal Protestantism and Liberal Catholicism have two entirely different political trajectories and destinies. Liberal Protestantism was once integral to the ideological strategy of the *Saeculum* and is slowly dying as the *Saecular* project loses its credibility and becomes more and more difficult to either defend or reform in ways that are recognizably consistent with Christianity. We will see shortly what replaces it. Liberal Catholicism is not itself a single coherent political-theological project but rather an umbrella term which includes *all* those who are especially faithful to the *catholicity* of the Catholic Church, in the sense of its historical openness to dialogue with and learning from Athens or any other political-theological metropole (or micropole) but who do not fully understand that the Catholic Church, unlike nearly any other religious community on the planet operates politically as at least a “great power” and quite possibly as a “superpower,” even in the *Saeculum*, and must be understood—and led—as such.

With the same qualifications Tracy’s application of categories such as neo-orthodox, radical, or revisionist might be applied in a Catholic context, but the qualifications are important. Internal Catholic lines of demarcation are as important or more important than attitudes towards the *Saeculum* and the most important relationship between the Catholic Church and the *Saeculum* is the geopolitical one.

What has been said about Catholicism applies with even more force to discussions of Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist liberalisms or modernisms, neo-orthodoxy or radicalisms or revisionisms. The divisions between Assimilationist, Bundist, Territorialist, or Zionist, Liberal, Religious, Labor, or Spiritual Zionists (Avinieri 1981) are as important as the divisions between Orthodox, Reformed, Conservative, or Reconstructionist (which otherwise corresponds eerily to Tracy’s typology). The same is true of the divisions between and within the Sunni and Shia camps (Crone 2004), the incredible diversity of “Hinduisms (Khan 2004),” and the complex engagement and contest between Indian and Chinese civilization which *is* actually existing Buddhism. It *is* true that the global hegemony first of theistic and later of technocratic (and in the Soviet sphere humanistic) secularism has *forced* all other traditions to define their global political-theological position with respect to the hegemonic ideals. But we cannot assume that the positions taken are taken for the same reasons, or have the same meanings as “analogous” positions within Protestantism. Anyone who has doubts about this should spend some time working with Muslims who understand themselves as friendly to modern science and democracy, but

who are anxious to demonstrate that its all in the Quran after all or to Burmese Buddhist democracy advocates who care very little about the human or democratic rights of the Rohingya. The issue here is not backwardness or insensitivity. It is the theological imperatives of global civilizational politics.

Finally, we need to consider two “types” which Tracy does not address, one because it is not generally considered to be in the mainstream of Christian theology and the second because it emerged since he wrote. I am referring to the New Thought/New Age movement and Radical Orthodoxy.

The New Age movement is best understood as the heir of the New Thought (Albanese 2007) movements of the nineteenth century. The term New Thought refers to a cluster of religious sects, including Religious Science, Unity, Divine Science. Christian Science represents a closely allied tendency, but differs from New Thought in emphasizing the unique manifestation of divine truth in Jesus. Like perennialism, this tendency promotes the idea that most, if not all of humanity’s great religious traditions contain a common spiritual core. But where the perennialists find this core in Neo-Platonism and authentically similar, cognate ideas in other traditions (Advaita Vedanta, Sufi mysticism), New Thought tends to reduce all religion to a kind of subjective idealism which regards reality itself as a projection of the mind. In this sense it betrays its modern, Anglo-American Protestant roots, which ultimately go back to Bishop Berkeley.

While New Thought organizations, such as those named above persist and form part of the larger New Age movement, the tendency has also had a broader influence on the Western reception of Hinduism and Buddhism. In particular, it has tended to promote a (mis)reading of Advaita Vedanta and several Buddhist Schools, including most Vajrayana, and especially the Karma Kagyu and Nyingmpa Schools, as subjective idealisms.

If perennialism is an oversimplification of the relationships between humanity’s mystical traditions the New Age movement is an outright falsification. This is easiest to see in the case of Buddhism. The first of the great noble truths—that life is suffering—is lost on the New Thought/New Age movements. For an authentic Buddhist the root of suffering is metaphysical and not merely mental. It lies in the reality of life as a finite, dependent being. The change in outlook by means of which we overcome suffering does not change our circumstances but rather involves a radical coming to terms with the unreality of the self and the impermanence of everything we hold dear. Even the more advanced Mahayana and Vajrayana Schools, which promise the bliss of full enlightenment, do so in the form of a purely generative, egoless life of ripening Being. For the New Age, on the other hand, overcoming illusion allows us to make the world what we will it to be, an attitude possible only for those who live on accumulated wealth.

