

On Being a Pagan

Alain de Benoist

Preface by Stephen Edred Flowers

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Alain de Benoist, 1943–

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Preface

Stephen Edred Flowers

I first heard the name Alain de Benoist in a side comment made by my dear late *Doktorvater*, Edgar Polomé, in a lecture on ancient Germanic religion. In our age, dominated as it is by ideologies of various sorts, Benoist is often categorized as a political theorist of the "French New Right." Indeed he is that. But even a brief survey of his writings reveals a thinker with a breadth and depth of intellect and intellectual capacities that far surpass those of the typical "theorist" of our dreary times. He has written on topics ranging from myth and religion to economics, from folklore to philosophy. In his view—which is difficult to classify as "right wing" in any conventional sense—the malady of the West (and more particularly in Benoist's case, the malady of Europe) is a cultural pathology, and not a mere political crisis. He sees the root of this malady as the European adoption of Judeo-Christian monotheism, and the radical cure he proposes is the rejection of that religion.

To many who might otherwise agree with much of what Benoist has to say, this "solution" is unacceptable. However, if he is right—and we believe that he is—then his remedy is in fact the only possible one. Anything less than the rejection of Judeo-Christian monotheism, and the redevelopment of our own Indo-European ideology, would simply treat the symptoms of our Western dis-ease, rather than cure it.

In this book, Benoist lays some of the foundations for a new pagan philosophy. But before the old edifice can be restored, the ground must be leveled with a series of hammer blows. Benoist must, like Nietzsche, philosophize with a hammer, and tear away the rubble of 2,000 years of Judeo-Christian accretions to European culture.

In many respects, the ideology underlying Judeo-Christian monotheism has become secularized. As others have pointed out, Christian ethics and universalism, disengaged from their religious roots, have been used to rationalize the redistribution of wealth, radical individualism, universal political suffrage, and the general eagerness to sacrifice freedom in order to avoid responsibility.

Foreword

Of what are those figures in the paintings of Botticelli and Caspar David Friedrich dreaming? What past-present continuum is drawing their gaze? What possible gods might these figures foresee passing through the world that surrounds them and connects them to their own lack of fulfillment? What kind of transcendence will their presence trigger? These questions for me are directly linked to the key question, "What does it mean to be a pagan?" that I intend to try to answer here. Only yesterday "paganism" was still a pejorative term. It is now part of everyday speech. Just what does this term mean? What can its *intended* meaning be for the people of our time? What idea do we propose to make of it? In correlation, what is the basis for this paganism's criticism and refusal of the biblical thought that gave birth to Christianity? And finally, what will the two coexisting phenomena of the collapse of the great revealed religions and the return in strength of the sacred mean to those who inherit our culture?

These are not questions that can be regarded with indifference. They are questions of *history* and *destiny*. They in fact concern both our destiny and our destination: to know just what our destiny is, beginning with the discovery of whether or not we still desire to be destined for anything. These are the questions I ask myself in this essay, which is primarily a personal reflection—a reflection on a subject that is heartfelt and about which my feelings have evolved—and on which I hope they will continue to evolve.

It is a problem of sensibility. There are no absolutes when it comes to criticism. There is no correct point of view about points of view. In any case I am not seeking to create such a perspective. I have only tried to reveal as clearly as possible two great spiritual visions, two great views of the world that are quite distinct from each other and that often confront one another even in the hearts of the same individuals. I wish to speak about why I spontaneously recognize myself in one and why the other contradicts my inner being. And lastly how it is possible today to re-appropriate the most eternal values. I am therefore not trying to persuade my readers of my views as much as to portray a spiritual antagonism, to illustrate a conflict of sensibilities. One may or may not feel "pagan"; one may or may not feel at home in a "pagan" sensibili-

ty. The problem remains knowing just what this sensibility is. Everyone is then free to acknowledge and reinforce what seems most personally suitable. This basically amounts to saying that such a book, far from alarming the believers about their chosen faith, may also fortify their belief in it. The illusion can even be positive and can even hold and inspire a creative projective force. I am not aiming at suppressing or reducing faith, but at giving something back to it, perhaps on other levels. Of course not all beliefs are equal, but there is one thing worse than a vile belief and that is the total absence of faith. (Presuming such a state is possible and isn't, as I guess it might be, a form of radical unbelief.) In an earlier essay, I said that the means by which things are made is just as important as the things themselves. We will see that faith, as I view it, is of equal worth with its object. This is another area where I am at odds with most of my contemporaries.

Is demonstration of this contention starting from the roots of faith even a possibility? More than forty years ago, Raymond Aron said that the critique of historical reason determined the limits and not the foundations of historical objectivity. This amounts to saying that a critique can never allow itself to proceed in the absence of a philosophical determination. "It is fate that rules the gods and not any kind of science," Max Weber writes. A sentiment is not refutable, yet it just so happens that sentiments determine systems as so many self-justifications. Max Weber provides the example of the Christian maxim: "Resist not evil." It is clear, he adds, that from the strictly human point of view, these evangelical precepts praise an ethic that runs counter to dignity. It is up to each of us to choose between the dignity of a religion that offers such an ethic, and the dignity of a virile being who preaches something entirely different, to wit: "Resist evil, otherwise you are responsible for its victory." According to the profound convictions of every individual, one of these ethics will take on the face of the devil, the other the face of God, and each individual will have to decide which one is God and which one is the devil. This is just how it is on every level of life.

If one is bound to such a value, if one decides to assume such a heritage, then in all logic one must uphold such an opinion. But the initial decision remains a matter of choice—a choice that can never completely demonstrate the necessity of its own postulates. Nothing spares us from making this choice, in which our plans and personal ideas play a role, but where shared identities exist as

well; what we belong to and what we have inherited intervene. Every one of us will have to decide, "which is God and which is the devil." It is in the full awareness of this calling that our human status resides. Subjectivity, therefore, does not have to hide away because it is subjective—in fact this is precisely where it finds its strength.

I offer in this book a parallel *reading* of paganism—as the original religion of Europe and as an ever-central component of its present day—and biblical and Christian thought. One may accept or reject this reading; it is a subject for debate. But to go even further, if one accepts my course of reasoning, one may even take a stand opposite that of my own, to wit, join Christianity and reject paganism exactly *for the same reasons* that prompted my attraction to the latter and withdrawal from the former. The discussion is thus posited from the outset not as a dilemma but as a trilemma.

It is an approach that is based ultimately upon tolerance. A tolerance that does not exclude judgment or criticism obviously, but only views its adversary as the *face* of a circumstantial problematic. Someone who denies the existence of worlds beyond, someone who denies any distinction between the individual and the world, who refuses to accept a conception of the Deity based on the notion of one truth and the devaluation of the Other that results, is ready, today as yesterday, to accept all the gods, even those who are most alien, even those he could never bring himself to worship, even those who have attempted to steal his soul. He is ready to defend the right of people to see themselves in the gods of their choice—on condition, of course, that this right be extended equally back to him.

I have written this book, as is my habit, for everyone and no one. Especially for those I will never know. A kind of nostalgia may be detectable here—a nostalgia for the future. The time of the interpretation of myth, alas, is also that of the effacement of the gods. This is an era that is *neo-primitive* by the very fact of its modernity, profoundly empty by virtue of its excess. This is an era where everything is simulacrum and foreclosed experience, where everything is spectacle but there are no eyes left to see. We live in a society where new forms of totalitarianism and exclusion are being put into place. It is a society with a deafening clamor of rekindled hatreds matched only by the deafening clamor of the inauthentic and the inessential. It is a society where beauty is dying, a society at the end of history, a society of the last man

where everything is collapsing into the sunset—of the absolute transatlantic West and a once great history. In opposition to this time and this society, this book seeks to recall the possibility of a landscape and a spiritual *re-presentation* that would resonate with the beauty of a painting, a face, a harmony—with the face of a people uplifted by hope and the will to live another beginning.

This is, obviously, a book of desires, memories, doubts, and passions.

A.B.

Chapter One

Never Dying, Always Reviving

For those who share Nietzsche's belief that the conversion of Europe to Christianity and the more or less complete integration of the European mind into the Christian mentality, was one of the most catastrophic events in world history—a catastrophe in the proper sense of the word—just what can the word “paganism” mean today? This question appears all the more fundamental as it still figures among the crucial problems of the day, as recent polemics may testify. Polemics that, furthermore, should be relocated within a larger and older *disputatio*. Whatever some may maintain, it is not polytheism that is “old hat,” but Judeo-Christian monotheism that now finds itself questioned and creaking all over, while paganism is again manifesting its attraction, although it may appear in forms that are often clumsy and sometimes aberrant.¹

In truth paganism never died. From the attempts to restore solar worship under the Illyrian emperors (notably under Aurelius, thanks to the support of Plotinus), and from those undertaken later by the Emperor Julian, it has been a constant inspiration. At the end of the fourth century, a time when Christianity, which had become a State Religion, would appear to have triumphed, we can even speak of a “pagan renaissance.”² Pagan values subsequently continued to survive, both in the collective unconscious and in certain customary folk rituals (incorrectly labeled “folklore”), in the theology of certain great “Christian” heretics, and through the expedient of countless literary and artistic revivals. From Ronsard and du Bellay, literature has never stopped finding a fertile source of inspiration in pre-Christian Antiquity, whereas for fifteen centuries political deliberation has been nourished by a meditation on the purely pagan principle of the *imperium*, the bedrock of that prodigious enterprise, perhaps the most grandiose in all of history: the Roman Empire. In philosophy, finally, in opposition to the partisans of the exclusive primacy of the *logos* over the *mythos*—from Descartes and Auguste Comte to Horkheimer and Adorno—are the partisans of the *mythos* from Vico to Heidegger.

At the end of the fifteenth century, the Renaissance—cen-

tered first in Florence before extending over the whole of Europe—was born out of the renewal of contact with the spirit of pagan Antiquity. During the golden century of the Medicis, we see the renewed opposition of the “Platonists” (Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino) and the “Aristotelians” (Pietro Pomponazzi). Translations of and commentaries on Homer, Demosthenes, Plutarch, the tragedians, the annalists, and the philosophers appeared. The greatest artists, architects, painters, and sculptors drew inspiration from Antiquity, not simply for the purposes of copying its works, but as a fertile soil in which new forms could take root. In France, the sister of Francois I, Marguerite de Navarre, experienced the discovery of Plato’s thought as a revelation, according to Baldesar Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* (1537). “Through the reading of the works of Cicero or Plutarch,” Erasmus declared, “I could feel myself becoming a better man.” In this way the old Greco-Latin gods found a new youth from which all of Europe profited, while in the North, the rediscovery of Germanic Antiquity played a similar role in the process of the “national renaissance” that Germany experienced from the time of Konrad Celtis to that of Nicodemus Frischlin.³

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was especially the German Romantics who honored and revived the antique spirit. They regarded ancient Greece as the perfect model of a harmonious life. They saw in its exemplary past the image of what might be their own future, and by putting Faust and Prometheus on the same standing, they underlined the profound affinities of the Hellenic spirit with that of their own people. If the divine once existed, said Hölderlin in substance, then it would return because it is eternal. Novalis and Friedrich Schlegel expressed similar sentiments. For his part, Heinrich von Kleist celebrated the memory of Arminius (Hermann), who in 9 AD created a federation of the Germanic peoples and defied the legions of Varus in the Teutoburg Forest.

Several decades later, France, with the help of linguistics and archaeology, witnessed a great vogue for pagan literature, something that affected symbolists and Parnassians alike, the romantics as well as the neo-classicists. While Victor Hugo, returning to pantheism, defined God as the Sum Total (“Fullness for him is infinity to the world,” *Religions et religion*), Théophile Gautier praised Hellenism as the “soul of our poetry.” Leconte de Lisle published his *Poèmes antiques* (1842) and his *Poèmes barbares* (1862);

Théodore de Banville, his *Cariatides* (1842); José Maria de Heredia, his *Trophées*; Juliette Adam, a novel entitled *Païenne* (1883); Pierre Louÿs, *Aphrodite* and the quite apocryphal *Chansons de Bilitis*. Anatole France wove crowns for Leuconoé and Loeta Acilia, and Louis Ménard sang the virtues of Hellenic mysticism. Hippolyte Taine lauded Athens as the “first country of the beautiful.” Albert Samain, Jean Moréas, Henri de Régnier, Laforgue, Verlaine, Edouard Schuré, Sully Prudhomme, Edouard Dujardin, François Coppée and Madame de Noailles should not be omitted from this list either. Not to mention Catulle Mendès, whose *L’homme tout nu* has recently been republished.⁴

Louis Ménard in 1848 regarded polytheism as the foundation of the republican ideal: a respect for pluralism and a critical attitude toward monarchy. This was also the viewpoint of Father J. Gaume, a fanatic adversary of paganism—which he identified with democracy and socialism—and who had no qualms about writing, “The Renaissance was the resurrection, the worship, the fanatic adoration of paganism with all its literary, artistic, philosophical, moral, and religious idols. The Renaissance gave birth to the Reformation. The Reformation gave birth to Voltairian impiety, and Voltairian impiety gave birth to the French Revolution. The French Revolution is the most dreadful moral catastrophe the world has ever seen.”⁵ The Church waxed indignant at the prospect of the examples of Themistocles, Cato, Solon, Scipio, and Cincinnatus being offered to the young as sources of inspiration or subjects of study. In the opinion of the Church, neither Horace nor Titus Livy should be taught.

This identification of pagan values with those of the emerging “left” then responded to general opinion. However, there were other authors who sought to pull paganism in the opposite direction. “When I saw the Acropolis,” Renan wrote, “I had a divine revelation.”⁶ In turn Maurras traveled to Athens, and Barrès made the trip to Sparta. The young Maurras—whose “profoundly lived paganism” Gustave Thibon, among others, has emphasized⁷—declares: “The Parthenon, having existed, no longer needs anybody. It is we who need the Parthenon to develop our own lives.” He goes on to vituperate “Judeo-Christian obscurantism” and the “venom of the *Magnificat*.”⁸ There would be a constant stream of criticism, in France as well as elsewhere, from what convenience calls the “right wing” political mentality, from such figures as Sorel and Proudhon, Hugues Rebell and Pierre Lasserre,

d'Annunzio, Pareto, Spengler, Moeller van den Bruck and Jünger to Drieu la Rochelle, Céline, even Brasillach—who extolled the “naïve paganism” of Joan of Arc⁹—in anticipation of Julius Evola, Louis Rougier, Armin Mohler, Louis Pauwells, and Jean Cau.

In modern literature, paganism explodes with D.H. Lawrence (see especially his *Apocalypse*),¹⁰ Colette, Giono, Knut Hamsun, Stefan George, Rilke, and so forth. Montherlant, who made the ancient world a palestra where Hermes rules equally with Minerva, praises the virtue of “paganness” and ceaselessly stresses the importance played by the *res Romana* in his work. Opposing the Roman Tiber to the eastern Orontes, he leaves these instructions: “Whenever you experience mental vacillation, cast your mind back to the Greco-Roman mentality as it was before the second century.”¹¹ Among more recent writers, I should cite Marguerite Yourcenar, Jean Markale, Yann Brekilien, J.R.R. Tolkien, Patrick Grainville, and so on.

From the time of the ideological blossoming of the “New Right” and the counter-offensive of Bernard-Henri Lévy¹² and his friends, the monotheism-polytheism quarrel—the “mono-poly” of Parisian literary circles—has become all the rage. Anathematizing any and all Greek parts of our heritage, Lévy has spontaneously rediscovered the reactionary and anti-democratic argument developed by Father Gaume at the same time he was claiming as his watchword the well-known aphorism: “Cursed be the man who teaches his son the science of the Greeks.”¹³ Louis Pauwells declared the opposite saying: “There is a secret Europe we must rediscover. I believe in a return to spiritual paganism.”¹⁴ The Mexican writer Octavio Paz, who calls himself both a “democrat and polytheist” describes monotheism as “one of the greatest catastrophes of humanity.”¹⁵ Bernard Oudin denounces monotheism as the very source of totalitarianism.¹⁶ Raymond Ruyer closes one of his last works with an invocation to Zeus.¹⁷ Alain Daniélou saw the “monotheist illusion” as an “aberration from the viewpoint of the spiritual experience.”¹⁸ Philippe Sollers described Pier Paolo Pasolini as both “pagan” and “Judeo-Christian.”¹⁹ Folklorists and the historians of mental attitudes constantly collide—when it comes to questions of ordinary folk life—on the question of pagan survivals in the heart of what Carlo Ginzburg calls the “peasant religion.”²⁰ This would include social phenomena that are highly contestable in the eyes of many, such as the rage for a kind of esotericism or the ecologist trend, which mani-

fest marginal examples of the resurgence of paganism (the return to nature interpreted as the “face of God,” the questioning of Christianity from the perspective of spirituality or occultism, and so on). These examples could easily be multiplied.

The contemporary trend toward *pluralism* and *honoring one's roots* itself contains finally, at least implicitly, a rejection of Christian equality and reductive universalism. It is also acceptable to share with Odo Marquard the belief that such a requirement goes necessarily hand in hand with the quest for a polymyth.²¹ The crisis of what Gilbert Durand has called the “unique worship of a unidimensional meaning of history aligned on the old thread of a totalitarian logic,” the collapse of optimistic certitudes connected to the idea of “progress,” the stagnation of the disruptionist ideologies of “contrarianism,” the subsiding of rationalism and positivism, the emergence of ideal types and archetypes as modalities of a necessarily plural collective unconscious (because it always consists of heterogeneous elements), the works that keep multiplying on the “imaginal” and the “primordial words,” the renaissance of myth both as object and *way* of understanding, the rejection of quantitative, mercantile values and univocal theoretical orientations, all these features of society are leading to open, heterogeneous, “polytheistic” (in the proper sense of the word), synthetic, paradoxical “determinisms” governed by conflictual logics corresponding to the *normal* state of living systems.