In the case of Hinduism the line between an authentic Western adherent of Advaita Vedanta and a New Age dilettante may, at first, seem a bit more difficult to catch. Hinduism, after all, is comfortable with the pursuit of religious aims other than enlightenment. But philosophically the difference is clear. Advaita Vedanta is an objective idealism for which the ego is as much an illusion as it is for Buddhism, to which it was the Hindu answer and from which the advanced Mahayana and Vajrayana schools derived much of their inspiration. Brahman is first and foremost an infinite and necessary generativity, not simply a universal mind. New Age movements, on the other hand, are subjective idealisms for which mind is always and only the primary reality.

Radical Orthodoxy, on the other hand, represents a fundamental rejection of the *Saeculum*, understood as defined by the embrace of a univocal metaphysics from the late Middle Ages on. This analysis has obviously influenced my own profoundly. But John Milbank (Milbank 1990, 1999, 2006a) argues that only Christianity provides the theological context for a metaphysics of participation, and includes what we have called humanistic secularism (and, in his earlier work at least, Hellenic philosophy) in his condemnation of the *Saeculum*. Where Milbank seems to me to err is in the claim that only Christianity can sustain a metaphysics of participation. As we will see there is ample evidence for such a metaphysics in Judaism and Islam and Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism all operate (with the exception of a few sects) with metaphysical foundations that are clearly not univocal even if they are not identical to, say, a Thomistic metaphysics of *Esse*. We will also argue for a distinction between two types of univocity: that of univocal contingency, with or without an infinitely powerful being (God), which is the univocal metaphysics of the theistic and technocratic *Saeculum*, and that of univocal necessity, which endows all beings with the power of *Esse* as such, which is the univocal metaphysics of humanistic secularism. This latter metaphysics, we will argue, is also incorrect, but it is far less damaging than the metaphysics of univocal contingency, in that it does not drive the authentically divine from the world, but simply overestimates what ordinary beings can do. This will lead us to a political-theological alignment which is both more cosmopolitan than Milbank's and more sympathetic to the humanistic secular project, if also concerned to define clearly the metaphysical as well as the political reasons for its failure.

It is necessary, finally, to mention an entirely new way of engaging questions of meaning and value across traditions which avoids many of the problems of both cosmopolitanism and particularism. I am referring to the emerging discipline of comparative theology (Clooney 2010). Specifically, where *theologies of religion* are concerned primarily with evaluating the

status of other religions, with respect to their truth claims and capacity to promote the spiritual development of their adherents, *comparative theology* is focused on what one can learn from inter-religious engagements. Thus, where a theologian of religions might ask how a Christian should evaluate the spiritual impact of the Buddhist doctrine of *sunyata* or emptiness, a comparative theologian would ask what we can learn from it without, however, calling into question core Christian metaphysical and theological commitments, e.g. for the Thomistic Catholic tradition, a theism grounded in an analogical metaphysics of *Esse*. Thus in *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (Merton 1968), Thomas Merton (long before comparative theology had emerged as a distinct discipline), shows how Zen Buddhism can inform the apophatic moment in Catholic theology and deepen a Christian's passage through the *via negativa*, and the "dark nights," preparing us for the breakthrough beyond mystical union which only Eckhart, among Catholic mystics, has adequately described.

This trend is also important to our work and we differ from it primarily in arguing that while we begin and may well end our engagement with questions of meaning and value within a particular spiritual tradition, the present period requires an engagement which is radically open and looks forward to both new syncretisms and radically ways of understanding the sacred and humanity's *theotic* project.

From Intercultural Engagement to Theological Method

We are now in a position to define our own method, which is at once a theological method and a approach to the engagement between civilizations which we have shown to be constitutive of theology. As we will see, it looks a great deal like Tracy's revisionism, but differs in taking a much longer and much broader view, so that the engagement between the theistic, technocratic, and humanistic *Saecula* are only a few among many such engagements with theological relevance.

We begin with an insistence on the existence of a common human nature and a common human project which is ultimately *spiritual* and *religious* in nature. Up until now we have used the terms spirituality and religion more or less interchangeably, and have been gradually defining theology as a specific discourse within and about the spiritual and the religious. As we move to define our method we need to be more precise. Henceforth, by *spirituality* we will mean humanity's fundamental ordering to the sacred, understood as *Being as such*. By *religion*, on the other hand, we intend the

structures by which humanity seeks *Being*. There is, in this sense, no contradiction between the claim that human beings are, by nature, both spiritual and religious animals (and would be even if the spiritual impulse turned out to be in vain) and the claim that religion is a social product and spirituality itself a social phenomenon.