In fact, with David Levy Miller²² and James Hillman²³ an entire modern school of psychology preaches the renaissance of polytheism as the sole spirituality that conforms to the state of a polyphonic, polysemous, and multivalent world. In a neighboring domain, a researcher like Gilbert Durand, for whom all society is “axiomatically polytheistic and more or less quadrifunctional,” argues for an “ethics of pluralism” (which would also be an ethics of “profundity”), based on a *desire* “which its own grandeur defines as plural, and the plurality of which can only be guaranteed by the hierarchical principle of difference,”²⁴ while Michel Maffesoli, also rallying to the cause of a “polytheism of values” evoked by Max Weber,²⁵ defines paganism as “that very thing which by acknowledging reality's polytheistic nature, teaches one how not to bow down before the ‘force of history’ or its various avatars and substitutes.”²⁶

The contemporary relevance of paganism is thus not a matter for debate. Neo-paganism, if in fact there is such a thing, is not a

cult phenomenon—as imagine not only its adversaries, but also sometimes well-intentioned groups and covens who can be described as often clumsy, sometimes unintentionally comical, and perfectly marginal. Nor is this a form of “Christianity turned upside down,” which would adopt for its own benefit various Christian forms—both rituals and objects—in order to reconstitute the equivalent or counterpart.

There is something else that seems especially important to watch out for today, at least according to the idea we have of it. It is less the disappearance of paganism than its reemergence under primitive or puerile forms, kin to that “second religiosity” that Spengler rightly described as one of the characteristic traits of cultures in decline. This is also what Julius Evola wrote about as “generally corresponding to a phenomenon of escape, alienation, and confused compensation, which is of no serious consequence on reality ... something hybrid, decrepit, and sub-intellectual.”²⁷ This requires a certain amount of clarification.

Chapter Two

Time and History

In the first place, paganism is not a “return to the past.” It does not consist of what could be called “one past versus another,” contrary to what Alain-Gérard Slama wrote so casually.¹ It is not a manifestation of a desire to return to some kind of “lost paradise” (this is rather a Judeo-Christian theme) and even less, contrary to what Catherine Chalier declared so gratuitously, to a “pure origin.”²

In a time where one never stops talking about “roots” and “collective memory,” the condemnation for being overly attached to the past is self-refuting. Every person is “first born,” an heir. There is no individual or collective identity that does not take into account one’s connection to those who create us, the source from which we emerged. Just as yesterday we had the grotesque spectacle of Christian missionaries worshipping their own *gris gris* while denouncing “pagan idols,” it is somewhat comical today to witness the denunciation of the “past” (European) by those who ceaselessly boast of the Judeo-Christian continuity and are always presenting for our edification the “ever relevant” examples of Abraham, Jacob, Isaac, and other proto-historical Bedouins.

On the one hand we must reach an understanding of just what this word “past” means. We refuse to give any credence whatsoever to the Judeo-Christian problematic that posits the past as a definitively passed *point* on a *line* that would necessarily conduct humanity from the Garden of Eden to Messianic times. We do not believe this has any historical meaning. For us the past is a *dimension*, a *perspective* that is totally relevant to the present. There are no such things as “past” events until they insert themselves as such *in the present*. The perspective opened by how we represent these events to ourselves “transforms” our present in exactly the same fashion the meaning we give them by re-presenting them contributes to their own transformation. The “past” necessarily participates then with that characteristic of human consciousness known as temporality, which is neither the “quantity of (measurable) time,” as is commonly assumed today, nor the duration evoked by Bergson, which is the property of non-human nature—temporality belongs to man alone. Life as “worry” (*Sorge*) is ex-

tensive of itself as Heidegger put it; therefore, it does not fit into any pre-established temporal framework. Man is nothing but a project. His consciousness itself is a project. To exist is to *ex-sistere*, to project (to hurl oneself forward). It is this specific mobility of the ex-tensiveness that Heidegger calls the "historizing" (*Geschehen*) of human existence—a historizing that absolutely marks "the very structure of human life, which, as a transcendent and revelatory reality, makes possible the *historicity* of a world." Man's historicity stems from the fact that he combines "past," "present," and "future" in the *immediate present*, which thus form three dimensions that mutually enrich and transform each other. From this perspective, the typically Judeo-Christian reproach of too great an attachment to the past is entirely devoid of any meaning.

This kind of attachment to the past can only exist in a monolinear historical perspective, in fact, in a history where what has "passed" cannot *return* again. But this is not the perspective we take. We believe in the Eternal Return. In 1797, Hölderlin wrote to Hebel, "There is no such thing as annihilation, therefore the youth of the world must be reborn out of our own decay." In fact, it is not a question of *going back* to the past, but of *connecting with it*—and also, by that very fact, in a *spherical* conception of history, to connect to the eternal and cause it to surge back, to have consonance in life, and to disentangle itself from the tyranny of the *logos*, the terrible tyranny of the Law, so as to reestablish the school of the *mythos* and life. In ancient Greece, Jean-Pierre Vernant observes, "the effort to remember the primary purpose of everything is not the construction of the individual past of a *man who remembers*, the construction of his individual time, but conversely what allows him to *escape time*."⁴ In the same way it is a question of referring to the "memory" of paganism not in a *chronological* way, so as to return to an "earlier time," but in a *mythological* way, to seek for that which, through time, surpasses time and still speaks to us today. It is a question of connecting to something that *cannot be surpassed* rather than to something that has been "surpassed."

The terms "beginning" and "end" therefore do not hold the same meaning for us that they do in the Judeo-Christian problematic. In the pagan perspective the past is always future. "*Herkunft aber bleibt stets Zukunft*," writes Heidegger, "What existed in the beginning, remains always in the future, remains

constantly under the control of what is in the future."

In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*,⁵ Heidegger specifically examines the question of the "past." A people, he says, can triumph over the "darkening of the world" and its decline only if its sights are permanently set upon its destiny. Now, a people "will be able to gain a destiny from its vocation only when it creates *in itself* a resonance, a possibility of resonance for this vocation, and grasps its tradition creatively. All this implies that this people, as an historical people, must transpose itself—and with it the history of the West—from the center of their future happening into the originary realm of the powers of Being."⁶ In other words, it is necessary "to recapture the beginning of our historical-spiritual existence, in order to transform it into a *new beginning*."⁷ And Heidegger adds, "But we do not repeat a beginning by reducing it to something past and now known, which need merely be imitated; no, the beginning must be begun again *more originally*, with all the strangeness, darkness, insecurity that attend a true beginning."⁸ In fact "the beginning is there. It is not behind us as something that has been there a long time but it stands before us. *The beginning has burst into our future*. In the distance it pursues its greatness, a grandeur it is imperative we catch up with."⁹

So it is not a *return* so much as a *recourse* to paganism. Or, if one prefers, it is not a return to paganism but a return of paganism toward what Heidegger in this page of luminous importance called "another beginning."

"There is nothing anyone can do for or against one's genealogy, and a time always comes when each person will have to choose comprehension over resumption, and with it an illumination that does not include denial in order to make the solitary choice of embracing what connects him to or pushes him away from his origins," writes Blandine Barret-Kriegel, who declares herself to be "Judeo-Christian."¹⁰ "When the undertakings of previous generations come to grief, the natural response is to start over on this side of the bifurcation, to loosen the duration, and expand the space."¹¹ This says exactly what is involved here: to start over "on this side of the bifurcation" for another beginning. But no doubt such a scheme will appear blasphemous to the eyes of many. In Hebrew, the word "beginning" also carries the sense of "profanation." To begin something, as we will have the opportunity to see, is to compete with God. The truth of this observation is underlined by a passage in Genesis that refers to Enoch,

son of Seth as “the first to invoke the name of Yahweh” (4:26),¹² which is interpreted in Jewish theology as meaning not the beginning of monotheism but the start of paganism (“*So one began*. This verb means to profane. One began giving to men and statues the name of Saint Blessed Be He and to call gods idols,” was the Rachi commentary on Genesis 4:26). From the time of Simeon Bar Yo’hai to the present, pagan culture has ceaselessly remained the target of criticisms and accusations.¹³ This fact alone, not that it needs to be stated, is sufficient evidence that a certain “past” remains present in the very eyes of those who denounce it. “It is not by chance,” writes Gabriel Matzneff, “that our fanatic, hateful, and doctrinaire twentieth century never missed a single occasion to paint a caricatured and slanderous image of the ancient Romans; it instinctively detests everything that is superior to it.”¹⁴

The Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was precisely that: a rebirth. “What it involved,” as Renan said, “was seeing Antiquity face to face.” This rebirth was no journey backward or a simple resurgence of the “past,” but on the contrary the point of departure for a new spiritual adventure, a new adventure of the Faustian soul that was now triumphant because it had awakened to itself. Nor is neo-paganism today a regression either. On the contrary it is the deliberate choice of a more authentic, harmonious, and powerful future—a choice that projects into the future, for new creations, the Eternal from which we come.

Chapter Three

The Sacred

If one accepts the greatness of something, says Heidegger, “then in the beginning of that greatness remains something yet greater.”¹⁵ Paganism today therefore clearly requires a certain familiarity with ancient Indo-European religions, their history, their theology, their cosmology, their symbolism, their myths, and the mythemes of which they are composed. A scholarly familiarity, but also a *spiritual* familiarity; an epistemological familiarity that is also an *intuitive* familiarity. This is not simply the accumulation of knowledge concerning the beliefs of various European regions from the time predating Christianity (nor is it ignoring what may distinguish them, sometimes profoundly, from each other), but primarily of identifying within these beliefs the projection, the transposition, of a certain number of values which, as heirs to a culture, belong to us and concern us directly. (This consequently leads to the reinterpretation of the history of the last two millennia as the story of a fundamental spiritual struggle).

By itself this task is considerable. Not only are the ancient religions of Europe equal to monotheism in their spiritual richness and theological complexity, but it can even be claimed that they often prevail in this domain. Whether they prevail or not over monotheism is not the most important thing, however. What is important is that they speak to us—and for my part, I draw more lessons from the teaching of the symbolic opposition of Janus and Vesta, the morality of the Oresteia, or the story of Ymir’s dismemberment than the adventures of Joseph and his brothers or the aborted murder of Isaac. Beyond the myths themselves it helps in the search for a certain concept of the deity and the sacred, a certain system of interpreting the world, a certain philosophy. Bernard-Henri Lévy refers to monotheism all the while declaring that he does not believe in God. Our era remains profoundly Judeo-Christian in the way it conceives of history and the essential values it assumes, even if the churches and the synagogues are emptying. Conversely, there is no need to “believe” in Jupiter or Wotan—something that is no more ridiculous than believing in Yahweh however—to be a pagan. Contemporary paganism does not consist of erecting altars to Apollo or reviving

the worship of Odin. Instead it implies looking behind religion and, according to a now classic itinerary, seeking for the "mental equipment" that produced it, the *inner world* it reflects, and how the world it depicts is apprehended. In short, it consists of viewing the gods as "centers of values" (H. Richard Niebuhr) and the beliefs they generate as value systems: gods and beliefs may pass away, but the *values* remain.

This means that paganism, far from being something that can be characterized as a denial of spirituality or a rejection of the sacred, consists on the contrary in the choice (and *reappropriation*) of *another* spirituality, *another* form of the sacred. Far from being confused with atheism or agnosticism, it poses a fundamentally *religious* relationship between man and the world—and a spirituality that appears to us as much more intense, much more serious, and stronger than what Judeo-Christianity claims for itself. Far from desacralizing the world, it *sacralizes* it in the literal sense of the word; it regards the world as sacred—and this is precisely, as we shall see, the core of paganism. For example, Jean Markale writes, "paganism is not the absence of God, absence of the sacred, absence of ritual. Quite the contrary, it is the solemn affirmation of a transcendence, upon recognizing that the sacred no longer resides in Christianity. Europe is never more pagan than when it searches for its roots, which are not Judeo-Christian."²

The sense of the sacred, spirituality, faith, belief in the existence of God, religion as ideology, religion as system and institution are quite different notions that do not necessarily match up. Neither are they univocal. There are religions that have no God (Taoism, for example). To believe in God does not necessarily imply that it is a personal God. On the other hand, to imagine that all mankind's *religious* concerns could be removed permanently is pure Utopian thinking in my opinion. Faith is neither "repressed" nor is it an "illusion," and the best that reason can do is recognize the fact that reason alone does not exhaust all of man's inner aspirations. "Man is the only animal astonished by his own existence," observes Schopenhauer, "the animal lives in its tranquillity and is surprised at nothing ... This astonishment that occurs especially when confronted by death and the sight of the destruction and disappearance of all the other beings is the source of our metaphysical needs; it is what makes man a metaphysical animal."³ The need for the sacred is a fundamental human need, in the same way as food or copulation (if there are those who pre-

fer to do without either, then bully for them). Mircea Eliade notes that "the experience of the sacred is a structure of consciousness," which one cannot hope to make do without.⁴ The individual needs a belief or a religion—we distinguish here *religion* from *morality*—to serve him as ritual, as an action that provides unvarying assurance, as an important part of the patterns of habit with which he is constructed. In this regard, the recent appearance of a *true* disbelief forms part of one of those phenomena of decline that are dismantling in man's structure everything that specifically makes him human. (Is the man who has lost the ability or desire to believe still a man? One may at least raise the question.) "One can have a society without God," writes Régis Debray, "but there cannot be a society without religion."⁵ He adds, "Those nations on the way to disbelief are on the path to abdication."⁶ One can also cite Georges Bataille, according to whom, "religion, whose essence is the search for lost intimacy, boils down to a clearly conscious effort to become entirely *self-conscious*."⁷ This is sufficient to condemn Western liberalism. However it would certainly be giving too much credit to Judeo-Christianity to reject all those concepts over which it claims to hold a monopoly, solely because it has claimed them. Nor is there any valid reason to reject the idea of God or the notion of the sacred just because of the sickly expression Christianity has given to them, any more than it is necessary to break with aristocratic principles on the pretext that they have been caricatured by the bourgeoisie.

It should be noted that in pre-Christian Antiquity the word "atheism" was practically devoid of meaning. Ancient trials for "disbelief" or "impiety" generally dealt with something entirely different. When Ammianus Marcellinus said that "there are some people for whom the skies are empty of gods,"⁸ he explicitly stated that they nevertheless believed in the stars and magic. In Rome, it was Christians who were accused of "atheism" because they showed no respect for the effigies of the gods or their places of worship. In Greece, rationalist thought simply reoriented mythical theogony and cosmology. This is why Claude Tresmontant, after his gratuitous incorporation of pantheism into "atheism," was forced to write that the latter was "eminently religious" and that it "was by far too religious, as it unduly deifies the universe."⁹ The fact is that in ancient Europe the sacred was not conceived as opposed to the profane but rather encompassed the profane and gave it meaning. There was no need for a Church to

mediate between God and man; the entire city effected this mediation, and its religious institutions formed only a single aspect of it.¹⁰ The opposite concept of the Latin *religio* should be sought in the Latin verb *negligere*. To be religious is synonymous with responsibility, not neglect. To be responsible is to be free—to possess the concrete means of *exercising free action*. At the same time, to be free is also to be connected to others by a common spirituality.

When Bernard-Henri Lévy declares that “monotheism is not a form of sacrality, a form of spirituality,” but “on the contrary, the hate of the sacred as such,”¹¹ his remark is only paradoxical in appearance. The sacred is the *unconditional* respect for something; monotheism, in the literal sense, places such respect outside the Law. For Heidegger, the sacred, *das Heilige*, is quite distinct from traditional metaphysics and from the very idea of God. We could say, to borrow an antinomy dear to the heart of Emmanuel Lévinas, that the *sacred* vests itself as mystery in this world, that it is based on the *intimacy* shared by man and the world in contrast to *holiness*, which is tied to the radical transcendence of an Absolute Other. Paganism *sacralizes* and thereby exalts this world whereas Judeo-Christian monotheism *sanctifies* and thereby retreats from this world. Paganism is based on the idea of the sacred.

Chapter Four

False Contrasts

So just what are the fundamental differences that separate European paganism from Judeo-Christianity? Before responding to this question a certain discretion is called for. Independently of the fact that an opposition is never as clear-cut in reality as it is from the—necessary—viewpoint of analytical convenience, it seems important to first avoid any reflexive usage of the very notion of “Judeo-Christianity,” which is the subject of controversy among both Christians and Jews and is not free of ambiguity. In all strictness, such usage only appears to be justifiable on two very specific planes. In the first place, on the historical plane, the Judeo-Christians are strictly speaking the first Christians of Jewish origin, members of the Palestinian communities of Nazareth who caused much discord between Judaism and Pauline Christianity. (We know that Paul’s success brought an end to this historical Judeo-Christianity.) Next is the “ideological” plane, which involves the characterization of what Judaism and Christianity may have in common from the philosophical and theological point of view. “Judaism and Christianity are the same fundamental theology,” notes Claude Tresmontant.² This was also the opinion of Jean Daniélou, one of whose books is entitled *The Theology of Judeo-Christianity*.³ Christianity, in particular, has adopted all the universally applicable norms found in the Torah. “Judeo-Christianity” thereby designates purely and simply the monotheistic line of descent.

That affiliation established, there is generally serious underestimation of the differences that exist between Judaism and Christianity. In practice this often leads to the attribution to paganism of features that supposedly radically distinguish it from Judeo-Christianity, and which in fact distinguish it only from Judaism or—as is much more often the case—from Christianity. In certain cases the oppositions are illusory in great part or only involve how certain terms are expressed and not the terms themselves. It has often been maintained, for example, that Greek thought was dynamic, concrete, and synthesizing in opposition to an essentially static, abstract, and analytical Hebrew thought. In fact it was certainly the exact opposite, as shown by James Barr,

who correctly opposes "the Greek type of thought, analytical, creator of distinctions and pieces, and the synthetic Hebrew type of thought."⁴ Furthermore, Semitic languages spontaneously lead to synthesizing and the concrete; partially lacking in syntax, they retain a vague nature that predisposes them to a multiplicity of interpretations.