Within this context the *secular* takes on a very distinctive meaning and one by no means essentially opposed to either the spiritual or the religious. The secular is simply the worldly. All religions bear on the worldly. In the process of seeking Being we define distinctive civilizational ideals or normative orders which in turn affect everything that we do. Some religions are, however, focused *exclusively* on the secular, constituting the civilization we will call the *Saeculum* (what most call *modernity*) and the doctrine we will call *secularism*. Secularisms attempt, that is, to find the infinite and the necessary, to the extent that they believe that it is possible, entirely within the realm of this world, through human development and civilizational progress. Humanistic secularism seeks divinization through the creation of a political subject (the rationally autonomous individual, the democratic state, the Communist Party, or the people or nation) which makes humanity the master of its own destiny. Positivistic or scientific-technological secularism seeks divinization through scientific and technological progress which pushes back the limits of finitude until they have, for all intents and purposes, disappeared. But neither is any less spiritual, in the sense of seeking Being, or religious, in the sense of being social determined and institutionalized ways of seeking Being, because of their radical secularity. Nor do ideologies which regard the secular project as ultimately vain and hopeless, such as existentialism or deconstructionism, cease to be spiritual or religious simply because they believe that humanity's spiritual longings are ultimately in vain.

Being spiritual and being religious are, in other words, *constitutive* of humanity and are so in and through our other human distinctives such as language and reason, labor and sociality, which are simply our ways of representing and pursuing our longing for Being. And this is true however much religious dogmatists may want to exclude experiences of the sacred different from their own or however much secularists may want to represent the sacred itself as a delusion. Both attitudes represent a fundamental misunderstanding of human experience. Hunting and gathering, plowing, sowing and harvesting and herding, eating and drinking, urinating and defecating, making love and making war, building cities, ruling them and governing them and razing them, art, science, and philosophy—each of these is a spiritual and a religious act. And they are and would remain so even if God were to turn out “not to exist” (whatever that means) and Enlightenment to turn out to be impossible.

Second, we will insist on the existence of real differences between *ways* of being human. This includes openness to the possibility at least of real differences between human *ends*. While our underlying commitment to the primacy of seeking *Being* would seem to imply a single shared final goal, even if the paths really differ, it is quite possible that we are seeking something that does not exist or that we play a significant role in creating. If this is so, then just as seeking *Being* leads to the evolution of diverse species of plants and animals, it may well lead to an increasing diversity of spiritual goals, even if there is an implied *telos* operating in and through all of them.

Third, these first two points imply that there is a basis for real dialogue, debate, and deliberation between ways, with the possibility, but not the inevitability, of persuasion. This deliberation, furthermore, while it certainly takes the form of theory, also takes the form of practice and the analysis and critique of practice. It is, in other words, a geopolitical-theological engagement (collaboration and contest) as much as it is a scholarly debate, and the scholarly debate becomes useful only to the extent that it takes into account geopolitical-theological realities.

Fourth, there is no implication in what we have said either that there is a final truth accessible to finite and contingent beings, or that all perspectives are equally valid or in any case not susceptible to rational validation or critique or both. Our work is more likely to lead to a tentative and uncertain hierarchization of perspectives, a kind of modest *p'an chiao* than it is either to final solutions or radical relativism. This is true partly because, as we will show, the truth transcends any particular expression or formulation, whether imaginative or dialectical, verbal, visual, or musical and partly because its possible two different *ways* will show themselves—even at the supra-rational level—to be equally but not completely adequate attempts at the Truth.

All of this, finally, will affect profoundly our substantive claims. While our starting point is a critique of the currently dominant spiritual project, that of the technocratic *Saeculum*, and while we will mount this critique quite vigorously, our fundamental orientation prevents us from denying that even our adversaries see at least a part of the truth. Our aim will be to save their contributions and to integrate them into a higher synthesis, recognizing that this synthesis itself will remain partial and incomplete.

With these methodological notes in mind, we now turn to the substance of our work beginning with an attempt to address the contests within and between the principal axial *ways*.