Other features that have been credited to "Judeo-Christianity" are in fact specifically Christian: the theological importance of original sin, the idea of a finished creation, devaluation of sexuality, disdain for life, and so on. This does not include the intolerance characteristic of Judeo-Christian monotheism, which assumed truly dreadful proportions in Christianity, first by virtue of the grafting of the Christian faith on the missionary spirit of the West, and because of the three great Abrahamic religions, only Christianity has set great store from the start in realizing its universalist vocation, wishing to be more than the religion of simply one people or one culture.⁵

Nor can paganism be denied an aspiration to the "universal" by boiling it down to an enclosed regressive subjectivity. But this aspiration to the universal, a point we will revisit, is derived from the particular—from beings to Being and not vice-versa. Powerfully manifested in Greek philosophy, among the Romans with the concept of the *imperium*, the Indo-Europeans with the idea of empire conceived as the body of the "god of light," the universal represents the crowning achievement of a social undertaking integrated with the being of the world, as well as the embodiment of its principle. It should not be confused with either philosophical or theological universalism, with their reduction of differences, or with ethnocentrism.

Finally, any consideration of the establishment of Christianity in the West cannot dispense with a study of not only the external but internal causes for that establishment. (What in the European mentality facilitated that conversion?) Nor should it be overlooked that Christianity itself has evolved considerably and that from the historical and sociological point of view there is not one but several Christianities. For my part, I will overlook nothing of the distinction between the egalitarian and subversive Christianity of the early centuries and the (relatively) constructive Christianity, strongly colored by pagan organicism, of the Middle Ages. Fourth-century Christianity was already obviously no longer the same as that which provoked the fury of a Celsus.⁶ Nor

are we unaware that, as Heidegger puts it, "Christianity and the Christian life of the New Testament faith are not the same thing."⁷ Finally, I will not overlook the multiple meanings of the symbols on which the hermeneutic is exercised or the inevitable variability of the body of scripture and theological systematizations.

When it comes to specifying the values particular to paganism, people have generally listed features such as these: an eminently aristocratic conception of the human individual; an ethics founded on honor ("shame" rather than "sin"); an heroic attitude toward life's challenges; the exaltation and sacralization of the world, beauty, the body, strength, health; the rejection of any "worlds beyond"; the inseparability of morality and aesthetics; and so on. From this perspective, the highest value is undoubtedly not a form of "justice" whose purpose is essentially interpreted as flattening the social order in the name of equality, but everything that can allow a man to surpass himself. For paganism, it is pure absurdity to consider the results of the workings of life's basic framework as unjust. In the pagan ethic of honor, the classic antitheses noble vs. base, courageous vs. cowardly, honorable vs. dishonorable, beautiful vs. deformed, sick vs. healthy, and so forth, replace the antitheses operative in a morality based on the concept of sin: good vs. evil, humble vs. vainglorious, submissive vs. proud, weak vs. arrogant, modest vs. boastful, and so on. However, while all this appears to be accurate, the fundamental feature in my opinion is something else entirely. It lies in the denial of *dualism*.

Expanding on what Martin Buber said about Judaism, it seems that Judeo-Christianity stands out less for its belief in a single God than by the nature of the relationships it suggests between man and God. In any case, it has been a long time since the conflict between monotheism and polytheism was boiled down to a simple quarrel over the number of gods. "Polytheism is a qualitative and not quantitative concept," Paul Tillich observed.⁸ "The difference between pantheism and monotheism," Tresmontant acknowledges, "is a spatial question, not an ontological one."⁹

Chapter Five

Dualism: For and Against

For Oswald Spengler, monotheism is the product of a particular psyche that—from about 300 BC—led to a specifically “magical” concept of a world that has *another world*—the world of the Deity—as its double, and which is ruled by the antagonism of an absolute good and evil (which on the symbolic plane corresponds to the confrontation of light and darkness). In this conception, the world is a dome or cavern—a theater where events transpire whose meaning and fundamental stakes are elsewhere. The earth forms a closed world, “magically” enveloped by the divine. This “magical” consciousness is not an active awareness: it is the stage where the dark forces of evil and the luminous forces of good do battle. The ego is subjugated by a deity of which it is simply an evanescent mode. Individual psychic activity shares a single divine *pneuma* through the intermediary of Election or Grace. The individual, like the world, is the site of a transubstantiation intended to transform darkness into light, evil into good, and sinful nature into the redeemed individual.

This term “magical” must be taken in its specifically Spenglerian meaning. It is not in fact without ambiguity. From another perspective, as we shall see, the religion of the Bible should be considered as preeminently *anti-magical*, to the extent that it introduces a process of “disenchancing,” of “unbewitching” the world. This is the *Entzauberung* of which Max Weber speaks. In the Bible, where traces can be found of several ancient magical practices (among which, perhaps, would be the prohibition made by the Decalogue of speaking the name—the *nomen* and thereby the *numen*—of Yahweh in vain), these practices are constantly denounced as “idolatrous.” It is an entirely different case when it comes to the Indo-European religions. “Authentic” magic here aims at clarifying a psycho-technique with a specific goal in mind; it guides man into the appropriate *form* for a given project; it constitutes the original “know-how” of human self-domestication and the domestication of the psyche by consciousness. The originally magical use of runic letters among the Germans seems today almost completely certain. Odin-Wotan is the preeminent magician god. During the founding war, which set at odds—in sym-

bolic form—the lifestyles of the great hunters and the farmers that emerged out of the Neolithic Era, he “domesticated” the Vanir with his magic and assigned them a harmonious position in the organic tri-functional society—where the “domestication of man by man” and the “domestication of nature” was completed. This myth signifies the transition from the *generic*, instinctive human subject to the *specific*, conscious human subject, who holds a magic power over other men, thereby engendering the conditions for the social stratification that are the distinguishing feature of every post-Neolithic society.¹

In fact, what is “magical” for Spengler in Judeo-Christianity is precisely *dualism*. This is not the immanent duality of the world as is found in Iranian Mazdaism, which opposes a good God to an evil God, a God of Light against a God of Darkness. To the contrary it results—since its inception—from a *radical* distinction between this world and God. It could be said that all of Judeo-Christian theology rests on the separation of the created being (the world) from the uncreated being (God). The Absolute is not the World. The first source of creation is entirely distinct from nature. The world is not divine. It is not the “body” of God. It is neither eternal nor uncreated nor ontologically self-sufficient. It is not a direct emanation or a modality of the divine substance. Nor is its nature or essence divine. There is but one Absolute, and this Absolute is God, which is uncreated, without genesis or becoming and ontologically sufficient unto itself. Everything that is not God is the work of God. There is no middle term, middle stage, or intermediary state between “to create” and “to be created.” Between God and the world there is only nothingness—an abyss that God alone can fill. Completely alien to the world, God is the antithesis of all tangible reality. He is not an aspect, a sum, a level, a form, or a quality of the world. “The world is entirely distinct from God, its creator,” the first Vatican Council of 1870 reminds us.²

An absolutely transcendent being, present everywhere yet nowhere in particular, God contains in himself the integrality of the world. By this he also affirms the objective existence of the universe. In this way, Judeo-Christian monotheism broke from the onset with idealism. This is the origin of that “ideological phenomenon,” to quote Foucault, formed by the separation of words and things in order to assert the primacy of things in themselves, independent of the subjects that see and speak of them, a separa-

tion that forms the foundation of the *realist* doctrine developed by the Medieval scholastics.

Within Judeo-Christianity, the consequences of the dualist assertion have not received the same emphasis everywhere. Without of course going as far as Manichaeism, which the Church rejected as incompatible with its own philosophy, Christianity presents the most radical form of dualism. Christianity in fact borrowed for its own purposes a certain number of secondary antinomies—body vs. soul, mind vs. matter, being vs. becoming, invisible thought vs. visible reality, and so on—which are formulated as so many logical consequences of the original dualism. These antinomies did not come from the Hebrew heritage, but from Greek philosophy, which has always exhibited a great fondness for hunting down antagonisms and oppositions. Among the Greeks, however, they were generally resolved by means of the principle of the conciliation of opposites on the one hand and, on the other, were only advanced within the fundamental assertion of an identification or alliance of being and the world. Under the influence of this Hellenic theory of dualistic categories, representing a *realized* systematization of the tendency toward the self-construction of myths and binary discrimination, Christianity, by contrast, made it an extension of its dualistic vision of the world, thereby accentuating even further a serious process of *dissociation* from the real. (Furthermore, this is the same tendency that would lead philosophers to conclude that ethics can be deduced by reason from the nature of things and man's nature, a tendency that can paradoxically also be found in positivism with the implicit deduction of the imperative from the indicative.³) Judaism, for its part, has avoided most of these antinomies. Obviously, once the distinction has been made between created being and God's Being, it has shown itself to be much more "unitarian" than classic Christianity. In its theology, the world "cannot be shared" precisely because there is only one creator. Subsequently, the teachings provided on life after death, resurrection, personal retribution in the beyond, are also more vague.⁴

In the Judeo-Christian perspective, dualism is connected to the theology of creation. "The idea of creation," writes Claude Tresmontant, "implies the radical distinction between the creator and the created, and the transcendence of the creator."⁵ This is the assertion that constitutes the very opening of the Bible: "In

the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis, 1:1). How was this creation made? It was created *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. God did not create the world out of shapeless and unorganized matter, out of a chaos that existed before him and on which he would have worked—in which case he would simply be an organizing demiurge, and there would be two non-created absolutes: God and matter. It cannot even be said that before God there was nothingness, because from the theological point of view, nothingness has neither reality nor qualities. "Before" the world there was only God. In the Kabbalistic tradition, the first chapter of Genesis is perceived as the unfolding of creation out of a preexisting divine universe.⁶ God therefore pulled the universe *out of himself*.⁷ And yet the world is not a "part" of God, because then it would be equally divine. Nor did God engender the world, for it is not consubstantial with him (only the Logos of God, engendered and not created, is consubstantial with God). He *created* it. By virtue of this fact, the relationship connecting God to man is both *causal* (God is the primal cause of all creatures) and *moral* (man must obey God because he is God's creature).

The relationship between God and this world is therefore truly a relationship of a unique kind of *causality*, which involves all manners of being while involving Being itself in the totality of what it is. This relationship is in no way one of identity or of direct emanation. The Bible rejects all ideas of immanence, emanation, all forms of pantheism, any idea of continuity between the first principle and the substances or beings that derive from it one after another. Finally, it is declared that the world adds nothing to God, in no ways increases his perfection, does not reduplicate him at all, and does not grow within his being. Without the world, God would still be equal to himself. If the world did not exist, God would not miss it nor would it be a loss of any kind to him. God was not "held" to making his creation. It did not give him "pleasure." Creation was a gratuitous act for him, or rather, in the terms employed by the theologians, an act of pure liberality.⁸ God creates out of "bounty." By the same stroke, he institutes himself as the sole absolute reality. In this way, as Nietzsche puts it, the "real world eventually became a fable."⁹

A number of modern ideologues have borrowed this dualistic theory for their own purposes, satisfied with simply providing an internalized or profane version. Freud, for example, views the unconscious as evil. Civilization moves forward through the sub-

limation of its instincts. (There are only a certain number of his disciples, like Wilhelm Reich, who oriented psychoanalysis in the direction not of the sublimation but of the anarchic liberation of the instincts.) “Even with Freud, whose system often passes as having freed the psyche from a one-dimensional and linear itinerary,” writes Gilbert Durand, “the famous subconscious is always suspected of being pathologically *beneath* and behind the healthy mind. This reveals how poorly suited duality is for modeling a domain of multiplicity.”¹⁰ More often, though, when dualism deflates and admits what it is, it transforms into its relative opposite, in other words a pure *one-dimensionality*. One then passes from one extreme to the other: the malaise of the *profaned* Unique naturally follows the malaise of the divided consciousness.

At the sources of pagan thought, by contrast, one finds that the world is *animated* and that the soul of the world is divine. All creation comes exclusively from nature and the world. The universe is the *sole being* and there cannot be any others. Its essence is not distinct from its existence. The world is non-created; it is eternal and imperishable. There has been no beginning, or rather, if there was one, it was the start of a (new) cycle. God only achieves and realizes himself by and in the world. “Theogony” is identical to “cosmogony.” The soul is a piece of the divine substance. The substance or essence of God is the same as that of the world.¹¹ The divine is immanent in and consubstantial with the world.

These ideas were under constant development in early Greek philosophy. Xenophanes of Colophon (sixth century BC) defined God as the soul of the world. “This world was created not by god or men,” wrote Heraclitus, “but it existed, exists, and will exist forever like an eternal and living flame that burns in a specific way and in the same way, burns out.”¹² For Parmenides, who saw the world as an immobile perfect being, the world is for that reason non-engendered, imperishable, and non-created. The Ionians made the principle of universal invariability, “nothing is created, nothing is lost,” the principle of the world’s intelligibility. Similar opinions are found with Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Melissos, Anaximander, and so forth. Even later, as noted by Louis Rougier, “in the majority of schools, Pythagoreans, Platonists, Peripatetics, Stoics, and Neo-Platonists marveled at the eternal return of all events, which excludes an absolute origin of time, a first man, and a final eschatology that will not be followed by another begin-

ning.”¹³ Aristotle himself taught in the fourth century BC that the universe is divine: As God’s intellect contains the specific ideas of all things as exemplary causes, it follows that God is only self-aware and ignorant of creation. As for Plato, whose work combined with Christian dogma gave birth to Augustinianism, while he may appear to be teaching in *Timaeus* that the world was created and there was a beginning—what Saint Augustine in *City of God* called *natum et factum*—it is less the actual origin of the world than the possible relationship between the sensible and supra-sensible world he is striving to explain. In other words, he is led to envision the creation of the world to explain this relationship and not to deduce the latter proposition from the first. The results are quite different concepts of humanity. In the Bible, man realizes his destiny collectively by returning to the “state of innocence” that existed before sin, whereas with Plato, man must realize himself by assimilating as many of the eternal ideas as possible. For Plato, “eternity” is simply the form life takes in the world to which God also belongs.

Indian thinking on origins attests to a similar concept with its ideas of a cosmic Being, a universal soul (Atman), and a Conscious Infinity (Brahman). Here again, notes Alain Daniélou, “there is no irreducible dualism, or real opposition, in the play of opposites that constitutes the field of our perceptions. Whether spirit and matter, consciousness and unconsciousness, inert and living, day and night, white and black, good and evil, or active and passive, it is merely a question of opposition between complementary and interdependent elements, which exist only in relation to each other.”¹⁴

It is inconceivable in Judeo-Christian monotheism that God would reveal himself fully *by* the world and that the world could fully depict his face. “The land promised to man will never be permissible to God,” observes Mark Patrick Hederman.¹⁵ Lévinas reacts even more violently: “So here we have the eternal seduction of paganism, which goes beyond the infantilism of idolatry! The sacred diffusing throughout the world—perhaps Judaism is only the negation of that.”¹⁶

From the pagan perspective, it is impossible to ever entirely dissociate God from the world. His connection to the world is not based on his being the absolute primal cause, and men are not contingent creatures to whom he gave birth *ex nihilo*. Paganism rejects the idea of an absolute first creation, which is a core com-

ponent of Judeo-Christian monotheism.¹⁷ Likewise it rejects all mechanistic epistemology, any idea of a global end of history—just as it tends, along with Spengler, to substitute the “idea of destiny” (*Schicksalsidee*) for the “principle of causality” (*Kausalitätsprinzip*). The idea of creation, said Fichte, is the “absolutely fundamental error of all false metaphysics.” Since that time, Heidegger has shown that the idea of creation does not emerge from philosophy. The declaration of the uniqueness of Being and the world contains, from the perspective of human intelligence, the postulate of their eternal nature: Being cannot emerge from absolute nothing and the world did not begin and will not end. Of the absolute being that exists in his whole, we say that he is *radically non-created*, cause of himself, *causa sui*.¹⁸

The real world corresponds to the Greek *idiotes*: it is singular, one of a kind, without double or reflection, without a “mirror,” without the added (pseudo-) value of a world beyond. Taken on its own, beyond all apperception or any human representation, the universe is neutral, chaotic, and devoid of meaning. The world only hides one thing, says Clément Rosset, and that is that it has nothing to hide. It is sufficient unto itself for its own unveiling. *Meaning* only appears as the result of the representations and interpretations man may give it. There is a secret *of* the world but no secret *in* the world, a mystery *of* things but not a mystery *in* things. Nor is there any “universal key” to the universal save the “sense of history.” And, as Rosset writes, it is very strange that so much energy is expended “seeking to shed light on the direction of becoming and the reason of history, in other words the meaning of what is meaningless.”¹⁹ Nor is there any objective necessity at work in the universe. Furthermore, necessity is only another word for chance—the same thing seen from another angle. Everything that exists *necessarily* only exists by the simple fact that nothing can escape the necessity of being something—to be “in any event of a certain style” (Malcolm Lowry). This is not to say that the universe is doomed to absurdity. There is no meaning *a priori*, but man *can create meaning* according to his will and representations. This power is one with his freedom, because the absence of any predetermined meaningful form is for him equivalent to having the possibility for *all* forms, the absence of a univocal configuration to the possibility of *every* operation.

From the preceding argument it can be easily deduced that what most characterizes Judeo-Christian monotheism is not only

the belief in a single unique God, but also and *especially* adherence to a dualistic conception of the world. The example of Greek philosophy in fact shows that it is possible for a non-dualistic “monotheism” to exist—identifying the absolute being with the world—which, as we have seen, is not fundamentally at odds with polytheism, as the different gods can correspond to the various forms by which the Divinity manifests itself.

In this respect we cannot pass over in silence the contemporary movement in the sciences that largely stands opposed to the dualistic rending of the world, insofar as by reintegrating man back into the universe it rejects the concept of an intermediary man standing between a creator God and nature as a machine, and develops, as noted by Ilya Prigogine and Isabella Stengers a “more unified concept of things.”²⁰ An entire sector of modern science seems in fact to be orienting its efforts toward a refusal of the single law, to consider as relative the field of application of each explicatory model, to acknowledge the multiplicity of time and the diversity of objects, to define all living forms as open systems that are really far from equilibrium, and so on. Prigogine notes that the dissipation of matter and energy, generally connected to the idea of an irreversible loss of efficiency, becomes itself—far from regaining balance—a source of a new order. Stéphane Lupasco demonstrates the reality of the contradictory antagonism built into each particle, which means that a *total separability* of beings is impossible (and is only realizable to a certain degree), just as, furthermore, a *total inseparability* is impossible. In the universe, every subject represents an actualization whose object represents the antagonistic potentialization. General systems theory, chaos theory, recent applications of cybernetics, the thermodynamics of dissipative structures, all these disciplines counter, on different levels, the “metaphysics of separation”—while making sure not to fall into the other extreme of a “flattening metaphysics” and the one-dimensional. Rejecting the mechanistic concept of linearity, like the false alternatives of body vs. mind, soul vs. matter, etc., they have become aware of a “neo-Gnostic” thought and developed a representation of the universe that is both more unitary and more complex, which emphasizes specific features without reducing them, and ceases to make man a stranger in his own world, without turning him into something he is not. “In fact,” writes Marc Beigbeder, “we have arrived at paradigms—or suggestions of paradigms—in the sciences, particular-

ly those of microphysics and neurophysiology, that are closer to the poetic imagination, to the Pre-Socratics and the Neo-Platonists, mystical and Gnostic traditions, than those of the seventeenth and eighteenth century founders, *a fortiori* the Positivists of the nineteenth century."²¹

"The opposition between Hebrew monotheism, Jewish and Christian, on the one hand, and atheism²² on the other," observes Claude Tresmontant, "is not at all contrary, as some have tried to make us think, to the opposition between theology and science, between 'faith' and 'reason.' But it is fundamentally ... a violent opposition, an inexpiable war, *between two theologies*. The Hebrew theology, on the one side, which professes that being is distinct from the world, and the theology of nature, which is the most ancient Hellenic philosophy on the other. This latter claims that it is nature that is divine."²³

Paganism therefore implies the rejection of this *discontinuity*, this *rupture*, this fundamental tear, which is the "dualistic fiction," which, as Nietzsche wrote in *The Antichrist*, "degenerated God into the *contradiction of life*, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal *Yes!*"²⁴ Curing the world of its monotheistic rupture would be the restoration of Being to its unitary unfolding, the removal of the ontological abyss separating God from his "creatures," and the return to life of the contradictory diversity of its meanings. God did not create the world; it unfolds in him and by him. He is not limited to being "present everywhere" in the world as simply maintained by pantheism; he constitutes rather the *dimension* of the world, which, globally as well as locally, gives it meaning based on what we make of it. God is bound to the being of the world, and to seek to approach him by the paths of reason is pure absurdity. "O' the madman who exhausts himself day and night striving to imagine you" (Walther von der Vogelweide). And yet, to study the world is also to know God—knowing that this knowledge will never be total and *never be completed*. Faith and science thus find themselves reconciled, not in the way of the scholastic, who claims to prove the reality of his dogmatic propositions by means of universal reason, but by the assertion of the overall oneness of the real that has no double or reflection.

Chapter Six

God: Creator and Father

Christian authors did not fail to emphasize that in Yahweh's eyes the created world was "good." Claude Tresmontant, for example, was of the opinion that biblical tradition "categorically declared the excellence of the real, the tangible world, and its creatures."¹ This does not negate the fact that this "excellence" is awarded by virtue of it being the consequence and reflection of a creative act of God. When it is said that on the sixth day "God looked on his labors and saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:31) it primarily means that God felt a positive appreciation for *his own* action. Given that the world was created by God, it cannot lay claim to the same perfection as God's. The Bible declares that "the earth and the heavens" wear out "like a garment" (Psalms 102:27). God does not "wear out." This is because the world does not have its own being, but only an existence that comes from God. It is only a "lesser being," and "good" as that being may be, it is essentially devalued as a result. Furthermore, it is this *devaluation* on which an entire school of Christian philosophy bases its belief that the world is nothing but a "vale of tears."

The disdain (if not rejection) of the world in Christianity, derives in large part from Paul. The Christian attitude, according to the very words of Saint Paul (Saul) consists of considering "Everything as a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of Christ," to view "everything as dung so that I may gain Christ and be found in him" (Philippians 3:8). It was from thinking specifically of the "ascetic" morality that emerged out of the Pauline reformation that Nietzsche fundamentally interpreted Christianity as "saying no" to life, a *saying no* produced by its inability to face difference, to affirm the dreadful otherness, to face the abyss. All of which would lead him to provide this definition of paganism: "Pagan are those who say *yes* to life, those for whom *God* is the word that expresses the great *yes* to all things."²

Most are familiar with Tertullian's maxim: *Nobis curiositate opus non est post Christum lesum* ("We no longer have any curiosity after Jesus Christ").³ Contempt of the world in fact entails contempt of the knowledge that it brings us. During Tertullian's time this was a widespread attitude among the Christians (hence the

reproaches of Latin authors, who accused Christianity of addressing only the illiterate). Origen himself admitted that the great majority of the Christians of his time "were vulgar and illiterate folk."⁴ While it is true that contempt for the world was fairly characteristic of all tendencies of second century thought, it was most prominent among the Christians—and also, of course, the Gnostics. ("The entire world is under the power of the Evil One," wrote the author of the First Epistle of John.) Origen, moreover, retained many of the features of Gnosticism. He considered birth such an evil that in his opinion men should "not only refrain from celebrating their birthdays but should curse this day."⁵ He even went so far as to attribute the creation to the activity of certain "physical intelligences," who, weary of contemplating God would have "turned toward the inferior."⁶ For Origen, writes A.H. Armstrong, "all physical creation is an effect of sin, its purpose is to serve as a Purgatory, and it would have been much better if it had never been needed."⁷ For a long time Christians avoided going head to head with pagans on the field of philosophical thought; it was only at a later date they dared add to the *pistis*, the most elementary and often the basest form of faith—simple gullibility—the *logismos*, which is conviction founded on more elaborated reasoning. Saint Augustine would again declare that "this life is nothing other than the comedy of the human race."⁸ The resurgence of such opinions can be seen today in quasi-Manichean forms: "The world bends under the law of Evil, and Evil, in return, is the other name of the world"⁹ (See also Marek Halter: "No one emerges unscathed from this world where everything leads to oppression and death and madness is hope!")

Pagan thought, to the contrary, regards human consciousness as being part of the world and as such it is not radically dissociable from God. Facing Destiny (*Moirai*), man is the law of the world (*anthropos o homos tou kosmou*) and the measure of all things; he simultaneously expresses the totality of the world and the very face of God. This intuition that connects man's consciousness and mind to the world has, incidentally, found numerous extensions in philosophy and modern epistemology, ranging from the monads of Leibniz to Teilhard's particles.¹⁰ Because paganism does not view the world as something apart from God, both are equal in perfection. God is as "imperfect" as the world. One of the great lessons from the *Iliad* is that the gods fight with men and in them.

On Olympus, says Heraclitus, "the gods are immortal men,

whereas men are mortal gods; our life is their death and our death their life."¹¹ There could be no better way to express that, while there is a difference of level between gods and men, there is no radical difference of nature. Gods are made in the image of men, for whom they offer a sublimated *re-presentation*. Men, by pushing beyond themselves, can at least partially share in the nature of the gods. In Antiquity, the exemplary figure of the hero was one who formed the intermediary between the two levels. The hero is a demigod—an idea that seemed completely natural to the Ancients, whereas in the Bible it is obligatorily blasphemous. Among the Greeks and Romans, when an individual was given heroic proportions, they found that proper and good. But in the Bible, when the "serpent" suggests to Eve that she "become as a god" (*Genesis* 3:5), it is an "abomination." More recently, Erich Fromm has shown how the figures of the hero and the Christian martyr are antithetical. "The martyr is the exact opposite of the pagan hero personified in the Greek and Germanic heroes ... For the pagan hero, a man's worth lay in his prowess in attaining and holding onto power, and he gladly died on the battlefield in the moment of victory."¹² Any idea of an "intermediary" state or being between man and God, of a *man-god* or a god taking human shape is foreign to the original Bible. (And in that regard, the Christian interpretation of Jesus as "a true God and true man" already attests to a certain compromise with the pagan spirit. Not only does Judaism not recognize Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Scriptures, but, furthermore, it is impossible for Judaism to accept Jesus' consubstantiality with Yahweh.)

The god of the Bible "does not reflect the human condition, as do the majority of deities," observes Mircea Eliade. "There is no family, simply a celestial court. Yahweh is alone."¹³ Yahweh's solitude derives from his specific nature. Yahweh has no genesis; he is not the result of an evolution, a process, or a becoming. He is all eternity and beyond all denominations. He only says, "I am that I am" (*'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*). The Bible provides no explanation to justify this declaration, nor demonstrates any train of reasoning or philosophical explication. It simply says he who is has always been and will always be. The essence of God is in this way relegated to a deeper and deeper ontological abyss, increasingly separated from the world. This is testified by the very disappearance of his name, which is gradually replaced by the personal pronoun "him" (*hu*), before becoming totally unpronounceable—even

unimaginable (at least in a conventional way) by the sound of the voice.

Yahweh is absolutely the sole *I* of the universe; all others are mere egos. From the onset Yahweh reveals himself as radical otherness (and, of course, exemplary for those who worship him). He is not only the *Other*, but the *Completely Other*, the *ganz andere* mentioned by Rudolf Otto. The human being is proportionately devalued. Certainly he can be "chosen" or receive Grace. He is still posed the alternative of finding his salvation, by uniting individually with Yahweh, or being condemned to eternal damnation. But this alternative resides only in subjection. Nothing has the power to make man Yahweh's "equal."

It goes without saying that Yahweh has no physical characteristics. Yahweh is unqualifiable, ineffable, and indescribable.¹⁴ The frequent allusions the Bible makes to his "face," his "throne," his "hand," his "eye," and so forth have a purely symbolic value. They are due to the fact that, according to the well-worn phrase, the Bible "speaks the tongue of men." Expressions like "God the Father" or "the children of God" are also, in all strictness, simply anthropomorphic renderings that should not be taken literally. Yahweh did not procreate human descendants. The very word "goddess," writes Renan, would be "in Hebrew the most horrible barbarism."¹⁵ There is no man who could be literally Yahweh's son. (Even in the Christian perspective whereas Jesus is "consubstantial" to the Father, Yahweh is only father to himself.)

This anthropomorphic treatment of the father-son relationship merits a pause, though. It is emphasized in fact in the context of the Covenant. Yahweh, even before he is a god of causality, is *a god of the Covenant*. He speaks to man; he gives him his commandments; he lets man know what he wills. He chose his people: "I will live in your midst; I will be your God and you will be my people" (Leviticus 26:12). This is the classic phrase of the Covenant: "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. And you will know that I am Yahweh, your God" (Exodus 6:7). This covenant with Yahweh, the *Berith-Yahweh*, has been constantly interpreted as a "contract with the father"—a form of relationship whose profane transpositions can be found in Rousseau or Freud (in opposition to, for example, Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Tocqueville, or Nietzsche). Now, as noted by Lévinas, "the separate and created being is not simply the issue of the father, but is *completely different* from him." As "father" let me repeat, Yahweh

does not engender. Consequently, it is impossible that his children will one day *succeed* him in the same way a son succeeds his father, with difficulty sometimes but in any case naturally. In monotheism, Lévinas adds, "the son status itself can only appear as essential to the destiny of the ego if the man retains his memory of the *ex nihilo* creation without which the son is not a true other." Lacan said in 1964 that no aware being is "father except as father." Gérard Huber adds that the "self-constitution of the son as father would constitute the father as father," and that "God emerged from an elaboration of the concept of the conscious father, but this—monotheist—elaboration belongs to the scale of unconscious ideas."¹⁶

We therefore have license to believe that the relationship established between man and God by Judeo-Christian monotheism exacerbates the bond of father and son under a neurotic form. Not only, in fact, does this place the father on a level that is *radically inaccessible* to the son, not only does this mean that the son knows in advance that he can never "take the place of the father" and thereby identify with him, but this even means, oddly enough, that the father ceaselessly—we will come back to this point—exhibits an attitude of constant defiance toward the "prideful" claims of his children and toward the "risk" involved in trying to "succeed" him, in other words, any attempts to compete with him. All the elements are here for putting into operation what the theoreticians of transactional analysis call the "dramatic triangle" formed by the savior, the victim, and the persecutor. In Freudian terms, what we have here is the situation type of a repressed love-hate relationship, retroactively overcompensated for by the assertion of an inaccessibility. The fear inspired in the son by the father and, coming full circle, inspired in the father by the son, thereby appears to me as one of the referential frameworks of biblical thought. On the mythic plane, this obviously brings to mind the precept pronounced by Yahweh, "You are to give over to the Lord the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn of your livestock belong to the Lord" (Exodus 13:12). This also brings to mind the massacre of all the Egyptian firstborn (Exodus 12:29–30), as well as the aborted sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham. (We will later see that in this perpetually recurring biblical "family story," a constant disqualification of the eldest son to the benefit of his youngest brother, can also be found.) The ritual sacrifice of the son is the price demanded by Yahweh as sym-

bolic proof of his "children's" submission to him, but this sacrifice is kept within "appropriate limits" by a God predisposed to accept its ritual equivalent upon which he can base his Covenant. Monotheism could thereby be interpreted, as Armando Verdiglione puts it, as "castration theology."¹⁷ The fear that man should display before Yahweh, a *necessary* fear, is one whose mark he should bear in his flesh. This fear, for which circumcision constitutes a symbolic simulacrum, would be the fear of a more fundamental "castration" intended to prevent the son from inheriting the powers of his father. Hence the compensation fantasy of the father's murder at the hands of a gathering of sons who would share his power on an egalitarian basis, a fantasy that will emerge into full awareness within the very discourse of Freud. In fact, the only way to "succeed" a father whose place cannot be taken, is to kill him. But at the same time, such a murder is forbidden by the system. The recollection of a creation *ex nihilo*, while it ruptures the normal father-son relationship, "implies the formation of a repressed unconscious and the lifting of that repression."¹⁸ The unconscious is thus forced to oscillate perpetually between an identificatory submission to the father and the ceaselessly repressed desire for an act of liberating parricide. (An oscillation that may not be foreign to the development of *Selbsthass*—self-hatred.) The *Berith-Yahweh*, the toned-down embodiment of ritual castration, is a repetition of birth; in other words, no one is really born without a father whom one can succeed except within the Covenant. Freud perceived the reality of this complex ensemble, but then took pains to divert suspicion. The brothers have not killed the father—but they have never stopped wishing to kill him, and it is this desire, which is only expressed in the depths of their unconscious, that is the cause for their feelings of *guilt*. The theory of the murder of the father, as is true moreover of Oedipus, probably has its true origin in the Bible—intentionally concealed by Freud to divert attention toward a Greek source that was more gratifying with respect to his projects.

In her *The Man with the Statues: Freud and the Hidden Fault of the Father*, Marie Balmory—while analyzing the matter from a strictly orthodox Freudian perspective—provides a convincing argument that Oedipal theory can be interpreted as the result of the son's "repression" of a transgression committed by the father.¹⁹ The mechanism invoked is transference: Oedipal theory only puts the guilt on the son in order to better exonerate the

father. In his review of this book, Clément Rosset notes that Freud, in his study of the Greek myth, significantly *came to a complete dead end* concerning the transgression of Laius, the father of Oedipus (a transgression that was the direct cause of the latter's fate).²⁰ He goes on to write:

What Freud and psychoanalysis mean by *repression* is not the work of the child, pulling from circulation a reality he or she experienced in such a way that it has become too intolerable to keep in memory, but that of the parent now outside the conscious grasp of the child ... The father hides but knows, and the son has nothing to hide, for what he would be allegedly repressing is precisely what has already been hidden from him and physically repressed by the father ... The invention of the Oedipus complex would therefore be a denial of the true history of Oedipus, a manner of *repressing* it in the Freudian sense of the term. The legacy of the father's transgression is thus both assumed (because the son takes possession of the sin as his own) and denied (because the heir thereby relieves his ancestor of precisely the thing he inherits).

Subsequently, the discourse on the transgression responds to the transgression itself, in the sense that the counter-neurosis "responds" to the neurosis—as a neurotic defense against the neurosis itself—which would also explain its "hereditary" transmission. In the matter that concerns us, we may ask in the same way if Adam's transgression doesn't go back to Yahweh's "transgression," meaning, in other words, if the *story* of Genesis would not *also* be the repression of the true feelings Yahweh inspired. It is then easy to see how this problematic is modified in Christianity with the idea of a son who is consubstantial with the father, and who takes upon himself, by virtue of embodiment, the original sin in order to save humanity.

One immediate consequence of the reference to a single father is that the fraternity of the sons knows no bounds. "All" men are "brothers."²¹ But precisely as a result of this, such a fraternity becomes impractical. Human societies create true fraternity on the basis of a founding myth of common ancestry. However, this ancestry needs to be demarcated in such a way that a specific distinction can be made between who belongs to one "family" and

who belongs to another. Relatively speaking, at least, fraternity is only possible with an *alter ego*: members of the same city, the same nation, the same people, or the same culture. If all men are brothers outside of any specifically human paradigm then no one can truly be a brother. The institution of a symbolically universal "paternity" annihilates the very possibility of true fraternity, in such a way that it proclaims itself in the absolute by the very thing that destroys it.