There is that dimension where there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind; neither dimension of the infinitude of space, nor dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, nor dimension of nothingness, nor dimension of neither perception nor non-perception; neither this world, nor the next world, nor sun, nor moon. And there, I say, there is neither coming, nor going, nor stasis; neither passing away nor arising: without stance, without foundation, without support [mental object]. This, just this, is the end of stress (*dukkha*; suffering), (*Nibbana Sutta* 1).

The question, of course, is just what these original insights meant, both spiritually and politically. It has become fashionable in recent years to stress the anti-metaphysical character of the Buddha's original teachings and to read not only Theravada but much early Mahayana philosophy in this light. David Kalupahana (Kalupahana 1992) is typical of this trend, arguing that Buddhism is based on rejection of metaphysics understood as a rational search for meaning, or rather on a rational recognition that there is no such meaning and thus on a radical anti-substantialism. This approach is a more specific variant of a broader tendency to accept at face value the claim of the *Theravada* (and more specifically the *Theravada* as it was reformed in the nineteenth century in response to colonial pressures) to represent the closest living approximation to the original teachings of the Buddha, a claim which reflects the Protestant originalist bias of most western scholars and which is rather akin to accepting the claim of the nineteenth century Campbellite Restorationists to have precisely reproduced the Christianity of Jesus and his first disciples.

A more accurate picture of the development of the Buddhist *way* suggests a complex struggle to work out what Enlightenment and nirvana might actually mean, spiritually and politically, in a world dominated by a vibrant Silk Road economy and resurgent *Empire*. The underlying dynamic of Buddhism, we will argue, is towards the development of a spirituality which aims at full Enlightenment, like that taught by the higher *Mahayana* (*Tian Tai* and *Hua Yen*) and *Vajrayana* schools (though also, probably, by the Tantric Theravada which was probably the dominant tradition in most of Southeast Asia before the European Conquests), and towards a polity dominated by monastic institutions which gradually evolve away from such traditional monastic practices as celibacy and begin to take on dynastic characteristics. But this development has profound internal contradictions, because of its tendency to transform monastic institutions into large feudal landlords. It also brought Buddhism sharply into contradiction with the Chinese Empire and with peripheral state-building projects in Southeast Asia. Both the Cha'an-Pure Land synthesis which defines most

(*bali*) and on the produce (*bhaga*), with the surplus extracted someplace between one sixth and one fourth of the total agrarian product. Nonagrarian activities were subject to a tax known as the *kara*, while craftsmen in particular were obliged to perform free labor for the state (*vishti*). Water was also taxed. Craftsmen were organized into associations known as *shreni* and *puga*, which gradually became large and complex, which at once organized large scale production, protected their rights—and facilitated the collection of taxes. Trade was strictly regulated, with superintendents of commerce inquiring into supply, demand, and costs of production, before approving pricing. A toll of 20% and a trade tax of 4% were levied on all transactions. Interest rates were fixed at 15% (Thapar 2002: 184–90).

Within the context of this basically tributary structure, however, Ashoka pursued policies which gave him a well-deserved reputation for justice. First, much of the revenue he collected was directed towards uses which served the common good. Thus, the imperial capital at Pataliputra is the only city at which we find monumental palace architecture (Thapar 2002: 189). Instead, the surplus he centralized was used for a large system of public works—including large scale irrigation systems, public granaries which provided for the poor in times of famine, and endowments for Buddhist and Jaina monasteries. The property of the rich (the local dynasties and coteries of nobles he had conquered) was seized, but to the poor Ashoka would lend without interest, and after three years forgive all debts (Sarkisyanz 1965: 28–30, 54–56).

What did Ashoka gain by this generosity? First, the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination taught Ashoka that ultimately his power rested on the consent and even the support of the people. A king who improved the lot of his people would enjoy their firm support and his kingdom would be secure. In short, Ashoka used a program of public works and public piety to build an alliance with the masses against the local aristocracies who presented the greatest threat to his empire. Second, Buddhism solved one of the principal difficulties facing a prospective emperor in India: the system of *varnas* which made Brahmin superior to warrior or ruler, and which make all rulers members of a relatively egalitarian caste community in which, up until 500 B.C. a kind of rough internal democracy had prevailed. This system had made kings dependent on the *brahmanas* who performed the sacrifices which made them divine. Buddhism and Jainism made spiritual authority dependent on the individual characteristics of the person claiming it, not on their birth or ritual knowledge. A just king could thus claim to be superior to a priest. This did, to be sure, present a new problem. What about the *bikkhus* and other ascetics Ashoka patronized? Where they not superior to him in terms of their personal sanctity, especially from the standpoint