The "choice" of the father against the mother also represents a rift vis-à-vis a *past* identified with the *earth*. "In Judaism," writes the psychoanalyst Gérard Mendel, "the faithful remain alone with the father, thereby renouncing with the mother a certain form of carnal relationship with nature and with life."²² From the ethnological point of view, the principle of maternity is of greater age than that of paternity.²³ Furthermore the mother is identical to the earth-mother and represents a telluric and "primitive" understanding of fertility. Such an option, at first glance, is not specific to the Bible though: Indo-European societies were also patriarchal societies. But the difference is that, in the first case, we are dealing with a father whose nature is entirely distinct from that of his sons, whereas in the second it purely and simply involves the sublimated projection of human paternity. In this new context the *cutting* of the bond with the mother—"nature"—remains revealing. This is apparently where the Bible places the origin of the prohibition against incest, in liaison with this idea that love between a man and woman is only possible when they have gotten beyond all "incestuous" fixations. Now these "incestuous fixations" are precisely what Erich Fromm sees as ties to the world, "to blood and soil," and "a bond to the past."²⁴ To the repressed desire of murdering the father, which Freud interpreted as the realization signaling the birth of civilization (parricide prompting the transition from the "horde" to society) is thereby added the "idolatrous" temptation of a "return to the mother," the mother-earth, a temptation the Bible ritualizes by relocating it in a "holy" perspective, with episodes such as those where Jacob, with the complicity of his mother Rebecca, deceives his father Isaac for "the good of the cause" (Genesis 27: 5-17).

This may also be the basis on which we need to reinterpret the conjugal symbolism frequently used by the Bible when speaking of Israel. This symbolism describes Israel as the wife or "promised" bride of Yahweh. Now a conjugal sexuality can only be prop-

erly assumed when all ties to parental sexuality have been outstripped and annulled. "Man only becomes capable of truly connecting to his wife and becoming one with her in flesh, in a successfully blossoming sexuality, when he can psychically and geographically leave the location of the primal event."²⁵ Furthermore, this is the sense in which Jewish tradition tends to interpret the verse of Genesis that appears directly after the creation of Eve: "This is why man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one in the flesh" (2:24). Such symbolism, which Mircea Eliade incidentally claims to be "paradoxically dependent upon Canaanite fertility cults,"²⁶ comes down to replacing the repressed *natural* mother with an abstract mother who has no ties with the tangible world. This only serves to emphasize the "naturalistic" character of what the Bible condemns as "idolatry" and logically interprets in terms of "adultery": "Rebuke your mother, rebuke her! For she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look upon her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts" (Hosea 2:4).

Obviously this problematic is completely absent in paganism. Man being perceived as the father of the gods and the son of the gods, there is no natural rupture between them but only differences in intensity and the mutual, incessant conversion of each into the other. By the same token, there is no castrational repression or parricidal desire. Generations of men and gods "succeed" each other without running into any radical opposition. Between being in its entirety and each state of being, between being and each being, there still exists a relationship comparable to that of the normal father and son. In Indo-European theology, no representations can be found of the beginnings of society from a single father but, always, to the contrary, eternal re-beginnings from numerous different fathers, characterized by their functions, and whose complementary relational construction already denotes the *organic* nature of the societies they are called upon to engender.

Human Nature and Freedom

In the first chapter of Genesis, Yahweh declares, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness" (1:26).¹ This phrase has inspired much commentary. What in fact is meant by these words "image" (*tselem*) and "likeness" (*demuth*)? Does the expression *tselem 'elohim* have a physical or spiritual meaning? Does it tell us something about what Yahweh looks like or simply inform us of the way he appeared to man? Paul Humbert gives concrete meaning to both these terms, but it is clear that we cannot stick to the classification of this as an anthropomorphic comparison.² There is also a subtle difference between the two words: *tselem* means a "copy" quite close to reality, whereas *demuth* implies an idea of analogy, more of an approximate similarity. The notion of "image" which is presented first—the exact opposite in fact of what Genesis says regarding Adam and his own son: "When Adam had thirty years, he begat a son in his likeness, in his image, and gave him the name of Seth" (5:3)—is thereby immediately toned down by that of likeness. Furthermore, the often used comparison to the feeling a father may have when recognizing his "image" in his son, is not much help. We know Yahweh was not the father of men in the genetic sense of the word. The "similarity," according to other authors, stems from the fact that man was created to "dominate" the physical world, just as man is "dominated" by Yahweh. Often cited in this regard is a passage from Ecclesiastes that Yahweh gave man power "over what is upon the earth. He has clad them in strength, as he in his image did create them" (2:3). But this appears to contradict the tale of Genesis, which makes the "rule" of man over animals the result of a secondary blessing.

In fact this allusion to Yahweh's "image" that is re-created in man simply emphasizes humanity's *mirror-like* nature. It helps recall that man remains a *created object* whose only positive value is to emerge from the hands of his creator and, also, as Pope John Paul II said, "that man resembles God more than nature."³ Likewise in the dualistic concept of the world, the physical universe is only ever perceived as a mirror, and man, inasmuch as he reflects the "image" of God, by that very fact confirms his exist-

tence. In other words, man is not challenged as subject except in the name of a Supreme, Unique Subject. We can follow the argument of Louis Althusser here that states, with regard to all ideology, that it is *centered*, that:

the absolute Subject occupies the central place and challenges around it the infinity of individuals in such way that the subjects are subjugated to the Subject, while giving them, in the Subject where every subject can contemplate his own image (present and future), the *guarantee* that it is truly them and truly he that are involved and that while doing without a family, God recognizes them as his own. In other words, those who have recognized God and will be recognized in him, are those who will be saved.⁴

No longer participating in the intimacy of the world, the man of Judeo-Christian monotheism finds himself in a position of a minor subject, the derived subject, which, with respect to the Absolute Subject Yahweh, makes him forever an object. In paganism he participates, according to his rank and specific modalities, in the entirety of all that exists. Here, as a *separate* being, he is henceforth an object. (And in return, as Bataille has noted, the things on which he will henceforth turn his thought will appear to him as partially incomprehensible and unassimilable. The monotheist split installs the conditions for the non-communication of man and the world.)

Man is an ambiguous being. His double nature is derived from this ambiguity. Man is an animal, but he is not only an animal. He is a physical being, but a part of him is metaphysical. And his *specificity* does not derive from biology or "nature" but from what in him cannot be found in any other living being. Contemporary philosophical anthropology deals with this problematic starting from the examination of relations between *nature* and *culture*. This is in fact where the heart of the matter lies. In paganism it is resolved under the angle of continuity—a continuity that should not be taken in the sense of a homogenous expanse—which is not exempt from hierarchies or differences of ranks, degrees or dimensions, and which can even be understood as dialectical. In this perspective, culture is not in *absolute* rupture with nature, nor can it be reduced to being just nature and only that. Culture is only the nature man has given himself by instituting it as such, in

the act of humanization, in order to "pursue" his biological nature in a self-conscious manner. This is, in short, what Edgar Morin observes when he writes that culture, as "a properly meta-biological emergence" acts retroactively upon a furthermore "entirely biological" man in such way that "the human being is human because he is fully and totally alive by being fully and totally cultural. It could even be said that the most irremediably biological is at the same time the most irreducibly cultural."⁵

This human ambiguity is also perceived in Judeo-Christian monotheism. Proof of this can be seen in the fact that in Genesis, man is created on the same "day" as the other terrestrial animals, although at a "later time." The interpretation made of this is nevertheless quite different. On the one hand, it institutes, by virtue of the privileged intervention on humanity's behalf made by this Completely Other who is Yahweh, a much more radical rift between man and "nature." On the other hand, at the very instant he acknowledges man's specificity, he reacts violently against the autonomy it entails—against the *freedom* that derives from the self-consciousness by which man sets himself up as a cultural being—by caging him within the *limits* implied by the affirmation of a unique creator god who is radically distinct from the world.

On the first point, things are quite clear. The lesson Christianity drew from this was taken to its most extreme consequences. The *rift* between man and "nature" is extended to everything that, even inside man, is viewed as stemming from "nature": the body with respect to the soul, physiology, sexuality, instinctive drives, and so on. Hence the hostility Christianity has displayed for so long against women, who, by this token, find themselves endowed with a greater part of "animality" than men. They are said to be more enslaved by the "senses" and the "passions," in other words to the drives that are directly connected to manifestations of *physis*. Hence also, during the Middle Ages, the condemnation of the *libido sciendi*, and the persecutions directed against those suspected of being more interested in the *harmonia mundi*, the natural "progression" of the world, than in the transcendence of the *logos* of God. (Even Christian philosophers like Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon did not escape these accusations.) Hence, finally, the subsequent fact that Christian authors have struggled as relentlessly against "biologism" as the Marxists.⁶ Even in Judaism, although it is far behind Christianity in this domain, one can see a fairly similar tendency to identify the part

in man which "ties" him to "nature" and the part which "frees" him from it with a duality between the human with a penchant toward evil and the human with a penchant toward good. Yahweh then becomes the antithesis of "natural" drives—and undoubtedly it is not by chance that, as noted by Eisenberg and Abecassis, the same letters that designate instinct (*yetser*) in Hebrew are used to designate God as "formative" (*yotser*).⁷

In this regard, however, the debate between polytheism and monotheism is not the "old opposition between the intellectual and the tangible," contrary to what Michel Le Bris writes.⁸ It is not a question of *choosing* the tangible over the intellectual, no more than it is of choosing nature over history or culture. Nor is it a question of invoking any kind of "feminine" security or womb of the earth-mother against the father of the "celestial" worlds beyond. The paganism I am speaking of is situated in an entirely different problematic. It is not the choice *opposite* the Judeo-Christian choice. It *rejects this choice*. In such a way that it brings to light the opposition between a system that posits in principle the *inseparability*—which does not mean the identity—of nature and culture, of intellect and the senses, and a system—the Judeo-Christian system—which posits their *separability* in principle (considered by Le Bris as a "major catastrophe of thought") to build itself upon this duality.

The second proposition is the result of man's position with respect to God in the theology of creation. In fact, when man is in the presence of Yahweh, he is only a creature; his condition of being is utterly dependent upon the one that made it possible for him to exist. As only God has an absolute value, everything that is not God can have only relative value. To be created means that one's being is not due to oneself but to something other than oneself. This creates a perpetual sense of self-loss within one's own state of unfulfillment. It means that one is not self-sufficient but a dependent being—one's state of existence is caged from the start inside that dependency. Creation therefore does not posit man's autonomy. It circumscribes it, and by virtue of this, in my opinion, invalidates it.

Indeed, man has no right to enjoy this world except on condition of acknowledging that he is not its true owner but at best its steward. Yahweh alone is owner of the world. "The earth belongs to me, and you are nothing but strangers and guests to my eyes" (Leviticus 25:23). The power man holds over the world is a power

by proxy, a power entrusted to him that he can only use on the condition he not use it *fully*. "Man does not have the right to profit from the fertility of being unless he acknowledges he is not absolute master."⁹ Man may make, but he cannot create: the world of "creating" (*olam haberia*) belongs to Yahweh, only the world of "making" (*olam haassya*) devolves unto man. In principle man *may* covet everything, but there are things he *should* not desire—which amounts to saying he can have everything he wants as long as he does not want everything. In the Bible, man is only free to submit or be damned. His one freedom is the renunciation of that freedom. He finds his "salvation" by freely accepting his subjugation. The Christian ideal, says Saint Paul, is to be freely "subservient to God" (Romans 6:22).

The hypothesis I am maintaining here is that the religion of the Bible's essential effect, if not express intention, was the obstruction of man's capability of putting into full operation the powers of freedom and creative autonomy that arise from humanization itself, powers that were "reinforced" on the historic plane by the Neolithic revolution and the appearance of the great cultures. Alone of all the animals, man's actions are not predicated by his membership in a species. In the spirit of Judeo-Christian monotheism, it is thus necessary that he could have "acted" differently. In short, Yahweh would have preferred that man had not emerged from "nature." This is the meaning of the story told in the first chapters of Genesis. As long as the "first men" were only "natural beings," as long as their humanization had not truly been achieved, they could not fully display their creative powers. They could not set themselves up as *rivals* of Yahweh. But for man to set himself up as man, means the adoption of a super-nature, a superior nature that is nothing other than culture whose effect is the emancipation of reflective consciousness from the repetitious constraints of the species. What this means especially is that man is given the possibility of going beyond himself and transforming. In other words, to ensure that each "super-nature" obtained is simply a step towards another "super-nature." Now this project is the equivalent of making man a kind of god—allowing him to participate in the Divine—a perspective the Bible depicts as an "abomination." Accordingly, the monotheist declaration is first and foremost a solemn prohibition against man establishing himself as a god. The reason for this is that when man has gone beyond his original status (the episode of "original sin"), to one

that is fully autonomous he thereby takes on a super-humanity that confirms him as the cause of himself.

This is the reason why the biblical discourse constantly takes place and travels on two levels. On the one hand, nature is first idealized—this is the myth of the "Garden of Eden"—insofar as it integrates and realizes man's being, before being devalued and condemned when the human asserted his humanity and adopted a culture that could not be reduced to this nature (however, the fact remains that this failed to make man radically dissimilar from nature). On the other hand, the super-nature that man-as-man has given himself is compensated for and invalidated by the declaration of an even stronger "super-nature," one that is *supernatural* in the proper sense of the term, inaccessible because it is absolute, and belongs only to Yahweh, the unique creator of all tangible reality. Man, in other words, is instituted by God as the "king of creation" (Genesis 1:26), but it is only to the extent that he is dependent upon another king who is immeasurably more powerful than he is. Yahweh accepts that man has a history, but he strives to neutralize it by giving it a purpose, which is precisely the return to the pre-historical state of paradisiacal "innocence." (Yahweh only accepts history in order to assign it an end.) Finally, if I may say so, monotheism *functions* as if Yahweh reasoned along the following lines: now that man has left nature, let's make sure he is completely removed from nature. As he no longer acts in accordance with nature, then let's compel him to act in accordance with us, lest he realize he can only truly act in accordance with himself and thus truly establish himself as creator, as *causa sui*. As man has managed to turn himself into a *player of the world*, the sole thing that can now prevent him from using all his possibilities of playing, is to make him believe that he did not invent the rules of the game. Judeo-Christian monotheism, with its myth of creation *ex nihilo*, its prohibitions displayed by an inaccessible and specifically irreplaceable "father," and his representation of a dualistic universe that is the double of this one in an absolute sphere, responds precisely to this function.

Henceforth, the sin of sins, the preeminent sin, will be "pride"—the lack of *humility* (in other words, as the two words have the same root, the intention of not being *humiliated*). This sin, writes René Coste, "is fundamentally the desire for absolute human autonomy (individually and collectively)."¹⁰ With this "desire for autonomy" are also condemned all forms of mastery,

the will to power, the non-separation of happiness and creative power, and the expansion of the self. This condemnation is made by means of an absolute *swindle*. The man who would choose the "ephemeral" pleasures of power will damn himself for all eternity. By being *faithful to himself* man can only be "unfaithful" to God. By honoring himself and the creative energy to which he gives scope, man would be "idolatrous." The sin of "pride" finds its archetype in the *non serviam* of Lucifer, the rebel angel who is also the "light bearer." From this point forward, Prometheus and especially Faust will be eternally in the defendant's chair. To enclose man within his lack of autonomy, in the *unspokenness* of his repressed freedom, Yahweh instituted himself as the center of a system where the capacities of man—insofar as he is a creature—are necessarily limited. One of the names attributed to him in the Bible, *chadday*, often translated as "the All-Powerful," is interpreted in Judaism as "He who tells the world enough" (*cheamar leolamo dai*). In fact Yahweh is none other than the God who says "enough." The Law he issues is meant as *limitation*. The Covenant he concludes symbolically seals this castration.

Chapter Eight

Fall or Rise?

At the same time the Bible makes a radical distinction between man and other living beings, it interprets his humanization as a fall. Here we find the "double speech" I alluded to earlier. In order to surmount this apparent contradiction, Judeo-Christian monotheism is led to depict original man, man before sin, as a creature that is not the least bit real. The man who existed before the fall is not man as we know him. He is a being who is both *pure spirit*, who dwells in the intimacy of absolute being represented by God, but who is at the same time pure nature, who lives in total harmony with creation, at peace with the animals, and so forth. This idealization of man goes hand in hand with the idealization of "nature." Adam, symbolically representing the first humans, corresponds to the pre-historic *natural man*, whose *humanization* has not yet truly come about, who is not yet a creature of culture. Not yet detached from the earth (*adamah*), he remains one whose activity is essentially dictated by his membership in his species. Eighteenth century philosophers would resuscitate this vision with the myth of the "noble savage."

After his creation of Adam, God gave birth to Eve. We know in this regard that a certain contradiction exists between the two creation stories contained in Genesis (1:27 and 2:18–25). That is not what is important though. It can be noted, on the other hand, that the transition from the androgynous Adam—"man and woman he created them" (Genesis 1:27)—to the Adam to whom God offered a companion, already emphasizes just how incommensurable is the distance between man and God. As long as he was alone, Adam was *unique*. From the moment Eve steps on the scene, this uniqueness is undone. Necessarily appearing with her are the notions of otherness, complementarity, as well as insufficiency. Eve's presence shows Adam, retrospectively, the reality of what he is lacking. This obviously sets him at odds with Yahweh who by definition can never lack for anything. Jewish tradition, incidentally, reads the passage from Genesis that immediately precedes the appearance of the first woman, "God said: It is not good that man be alone" (2:18) as "It is not good *for God* that man be alone." Alone, and immortal to boot, man is free to imagine

that he lacks for nothing and there is nothing to distinguish him from God. He could believe himself God's *equal* and not merely made in his "likeness." This is precisely what he must be prevented from believing.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve are given the choice of living eternally in the bliss of Yahweh, sheltered from the assaults of history, the real world, and time, or to become true human beings, that is to say, to begin to travel, as they desire, the historical path that will establish them as what they are. We all know what happened. Adam and Eve surrendered to the temptation offered by the "serpent." So what did this serpent say? He told Eve, "You shall be as gods who know good and evil" (Genesis 3:4). In fact the serpent has no trouble demonstrating that a freedom one cannot truly exercise is not really a freedom, that the beginning of the prohibition contained within itself the logical possibility of other prohibitions, and that the very fact of prohibition is antagonistic to the freedom God claimed to have granted them (Genesis 3:1). In this case, the exception does not confirm the rule but repudiates it. It will also be noted in passing that this serpent is polytheistic. In fact the phrase "You shall be as gods" immediately leads to the conclusion that there may be more than one.

The presence of the serpent inside the "Garden of Eden" raises on its own a certain number of problems and difficulties of a theological nature. Genesis describes the serpent as "the most cunning of all the beasts of the field" (3:1). This is not a true serpent though, because only afterward is he condemned to crawl on his belly (Genesis 3:14). Some theologians interpret the serpent to simply represent the Evil Inclination that dwells in the heart of man.

Adam and Eve, placed in the garden of Eden, find themselves forbidden to eat of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17). Catholic theologians believe this "knowledge" forbidden by Elohim-Yahweh is neither omniscience nor moral discernment, but the ability to *decide* what is good or evil. Jewish theology is more subtle. The "tree" of the knowledge is interpreted as the representation of a world where good and evil "are in a combined state," where there is no absolute Good and Evil.² In other words, the "tree" is a foreshadowing of the real world we live in, a world where nothing is absolutely clear cut, where moral imperatives are tied to human values, and where everything of any greatness and importance always takes place beyond good and

evil. Furthermore, in the Hebrew tradition "to eat" means "to assimilate." To eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is therefore to personally enter this real world where human initiative "combines" good and evil. Adam's transgression, from which all the others are derived, is clearly "that of *autonomy*,"³ accordingly, as emphasized by Eisenberg and Abecassis, this would be "the desire to conduct his own history alone according to his own desire and his own word or law."⁴

Confronted by man's desire for autonomy, Yahweh displays a kind of fear, which is manifested by his establishment of a new compensatory prohibition: "Behold man has become as one of us, to know good and evil! Lest he now put forth his hand, and take also the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" (Genesis 3:22). What is now involved, from an obviously symbolic point of view, is to prevent man, who by transgressing the initial prohibition has "successfully" achieved his humanization, from attaining "immortality." As long as Adam had not transgressed, the "tree of life" was not forbidden to him to the very extent he did not need it—for, as the Bible says, it was only his transgression that rendered him mortal (Genesis 2:17). But now man should become ephemeral. He becomes "peaceful with death."

Expelled from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve become "the first pagans of history."⁵ Translation: they have become *accomplished* individuals, human beings in the full sense of the word. This humanization goes hand in hand with a true individuation. It is only after he has sinned that Adam is *personally* challenged by God (Genesis 3:9). The generic history of humanity begins with the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Civilization is also now able to start. Work appears. Human intelligence gives birth to syntactic language. These facts are regarded negatively in the Bible. According to the theology schools, original sin may be interpreted in rather dramatic fashion; the fact remains that if Adam and Eve had obeyed God, history would never have begun and humanity never would have been.

The following episode introduces Abel (Hével) and Cain to the scene. "Time goes by and it happens that Cain presents products of the earth in offering to Yahweh and Abel, for his part, offers the first born from his flocks, and even their fat. Now the lord accepts Abel and his offering. But he did not accept Cain or his, and this vexed Cain greatly ... Cain spoke to his brother Abel: 'Let's go outside' and when they found themselves in the coun-

tryside, Cain hurled himself on Abel and killed him" (Genesis 4:3–8).

The initially obscure reasons for Yahweh's choice of Abel are clarified when the offerings from each brother are examined. Abel's murder by Cain in fact involves two different lifestyles. Abel is a nomadic shepherd, whereas Cain is a farmer (Genesis 4:2). The first extends into the new society, born of the Neolithic revolution, a typically pre-Neolithic lifestyle. In continued loyalty to desert tradition, he has formed no attachment to any particular land. The second, Cain, is the man of the Neolithic revolution, the revolution that allows man to more clearly assert his mastery over the world, to subjugate the world more fully as an object. As a farmer, he is by that very status rooted, attached to the soil that Yahweh has cursed because of Adam (Genesis 3:17). To borrow an expression I used earlier, he is displaying an "incestuous" attachment toward the earth. He has chosen, as Lévinas puts it, *Totality* as opposed to *Infinity*, the "pagan" conquest of space against the Hebrew possession of time as eternity. For this attachment to a given soil, rootedness, bears within itself the warning signs of everything the Bible stigmatizes as idolatry. These include the distinct cities, patriotism, the state and reasons of state, the frontier that distinguishes citizen from foreigner, the vocation of soldier, politics, and so forth. Whereas by his sacrifice, Abel shows he keeps his spirit totally open for Yahweh, Cain's sacrifice asks God to sanctify the kind of existence that has earned God's disapproval because it is a manifestation of the increased autonomy man is seeking.⁶ Just like Adam, Cain reveals his pride, and this is why he is condemned. In fact the principal cause of Cain's condemnation is not Abel's murder, but Cain's refusal to humble himself by repenting. Questioned by Yahweh ("Where is your brother Abel?"), Cain *returns the question*, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 9:4). The underlying message is that it was Yahweh's responsibility to guard him. Cain, the farmer, is condemned to wander. He is exiled to a nomadic existence—expelled back to "nature" for having sought to give himself a super-nature. Adam had been similarly condemned for having placed himself above the Law. What is involved in each incident is a pejoratively unidealized nature. Adam's transformation into a true human is accompanied by the transformation of nature into a "jungle." In the case of Cain, the nomadic life is converted into exile. Cain then declares, "My punishment is too heavy to bear" (Genesis

4:13). But all he means by this is that the condemnation he has been struck with is overly harsh. "Pride" again.

Cain is in fact the preeminent civilizing hero. If we are the "children of Cain"—a rather exaggerated term, as Adam and Eve also engendered Seth—it is as people of culture and civilization. After his condemnation Cain in fact founded the first city, which he named after his son Enoch (Genesis 4:17). By this same act, he doubled his transgression; first because by all evidence he was seeking to make a name for himself, next, because biblical tradition condemns "vanity," by virtue of which he named a city after a person. This name Enoch is significant itself, as it is built on a root that means "inauguration, beginning," as well as "man." In other words, Cain was seeking to substitute a specifically human beginning for the absolute beginning represented by the Creation. He set up his own beginning in opposition to Yahweh's and thereby *profaned* the notion. Cain did not restrict himself to engendering urban civilization, the one where history is made, but he also forms the first link in a long chain of inventors of civilization. One of his descendants, Yubal, was the first musician. Another, Tubal-Cain is the ancestor of smiths, and it is to him we owe the discovery of metallurgy. In this respect he is considered to be the first specialist in the art of war, a fact that of course earns him God's personal disapproval.

It is another descendant of Cain, Nimrod, the "hunter"—in other words the conqueror—son of Kush, to whom Genesis symbolically attributes the construction of Babylon, Nineveh, Accad, Rehoboth, Calah, Resen, and so forth (10:8–12). This is certainly not by chance. Jacques Ellul, in an insightful book, furthermore, has found that the Bible lays a veritable curse on the city, as it represents the place where man is most apt to sovereignly declare his free destiny.⁷

"The city," Ellul notes, "is a direct consequence of Cain's murder and Cain's refusal to accept God's protection ... Just as history began with the murder of Abel, civilization begins with the city and everything it represents." Again what the city stands for is roots, territory, the frontier, power—everything that allows a man to make a name for himself. And also, of course, "idolatry," because every city seeks its own protective deity; the result is a multiplicity of gods. "The curse," Ellul goes on to say, "is pronounced right at the start. It forms part of the town's very being; it is embedded within the framework of its history. The city is a

cursed locale because of its very origin, its structure, withdrawal, its quest for gods. Every city in its own development resumes this curse and tolerates it, for it is one of the constituent elements of every city." The large city is itself a manifestation of "pride." Nineveh declared itself as "without equal!" (Zephaniah 2:15). As did Babylon (Isaiah 47:8). In Egypt the people of Israel had already been toiling to build the cities of Pithom and Ramses (Exodus 1:11). They later suffered exile in Babylon, which explains the special execration devoted to that city. In Babylon, writes Jacques Ellul, "all cities are encompassed and synthesized. It is truly the queen of cities and the yardstick by which all other cities are measured. When the wrath of God is unleashed, it is the first to be struck. When it is struck, all other cities are struck with it ... Everything said of Babylon in reality relates to all cities in their entirety. Like all cities, Babylon is the center of civilization. Commerce toils for the city; industry develops inside it; fleets ply the waves for it; it is where beauty and luxury bloom; it is where power is built..."⁸ The Apocalypse transformed Babylon into the "famous harlot" (Revelation 17:1) and the "mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth" (17:5). An angel makes the announcement that it will be consumed by flames: "It has fallen; it has fallen; Babylon the Great has fallen!" (14:8 and 18:2). Yahweh also condemned Nineveh, Tyre, Damascus, and Gaza (Amos 1:3-10). Jericho was destroyed in "miraculous" fashion. The sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were razed in the most appalling manner. The Apocalypse denounces Rome as "the beast of the sea" and wears upon its "seven heads" (the seven hills) "blasphemous titles" (Revelation, 13:1-2). It utters "proud words"; those who worship it will be subject to the torment of "fire and brimstone," and the smoke from this torment will rise aloft "for centuries upon centuries" (14:10-11).

In Numbers (21:2) it is considered a good and salutary work to condemn cities as taboo. In Hebrew, the masculine substantive meaning "city" also means "enemy" in the spiritual sense. This enemy would be the omnipotence of mankind; on every occasion the defeat of the cities represents the humiliation of the great and the degradation of the powerful. "The prophets always set their sights upon the cities with incredible persistence and consistency," writes Ellul again. "There is an abundance of such texts and whether the cities are friends or enemies, the judgment remains the same. If there is any strict concurrence among the prophets it

would certainly be on this point! But it is God's judgment. In other words it is a matter between God and the city ... To truly understand the history of cities, this curse that weighs heavily upon them must be taken into account. A curse that, from one end of the scriptures to the other, is expressed in the words: 'I will destroy...' said the Lord."⁹ Only Jerusalem is an exception to this rule. That is because it is to other cities what the land of Israel is to other lands: their proportional antithesis. Jerusalem is not a *sacred* city but a *holy* city. It is a *unique* city, of a kind seen nowhere else. It is the city that will one day absorb all the rest. In some ways it is the anti-city.

This makes man God's *golem*. This is an old tale—Frankenstein!—of the creature who rebels against his creator. At the end of the first part of Genesis, Yahweh's trepidation with respect to the way man used his freedom, and his anger and jealousy were so strong that he purely and simply decided to commit genocide against humanity. "The Lord regretted having made mankind upon the earth and felt a great pain in his heart. And Yahweh said, 'I will wipe from the face of the earth the men I have created'" (Genesis 6:6-7). This is the episode of the Deluge from which only Noah and his family out of all humanity escaped. This led into a new beginning in which Yahweh established his covenant with Noah.

But unfortunately for Yahweh, humanity was not always disposed to submit to his will. One more step forward in the establishment of civilization was made with the construction of the Tower of Babel. Having moved east, mankind exclaimed, "Come. Let us build a city and a tower whose spire will penetrate the heavens! Let us make ourselves one in name and not be dispersed throughout the earth!" (Genesis 11:4). Before this new display of "pride," Yahweh immediately expressed his wrath. "Now there is no design that they cannot realize. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so that they can no longer understand one another" (Genesis 11:6-7).

The nature of the "transgression" committed by the builders of the tower is obvious. Furthermore, it is still the same one. "It is the autonomy of man, his creative and Promethean power that God senses in some way in the Babel undertaking," writes André Neher.¹⁰ The idea at work behind this undertaking, specifies Ernst Bloch, "is connected by his desire to create like God, following the advice of the serpent, thus to the desire to become and be like

God."¹¹ Other authors have also incorporated the tower of Babel into the historic model of the West. What is interesting, moreover, is that the diversification of humanity into peoples possessing different languages and cultures is presented here as Yahweh's "riposte" to human audacity. The fundamental good of cultural variety is therefore allegedly derived from a "transgression" exactly as the entrance into history was the result of Adam's transgression. "It is tacitly understood that idolatry appears simultaneously with the formation of nations," remarks Nahum M. Sarna.¹² The tower of Babel should therefore be considered as the first of these "idols" and the story of its construction as the "sequel to the anti-pagan polemics contained within the earlier stories of the Creation and the Deluge."¹³

"The Jehovist has a kind of hatred for civilization," Ernest Renan wrote. "Every step forward on the path of what we call progress is a crime in his eyes, to be swiftly followed by a punishment. The punishment for civilization is work and the division of humanity. The attempt of the worldly, profane, monumental, artistic culture of Babel is the preeminent crime."¹⁴ From the perspective of the Bible, everything transpires as if every effort by man to grow has the consequence of diminishing Yahweh. Man, we know, has the right to *make* but he does not have the right to *create*. "Every stage of human creation is a profanation. The cost of its victory is retreat from God."¹⁵ In comparison to Abel, Abraham, Jacob, Adam, Cain, Enoch, Nimrod, Esau, and so on, stand out as civilizers. Now Yahweh has nothing but hatred for "brick makers," for a humanity still drawn to declaring: "Let us make a name for ourselves!" (*Na'asse lanou chem*).

In order to manifest this hatred and put it to work in a concrete manner, Judeo-Christian monotheism instituted it into a system. The "historic" rôle of Abraham, the nomad exiled from the city of Ur, was to challenge, from the very interior of the world, this civilization born of the Neolithic Revolution by means of a series of revolts against Yahweh. "The first act by which Abraham became the father of a nation," notes Hegel, "is a scission that tears apart the bonds of everyday life and love, every relationship he had experienced until that time with men and nature; all those fine relations of youth he cast aside."¹⁶ In this sense Abraham's solemn "yes" to Yahweh (Genesis 22:2 and 11) is first a "no" to human autonomy, a "no" to history—a "no" called upon to transform into the *ewige nein* of which Goethe speaks.

The rupture symbolized by Abraham is a rupture with the historic becoming of a humanity spontaneously carried to a super-humanity; it displays the idea that at the end of time all peoples and nations will share his refusal and renounce their own destinies. After Abraham, Moses repeats this commitment. Just as the people of Israel were able to escape captivity in Egypt, the whole of humanity is called upon to escape from the "captivity" of history. The law of Yahweh, formulated on Mount Sinai, is presented as the means of rescinding once and for all Adam and Eve's transgression. This is the role of Judeo-Christian monotheism: to definitively forbid man any present pregnant with a future that did not depend on this monotheism, *ad infinitum*.

Nietzsche believed he could identify in monotheism's origins the trace of an old "personality change," the imprint of a compensation for a feeling of inferiority. So as not to lose face, someone who *cannot* do something claims that he does not *want* to do it—or that to want to do it is *evil*. The same is true in Judeo-Christianity; "To the extent that everything strong and great is viewed by man as superhuman, as alien to himself, man diminishes; he divides between two spheres his two aspects, one pitiable and weak, the other strong and gripping; the first sphere he calls *man*, the second *God*."¹⁷ The ideal can always be seen, but it is seen as inaccessible and thereon transferred to an equally unattainable God. The invention of an absolute superiority will tend to justify a relative inferiority. "Everything the believer places under the idea of God is in fact pilfered from man himself, as if through a series of communicating vessels ... Everything then takes place as if God's greatness was only the repression of neurotic man."¹⁸ Here the system and its discourse begin to obey their own logic. The man who becomes alienated from his own freedom because he is incapable of making full use of it and places it, in a desire for compensation, in the power of a single and remote God, accepts in advance the very principle of his mutilation. It is because he feels subjugated that he transforms this submission into intentional servitude, through the angle of a *covenant* with a master who holds the omnipotence he does not. By so doing, he condemns himself to eternal suffering, but he makes this suffering the very justification of his existence—and of his *critical* attitude toward the world. (A similar arrangement can be found in Marx's concept of social alienation that will itself produce the realization that will terminate it. In both cases, "liberation" is tied to man's capacity

for suffering and reinterpreting his suffering.) Finally he dissimulates, not unskillfully, the subjective nature of his approach behind the affirmation that seems as objective as it could possibly be, of an absolute being who created the world. In such a way that we had to wait for Nietzsche to raise the essential questions: Who is talking? What are his true intentions? And what are the results of this speech?

In paganism, of course, no one asks the gods to exchange the slavery of some for a guarantee of the slavery of all. This is because the gods of paganism do not consider men to be their rivals. The great deeds of human beings not only aggrandize humans but also aggrandize the gods. Human undertakings are not an assault against divine qualities; on the contrary, they bear witness to those qualities. Far from men being forbidden to make a name for themselves, that is the very thing that justifies their existence and earns them a piece of eternity. This is what is declared in one of the more famous maxims from the *Edda*, "Men die, as do beasts, but the sole thing that does not die is the renown of a noble name."¹⁹ Whereas the Bible displays its intention of limiting human sovereignty by a series of prohibitions (which forecasts the modern theory of "countervailing powers"), the religions of ancient Europe gave heroic dimensions to the man who exceeded his abilities and thereby shared in the Divine. Where the Scriptures look at life with a blend of distrust and trepidation, paganism hypostatizes in its beliefs all the ardor, intensity, and pulsation of life.

Instead of pushing man to exceed himself, the monotheism of the Bible consumes his vitality. He must "impoverish and annihilate himself to give consistency to God. The deity becomes a kind of hemorrhaging of human nature. And God manipulates the transfusion of all man's creative energies."²⁰ Power, in the best of cases, is merely a stopgap. The world as we know it is only a stop gap. History is a stopgap. Man himself is a stop gap. From his own viewpoint it would have been better if he never existed. According to the Talmud, "for the space of three years the school of Hillel and the school of Chamay debated to learn what was better for mankind: to have been created or not. A vote was taken and the result was: it would have been better if he had not been created. But now that he is here, he should scrupulously examine his actions."²¹ This *negative* nature of monotheism appears again, in an extreme form, in the theory of *tsimtsum* ("contraction") intro-

duced in the sixteenth century by the Kabbalist Isaac Luria, according to whom the world emerged in the absolute void when God withdrew into himself in order to make a place for it. The reason for existence would then be that "God wished to see God." Withdrawn from a place, the contracted Absolute Everything opened up a void in which the mirror of existence could appear. The whole of objectified creation, separated from the World of Emanation, would have thus been born from a "concept" of the negative. (The Transcendent God is then called *Eyn*, "No Thing.") Pushed to extremes, this kind of re-presentation would culminate in the opinion of Bernard-Henri Lévy, according to whom the history of God's people "was an eternal naysaying stubbornness."²² It can also be noted that, with the exception of two, all the Ten Commandments are expressed in the negative. On the other hand, Meister Eckhart interprets the phrase from Exodus, "I am that I am," as "the purity of the affirmation, as all negation is excluded from God himself." "The Christian conception of God," writes Nietzsche again, "is one of the most corrupt conceptions of God arrived at on earth; perhaps it even represents the low water mark in the descending development of the God type. God degenerated to the *contradiction of life*, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal Yes! In God a declaration of hostility towards life, nature, the will to life! God the formula for every calumny of 'this world,' for every lie about 'the next world!'"²³ Judeo-Christian monotheism developed a *negative* anthropology because it is a *negative* religion. An anti-religion.

The Primacy of Mankind

What is most striking when studying the Indo-European cosmogonic myths is the solemn affirmation, found everywhere, of man's primacy. The gods, who gave form and organization to the world, were visualized on the model of men, who made them their mythical ancestors and ideal models. Among the Greeks, "the gods are not supersensible and otherworldly. They inhabit the world, lend themselves to many theophanies, exist on familiar terms with human beings, whose interests they espouse."¹ Among the Celts and Germans, men and gods both originated from the same source. Indo-European cosmogony places a cosmic "man" at the "beginning" of the current cycle of the world. In the Indian world, the *Rig Veda* gives him the name of Purusha; his name is Ymir in the *Edda*. For the Vedic Indians, Purusha is the One by whom the universe begins (again). He is "naught but this universe, what has passed and what is yet to come." In the same fashion, Ymir is the *undivided* One and it is by him that the world is first organized. His own birth is a result of the meeting of fire and ice: "The burning current encountered the frost, causing it to melt into drops, and life sprang from these drops of cold water because of the force prompted by the burning heat, and this became a human figure, and he was called Ymir."² Before Ymir there was naught but a "gaping bottomless abyss" (Ginnungagap), which, contrary to the "abyss" mentioned at the beginning of Genesis (1:1), which was already a result of Yahweh's labor, had existed for all time. Ymir in turn gave birth to the world by his own dismemberment. "From the flesh of Ymir the earth was made, the sea from his sweat, from his bones were made the mountains, the trees were his hairs, and the heavens were made from his skull."³

It is the same story in the *Rig Veda* where the division of the cosmic man provides for the creation of the world. "The moon was born from the consciousness of Purusha, from his gaze the sun was born, from his mouth Indra and Agni; from his breath the wind was born. The domain of the air emerged from his navel, the sun evolved from his head, from his feet the ground, from his ears the directions; the worlds were modeled accordingly." Purusha is

thereby the "father of all creatures," *Prajapati*. It is his dismemberment that sacrifice, whose role is fundamental in Vedic worship, recalls and commemorates.⁴ The universe does not derive its status of existence from something that is not part of it. It proceeds from the being of the cosmic man, his body, his gaze, his word, and his consciousness. There is no opposition between two worlds, between a created being and a non-created being, but to the contrary, incessant conversion and consubstantiality between beings and things, between heaven and earth, between men and gods.

Contrary to Yahweh who is only being ("I am that I am"), cosmic man is both being and non-being. He is the place where all the relative oppositions meet, melt, and exceed themselves. He is the preeminent place where all opposites are reconciled. When the organization of the world took place, all the "complementary opposites" emerged from him, in the same fashion that opposing mythemes proceed from one single foundational myth. To start, cosmic man gives birth to the sexual principles. The name Ymir is akin to the Sanskrit *yama*, which means "bisexual, hermaphrodite." It is he who gave issue to the two giants, Burr and Bestla, who formed the original couple. Burr and Bestla then had three sons, who were the first Æsir or sovereign gods: Odin, Vili, and Ve.⁵ They in turn gave birth to the first men or civilizing heroes, Ask and Embla—"and by them were engendered the race of men who could live and inhabit Midgard." In the *Rig Veda*, Purusha also engendered the representatives of the functional classes: "The mouth (of Purusha) became Brahman, the Warrior was the product of his arms, his thighs were the Artisan, and from his feet were born the Servitor." "The idea that earth and heaven derived from the body parts of a primitive giant, a kind of fabulous archetype is ancient Indo-European. The same is true for the chronological progression: the existence of an original being, the creation of the giants, the gods, and finally men."⁶

Through a series of legendary or symbolic representations, Indo-European myth ceaselessly celebrates the limitless creative potential of humanity. When it describes the gods as the authors of their own existence, it is not to oppose them to human beings, but to suggest them as ideal models that people should strive to equal. It is within himself that man, individually or collectively, can, like the gods, find the means to become more than he is. The world is self-sufficient, the great cultures are self-sufficient—

which does not justify any exclusion or forbid any exchange. In the Vedic texts, Purusha dismembers himself; in the *Edda*, it is the Æsir, sons of Burr, who place Ymir in the center of Ginnungagap and create the different parts of the universe with his body. In the Germanic religion, Odin-Wotan, creator of a *new* world, *sacrifices himself to himself* in order to acquire "magic" and learning. "I know that I hung from the tree battered by the winds, wounded by a spear, sacrificed to Odin, by myself to myself sacrificed."⁸ In the Indian poem by Kalidasa, the *Kumârasambhava*, it is said: "With your own self, you will know your own being. You create yourself." And later: "May you be adored, o God of the three forms, you who were once absolute unity before the creation was finished ... You alone are the principle of creation of this world and also the cause of what yet exists and will eventually collapse. Of you, who have divided your own body in order to engender, come man and woman as part of yourself ... You are the father of the gods, the god of the gods. You are the sacrificial offering and also the lord of the sacrifice. You are the sacrifice but also the sacrificer." In the *Devi-Mahatmya*, the goddess Nidra, the universal sovereign, is praised in these terms: "At the creation, you took the creative form, and when the world must be protected, your form is that of life; when comes the end, you shall be seen as destruction; and yet you are one with the universe! Science, magic, wisdom, and tradition; you are also distraction, both goddess and demon! You are the nature that gives structure to the elements."⁹

Chapter Ten

Beneath and Beyond Good and Evil

The "grammar" of Judeo-Christian monotheism is not primarily religious; it is *moral*. The Bible is above all a moral book, at the same time as it is a book that expresses a certain morality, a book that characterizes the hyper-morality denounced by Arnold Gehlen.¹ Judeo-Christianity sees everything through the lens of morality; in the final analysis every sphere of human activity is brought back to morality. Esthetics and politics, to name only two, lose all autonomy. In the order of human affairs, the Bible establishes the conditions necessary for nomocracy to appear. This primacy of morality makes it so that Yahweh is first a *judge*, a distributor of punishments—"the judge of the whole earth" (Genesis 18:25). In biblical language, furthermore, the moral prescription is inseparable from the realization of a divine plan. "There is no imperative in the strict sense in the Hebrew language; it is the future that is used as a general rule to express it."² The best way of saying this is that in the Bible the "you should" is confused with the "this will be." What should happen will happen; what man should submit to will be realized. There is no longer any place for the chance result of human actions; in the long term, history will necessarily culminate with the victory of morality. "Christianity," says Nietzsche, is "the most prodigal elaboration of the moral theme to which humanity has ever been subjected."³ Biblical morality is not, of course, deduced from a vision of the tangible world or from concrete experience as lived by human beings. It comes exclusively from the will of Yahweh and the prohibitions he has pronounced. Adam and Eve's transgression, as we have seen, consists of wishing to determine for themselves the criteria of good and evil. Now only Yahweh possesses this right. It is given that he alone defines what is good and what is evil and constitutes them into absolutes, and furthermore he is also the one who rewards or punishes. What befalls man befalls him necessarily with respect to the moral value of his actions. Such a system imprisons man within a problematic of unhealthy explanation: if there are (concretely) evil events it is because there are (morally) evil actions. This is the source for guilt feelings and bad conscience. Far from abasing themselves and crucifying themselves

by means of their beliefs, the Greeks, writes Nietzsche, "to the contrary used their gods to protect them against any vague urge of *guilty conscience*, to have the right to play in peace with their freedom of soul." There is none of this in Judeo-Christian monotheism, which uses pain as one of the surest means to perpetuate its morality. "Only that which never ceases to cause suffering remains in memory," observes Nietzsche again. The best way for Yahweh to be never "forgotten" is for him to inscribe himself in the human heart as a sign of unfulfillment, as suffering produced by "sin." The priest explains suffering, illness, poverty, captivity by "transgression"; he suggests the ways it can be "expiated." For him pain is the "the most powerful aid to memory." The Bible gives pain a "poisonous" explanation: if one is suffering, it is because one deserves to; it is because one has *sinned*. Pain is not only painful, it is also a sign of guilt. Accepting the principles of this guilt-inducing condition comes down to understanding the reasons suffering exists, an understanding that mitigates suffering somewhat—because it also lays out the hopeful principle of the sinner's "redemption," a radical *comprehension* of his suffering in this world—but this also renders it *interminable*, by virtue of its inclusion within the most intrinsically perfect system for its reproduction.

Why would biblical morality, in Nietzsche's words, constitute "the most terrible illness that has ever raged among mankind"? Because of the dualistic vision that supports it. Because it functions according to abstract categories without the slightest fundamental relation to the world. Because it imposes upon the world a code whose sources are outside of the world; because it renders life foreign to itself and prevents it from realizing itself; because it ruptures vital ardor and creative energy by imposing eternal limitations upon them:

This overly exclusive reading of the human condition, for good and evil must obviously coexist, bursts the coherence and unity of life. Life finds itself divided piecemeal and split apart, in other words incapable of realizing itself. In this way morality defines life according to criteria that are not its own and are not determinative of its specific effectiveness. Such a problematic imposed on life from without prevents it from achieving its virtual qualities. Life no longer stems from its own creativity. By arbitrarily dictat-

ing laws that do not spring from its own legitimacy—that of its sensibility—morality forbids it from being itself.⁴

In Judeo-Christian monotheism, life is not valued according to its own problematic, but subjected to another. No longer will man be judged according to his law and his measure, but according to those of a Something Entirely Other. This is why the progression of Christian morality in history can also be read as a decline in energy.

Christian morality is burdened by *resentment*. The believer accepts his own debasement in exchange for the hope that others may also be debased. He adheres to a morality that suppresses diversity in the name of "equality," that belittles in the name of "justice," that curdles in the name of "love." Such a morality is a system to dissipate energy, chip away at health, and destroy potency. It culminates, when all is said and done, with fusion and confusion, with entropy and death. It reveals itself, once *identified*, to be pure negation—like the death instinct. (Here *Eros* is merely the mask of *Thanatos*.) "For confronted with morality (especially Christian or unconditional morality), life must continually and inevitably be in the wrong," writes Nietzsche, "because life is something essentially amoral—and eventually, crushed by the weight of contempt and the eternal No, life must then be felt to be unworthy of desire and altogether worthless. Morality itself—how now? Might not morality be 'a will to negate life,' a secret instinct of annihilation, a principle of decay, diminution, and slander—the beginning of the end?"⁵

Pagan man is by nature innocent. Certainly over the course of his life he will have responsibilities to assume. One or another of his actions, by implicating him in a situation or conformation of given facts, may cause a feeling of guilt to arise within him. But this feeling always results from voluntary choices he has made. Man does not inherit at birth any guilt, any imperfection bound to his very condition (other than those of his psychic or physiological limitations, which are exempt from moral implications). He is at the onset pure innocence—*innocence incarnate*. And he puts this innocence into serious action like a child puts it into play. To transform *action* into a *game*. Because only the game is truly serious: the game of man, the game of being, the game of the world. The game is fundamentally innocent, beyond good and evil. When he describes the Trojans' assault on the wall the

Acheans erected to protect their camp, Homer himself compares the actions of the gods to the games of children.⁶ Montherlant said that the game "is the sole form of activity that should be taken seriously."⁷ Lastly Schiller declares: "Man is not fully man except when he plays." This is why it is the child who is the closest of all people to the superman. The world of the superman, to paraphrase Montherlant, is a world whose prince is a child. It is a world instituted beyond good and evil, a world where the moral sense of action is a matter of indifference with respect to the action itself. "To desire indifferently," Montherlant says, "is the very essence of play." *Aedificabo ad destruam*.

Morality in the Bible always has the scope of an ontological foundation. In Judaism it is the Law, the Torah, upon which the core role is conferred. This is the means by which original sin can be "corrected" and with it the Evil Tendency that caused it.⁸ From the moment there were two worlds, that of the created being and that of the non-created being, the problem of their articulation was raised. This problem is resolved in the Old Testament by the Covenant and by the fact of the Law. Genesis (1:26-32) says that man was created on the sixth "day" at the end of a series of five, which Rabbinical tradition generally identifies with the five books that make up the Torah.⁹ The sixth "day" would then symbolize man's acceptance of the Torah as a meaningful prelude to the "day" of Yahweh's Sabbath. Several commentators furthermore observe that in this Genesis story, only the sixth "day" is designated with an article: "the sixth day" (with regard to the others it says: "day one," "day two," etc.). It so happens that the numerical value of the article in Hebrew is "5." According to Rachi, this means that it is on condition of Israel accepting the five books of the Torah that it is able to have a sixth day. A *midrash* even proclaims that "in the beginning, God read the Torah and created the world."¹⁰ The question of knowing whether the essence of the monotheist revelation resides in the idea of the law or that of creation is still a matter of debate, incidentally. Against the Judaism of the later kabbalistic schools, rabbinical teachings are more prone to hold to the former solution. The phrase "here are the laws" (*eleh hamichpatim*) would thus denote the true beginning of time. The fact is that when Yahweh presents himself to Adam for the first time, he does not introduce himself as the creator of the world but as the author of morality. When he speaks, he is not making theological pronouncements; he is delivering speech with

a moral value, a commandment. When he addresses Adam for the first time (Genesis 2:16-17), it is to formulate a prohibition. Likewise, in Exodus, when the Lord declares to Moses that he is his God (20:2-3), it is to pronounce the ten phrases that make up the Ten Commandments. This gives the impression that the story of the creation is only provided in order to force acceptance of moral speech. It was *necessary* for Yahweh to be the author of the world in order for the whole world to submit to him. *Truth* finds itself by this same stroke separated from *justice*. The affirmation of a self-evident truth is only the means for realizing a certain kind of "justice." The Law's ultimate finality is in imitation of Yahweh: "Be holy, because I, Yahweh your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). Emmanuel Lévinas goes so far as to write, "We love the Torah more than God," then adds, "the essence of Judaism is the destruction of man's natural religious tendencies and the development of an ethical approach to reality."¹¹

Contrary to paganism, which is more apt to deduce the ethical as well as religion from a sublimation of human activities, the Bible seems to deduce religion from morality and even infers the existence of Yahweh from the fact the Torah exists. There is a kind of equivalence between Yahweh and the Torah: "If you honor the Words, it is as if you honor God; if you scorn them, it is as if you are scorning God."¹² By virtue of this, the practice takes on the appearance of an *imitatio Dei*, which in the extreme, could paradoxically make God superfluous. This line of reasoning is pushed to an absurd extreme by Bernard-Henri Lévy, according to whom "the radical non-existence of God is the supreme meaning of Jewish existence"! The judgment delivered by certain Christian theologians on Judaism is not so far from this opinion. It has also been pointed out that classical Hebrew has no specifically equivalent word for the terms "religion" and "religious." Erich Fromm, for his part, ordains certain interesting developments to the opposition between the "moral man" and the "religious man," or even to the distinction between the "authoritarian ethic" still "colored with idolatry," and the "humanist ethic" that determines in the very absence of God a type of specifically Judeo-Christian consciousness.¹³

Here we find again the opposition between *holiness* and *the sacred*. The first is on the side of morality; the second is on the side of religion. Some contemporary neo-Marxists have only gone a little further than this by disassociating not only morality from

religion but also morality from a belief in a personal God. Let's not be misled: by raising the figure of Dionysius in opposition to the Crucifixion, Nietzsche—whom Heidegger described as “the last German philosopher to have sought for God with passion and suffering”—is not opposing religion with religion's absence. He is opposing a true religion, a true sense of the sacred, to the degradation of religion under the exclusive form of morality.

We know that the notion of law is viewed differently in Christianity. The most fundamental distinction between the teachings of Jesus (at least as presented in the Gospels) and those of traditional Judaism, regarding the emphasis on the affairs of this world and the “kingdom of heaven,” is the relative separation of morality and the Law. Without impugning the spirit of the Law, Jesus did challenge the letter of the Law and declared that individual conscience by itself could serve as a guide for achieving truth. This is the meaning of the phrase: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28).

Clearly opposing Grace to Law, which the Old Testament viewed as combined (see Psalms 119:29), Saint Paul declared that the Law only represented a temporary stage, a transitional stage from which the coming of Christ, the Messiah, had freed humanity. “Do not believe that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets,” Jesus said, “I have not come to abolish but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17). With Saint Paul, this “fulfillment” is taken in the sense of the Greek *telos*, which combines the ideas of “achievement” with “finality.” The Law, Saint Paul said, was not valid literally until Jesus who, by achieving it, rendered it useless. (Karl Marx later developed a similar kind of analysis of the bourgeois revolution of 1789, presenting it as a positive and useful stage, but one communism claims to have surpassed, and it even attacks those who wish to remain at this stage.) Henceforth Christ's Law simply replaces the Law, which is now sclerotic. Grace carries the ancient Law to a higher dimension; baptism replaces circumcision as *sphragis*, the mark of belonging. Paul will even go so far as to define Christianity as an anti-Law: “You have broken from Christ who seek justice in the Law; you have fallen from grace” (Galatians 4:5). Although Paul's doctrine on this subject could often be contradictory, these are the most critical aspects retained by the Church during the greatest part of its history, to conform to its own vision of the Law. And it was not until

recently that it began revising this domain as it has also revised others.¹⁴

Chapter Eleven

The Shapes of History

Two great conceptions of history are to be found in paganism. The first is cyclical: "There is nothing new under the sun." The other sees history as potentially having a beginning but no foreseeable or obligatory ending. In both cases, historical becoming is not governed by any necessity outside of itself. There is no *overall* meaning to history. There is no history allegedly unfurling in one given direction that does not, over the long term, owe something to human will, which is the only determining factor here. Nor does any one people occupy a central or *chosen* place in the ever-plural becoming of humanity. No more than there is one God, one Truth, or one humanity is there any kind of predestination for all in a single direction. "The idea of a history directed from a beginning to an end, or of an indefinite movement oriented to one consistent meaning, is foreign to Antiquity and non-Christian civilizations," emphasizes Emmanuel Mounier.¹ History is in fact the very mirror of life: it reflects an eternal series of unstable balances and conflicts limited in time. It is an eternal *tension* governed by the heterogeneous and antagonistic nature of the different forces in play.

In paganism, the *innocence of historical becoming* thus responds to the *innocence of man*. When Nietzsche speaks of the "innocence of becoming" against what Judeo-Christian history labels as *guilty*, he is creating a metaphor for a concept of time which, in the first place, opposes that of irreversible time. Consequently, it inevitably posits *another* relationship of time to eternity, a relationship that is not so much "a-historical," as Pierre Boudot argues, as super-historical, "ultra-historical"—in the sense that the superman represents a surpassing of the human.² Time for Nietzsche is also foreign to the world of classic mechanics, which intersects with and even extends the mono-linear conception of Judeo-Christianity. Eternity is not the cancellation of time, but on the contrary, its infinite hammering out in the form of becoming and Return within becoming. And, as Boudot says, this "genealogy of Eternity" is "only realizable by the will to power, capable of restoring the innocence in man as if he were already in eternity."

In the Judeo-Christian vision, history has an absolute begin-

ning, whose story is provided by Genesis. It also has an end that is imaginable, foreseeable, and necessary. Not only does it say that time will be compelled to end just as it was compelled to begin, but what meaning that end will take is indicated in advance. The monotheistic conception of time is *linear* (or vectorial): time is oriented; it has a direction at the same time it has a meaning. Furthermore, this history is only an episode, an interlude, in the existence of humanity. Humanity's true being is outside history; in fact only the end of history will restore it to its fullness, such as it would have been if Adam had never "sinned," and this time in absolute and definitive fashion. When this end has been attained, humanity will have reached its goal—the goal Yahweh assigned it in the beginning. Having closed and been terminated, history will no longer continue or recur. The true human eternity is not in becoming but in being.

The world has begun. It is with this word *berechit*, "beginning"—for which there are some seven hundred different interpretations—that the Bible opens. This idea of beginning, the equivalent of an absolute rupture, is itself implied by dualism. "To say that there is a beginning is to say that there is, on the one hand, the world of God, and, on the other, the world of men."³ Before the world there was only God; before the *beth*, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the first letter of *berechit*, there was only the world of the unity, the world of the *aleph*, the first letter of the alphabet, which corresponds to Yahweh. Because it unfurls within the world created by Yahweh, history too is subject to his will. It has but one direction, and this direction will witness the realization of Yahweh's plan, despite the avatars and delays born from the "ambition" and "pride" of men. The sense of history is the messianic fulfillment or, for Christians, the mystery of Christ. Beyond the history of the people of Israel, which represents in some way concentrated mysticism, it is the entire history of humanity that should be interpreted as *Heilgeschichte*, "history of salvation" or more exactly "history of holiness." In Judaism, as Raphael Patai makes clear, "ethnohistory is almost entirely confined to religious history as presented by the Bible."⁴ This "ethnohistory" in fact foreshadows the one Yahweh had in mind for the whole of humanity.

From this perspective the end is deduced from the beginning. Not only will the world end because it had a beginning, but it is also said that this end will be the equivalent of a return to the

beginning. *It will restore the beginning.* It will restore the initial state that was stripped from humanity by original "sin." History, as we know it, is only a long parentheses that opened at the moment of the "fall" and will be compelled to close again, thanks to Yahweh's "goodness," when the necessary conditions for *canceling* this fall will have come to pass. In other words, history consists of a gradual evolution of humanity toward the finalization and complete unveiling of the divine plan. It is a *moral proceeding* which should culminate with the establishment of the kingdom. The curbing of history born from man's power will coincide with the plenitude of Yahweh's reign. According to the Kabbalah, the very name of Adam summarizes this vision of times past and times yet to be. A is "Adam," D is "David," and M is the "Messiah" (*Machia'h*). History runs from Adam to messianic times through the intermediary of David and his lineage. Yahweh is at work in history; he *works* on it and guides it toward fulfillment. Generally speaking, nothing can prevent his design from being realized. In the long term, all has been played. All the rest is only dust and vanity. The history of men in the Bible is not autonomous. It cannot be either its own cause or "revelation." It is only the "middle" phase in a process that includes two others, two that are more important, *better*, and determine history's meaning. Just as man is determined by something that is other than him, history has only the meaning and direction provided by something apart from it. History is nocturnal; it unfurls between the light of the Creation and the light of the end of time, between the "Garden of Eden" and the Last Judgment.

The history of humanity as something that has been fully and historically humanized, begins with Adam's expulsion from the pure *naturalness* of the "Garden of Eden." This episode, recapitulated in Cain's murder of Abel, corresponds to a fundamental psycho-social rift, primarily consisting of the domestication of the physical world by man, rather than to man's own self-domestication. This "moment" corresponds, within the profane transpositions of the Judeo-Christian linear outline of history, to Marx's end of "primitive communism," Freud's "murder of the father," and even to Lévi-Strauss's separation of Nature and Culture.⁵ By entering history, man is able to fully experience the rupture between the world as object and himself as subject, as the very condition of surpassing and surmounting himself. Having already been given one super-nature, he puts himself in a position to pro-

vide himself with another. But this is where Yahweh steps in. Because man has entered history with the purpose of being "God's likeness," this history must be disarmed from within. Yahweh can no longer prevent history from occurring, but he can arrange it to no longer be the place where man can become his rival. The only requirement is that man be "capped" with an absolute signifier intended to respectively illuminate the meaning and form the essential track from which man would be obliged not to stray. This track is what the institution of monotheism "revealed" to humanity. The announcement of "Messianic Times" forms in some way Yahweh's riposte to historicization.

The end of time is generally envisioned in two ways. There are those who see it as resulting from a quasi-apocalyptic breach, in harsh discontinuity with what came before. Others imagine a gradual evolution, consisting of the progressive organization of the world around biblical values and the establishment of equality, justice, and universal peace. Transposed to the plane of contemporary politics, this distinction tallies with the revolutionary and reformist paths, with all the ambiguities and contradictions specific to each. (Rupturalism, for example, implies a stronger historicity in the short term, although it claims to bring it to a quicker ending.) It also matches, to a certain extent, the difference between "royal" messianism, connected to Nathan's prophecy concerning David (Samuel 7:1-29) and the specifically eschatological messianism that was so widely discussed elsewhere. It can still be envisioned in a diachronic fashion, the "flowering" of history preceding its end, properly speaking. The first phase would then correspond to the specifically Messianic period meant to compare with the former "Garden of Eden," whereas the second, corresponding to the "future world" (*Olam habbah*), would restore "Eden" itself—in such a way that any repetition of the original sin would become impossible.⁶ This fulfillment would arrive on the day after what rabbinical texts refer to as the "birth pangs of the Messiah" (the "final struggle" in Marxist terminology). History, having reached its end, will "give birth" in the pain of its own negation. And it perhaps may not be by chance that the Bible so frequently employs the metaphor of "giving birth." After all, it is only starting from the time that Adam and Eve entered history that woman began, as said in Genesis (3:16), to give birth in pain and suffering.

Christian theologians in the past never skimmed on details

when describing the horrors of hell. When it came to the nature of the joys reserved for the Chosen after the Last Judgment, they were always more discreet. Karl Marx, as well, was always more prolix when it came to stigmatizing the evils of capitalism than in describing the specific aspects of the "classless society." To get any idea of just what "Messianic Times" will consist of, one is reduced to conjectures. Such a "moment" can only be described in opposition to the reality of the world we know. It is clear that from the biblical perspective the advent of the end of time is connected to the coming of a more fundamentally egalitarian society, one that is more homogenous and more peaceful. As history rests on conflict, there will no longer be any conflicts—therefore no more diversity that is susceptible to "degenerating" into confrontations. Mastery will no longer have any reason to exist; all forms of "alienation" will disappear. The world will be transfigured into the world's *opposite*. The great cities devastated by Yahweh will remain deserted "for generation upon generation" (Isaiah 13:19–20); they will be like Babylon: "The Lord's wrath will make it uninhabitable; it will become a site of total solitude" (Jeremiah 50:13). As every people will lack any distinguishing features, they will no longer display any will to power. Peace—the peace of the cemetery—will reign forevermore, "no longer will any learn the art of war" (Michah 4:3). Any possibility of being "similar to God" will have been annihilated. The powerful will have been "humbled"—all would have renounced any search for power. The first will have become the last. The master will adopt the manner and behavior of the slave. "The wolf will live with the lamb and the panther will sleep with the goat. The calf, the lion cub, and the fatling will walk together" (Isaiah 11:6). The wild beasts will feed on salad, and man himself will become an herbivore.⁷ Thanks to the Messiah, the "taint of the serpent" will be erased.⁸ There will no longer be day or night, sorrow or joy, "nor merit or sin."⁹ There will no longer be anything.

This end of history will retrospectively give meaning to all that has occurred since the beginning of time, in the same way that the seventh "day" of Creation simultaneously denoted the *cessation* of the "act" of creating and the completeness of the work produced. Now it is to this seventh "day" during which God "laid off" (Genesis 2:2) that the Bible explicitly attached the institution of the *Sabbath* (Exodus 20:8–11 and 31:12–17). Thereby the "messianic era" is to be compared to the Sabbath. Because it manifests

a kind of circumcision of time each week,¹⁰ it constitutes within the very core of the real world, within the very heart of humanity's historic becoming, both the *recollection* of the seventh "day" when God, having completed his creation, blessed and sanctified it (Genesis 2:3), and the *announcement* of the time when—the parenthetical duration of history having been closed—the world will have become perfectly complete. The Talmud calls the Sabbath the "anticipation of Messianic Time" and Messianic Time the "eternal Sabbath." The Sabbath thereby constitutes, inside historical becoming, the recollection of the prehistoric and the premonition of the post-historic. Symbolically separating normal time, the time in which man is *active*—in which he acts upon the world and establishes himself as its master—from the time when all the laws of the world are suspended, it represents the very *sign* of the ideal of the pause, of the ideal of the limitation and the *stop*. The Sabbath is in no way a day of "rest." It is a day of *cessation*. It marks the moment in which the believer displays his ideal and his faith by ceasing to make history, by suspending all subject-object relations, all relationships of mastery or subservience toward beings and things. "Freedom" thereby becomes identical to *detachment*. During the Sabbath, man makes no use of his power. He is neither the master or creator of anything; he is implicated in nothing; he forswears all "pride" and all "claims." He is emancipated from the very chains of time. "Instead of a Sabbath on which man bows down to the Lord of Time," writes Erich Fromm, "the biblical Sabbath symbolizes man's victory over time. Time is suspended; Saturn is dethroned on his very day, Saturn's-day."¹¹ The Sabbath is the regular and periodic reminder given man of his servitude and dependence on the Completely Other.

It is not so surprising then that some Freudian Marxists have interpreted the perpetual Sabbath that "society" will become after the end of time, as a convincing symbol of a realizable Utopia. "The Sabbath appears as the foreshadowing of a time when the class struggle will no longer exist," write Eisenberg and Abecassis.¹² Fromm, for his part, goes so far as to suggest "reestablishing the Sabbath as a universal day of peace and harmony, as the *human day* anticipating the *human future*."¹³ The Sabbath is then perceived as the mark of what is impossible to realize today, but which will necessarily occur "one day": a world where there is no longer any "injustice," conflicts, determinations, and causalities. The part of the future imperative in the very core of our pres-

ent indicative.

"The rejection of history," admits Pierre Chaunu, "is a temptation for civilizations that have emerged from the Judeo-Christian tradition."¹⁴ Furthermore, there is no word in Hebrew to designate "history." The most frequently used term, *toledot*, rather means "filiation," "engendering." It evokes an essentially repetitive chronology.¹⁵ In the Bible, history is re-production, in both senses of the word; it overlooks the radical innovation and is only a long preparation for the "delivery" that will herald its end. The only "decisive events" it houses are those tied to the establishment of monotheism or the realization of God's plan: Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, and the Messiah introduce such ruptures. But at bottom, the sole truly great rift is *anterior* to history. Thus two readings are obtained, determining two graphs. In the Bible we find history conceived as repetition following the fundamental caesura due to Yahweh's intervention. In paganism we find a specifically human history, crediting the greatest part to the innovations of human creativity, yet maintaining a clear continuity of heritage, which finds its modern expression in Nietzsche's phrase: "Zarathustra wishes to *lose* nothing of humanity's past; he seeks to throw everything into the crucible." Accordingly, Judeo-Christian monotheism does not conceptualize or conceptually isolate the notion of history (which the Ancients realized concretely, but not in full awareness), save to imprison it within boundaries that *destine* it for an end. Yahweh only accepts history to terminate it. He only accepts human history in the sense that it leads to the annulment of humanity. He only evokes the idea to better arrange for its destruction.

Chapter Twelve

Messianism and Utopianism

"Messiah" is derived from the Hebrew word *machia'b*, meaning "to anoint." This is the word translated by the Greek *christos*, "Christ"—which, moreover, produced some sliding of the meaning (it is in fact a historic term and not a proper name or theological term to be exact). From the perspective of the Bible, the Messiah is generally a figure whose "coming" should mark the beginning of messianic times. Nevertheless, this quality is sometimes attributed collectively to the people of Israel. This second conception traditionally prevails over the former when it involves denouncing the messianic quality of an "imposter" (Jesus, for example, from the Jewish point of view; see especially Lévinas). Orthodox Judaism, on the other hand, strongly leans toward systematically interpreting the Messianic Era as being connected to the advent of a personal messiah, whereas reformed Judaism instead places the emphasis on the messianic times themselves.

Christianity's diligent efforts to draw arguments from messianic prophecies to demonstrate how they relate to Jesus are well known. The Church Fathers showed particular zeal in this task, one that was also pursued by Thomas Aquinas and Bossuet. "The greatest of the proofs of Jesus Christ," says Pascal, "are the prophecies." (This exercise assumed new vigor in the nineteenth century in reaction against rationalism and German idealism.) At the end of his Gospel, John specifies that he wrote his text to make others believe "that Jesus is the Christ" (20:31), in other words the Messiah. However, when referring directly to the Gospels themselves, it will be noted that except for one passage in the most recent of them, that of John to be exact (4:25–26), Jesus practically never claims on his own behalf to be Christ or Messiah. He even seems, notes Charles-Harold Dodd, "to have discouraged efforts made by others to give him this title."¹ The only two episodes in which he appears to accept this title, a conversation with his disciples (Mark 8:27–30) and the interrogation during his trial (Matthew 26:63–64), remain quite ambiguous.

In the Old Testament, the messianic problematic is directly connected to the notion of being "chosen." This is in no way a *superiority* but a *peculiarity*. Dating from Exodus, Israel formed a

separate, *chosen* people. Moses, by invoking the power of Yahweh, founded both the religion and "nationality" of the Hebrews, with which he combined the tribes into the worship of a single deity.² In this way Israel derives its identity from Yahweh. Yahweh is not merely satisfied by "choosing" his people; with his Covenant he constitutes them as a people. This boils down to saying that Israel will exist as a people for only as long as it recognizes Yahweh as its God. What is true for the people is also true of the land, for it is only in Eretz-Israel that the Torah can be perfectly fulfilled—and inversely, Eretz-Israel only has "meaning" as long as the Torah is observed there. Hence the particularity of the *land* as of its people. Hence also, as shown by Alexandre Safran, the fact that the four fundamental aspects of Judaism—Yahweh, the Torah, Eretz-Israel, and the people of Israel—can be dialectically visualized as interchangeable.³

With his "unction" and the Covenant, Yahweh "chose" a certain number of men. He assigned them a messianic mission to engage in history in order to bring it to a close from within, the sole means of "gradually" eliminating "from men ... the human transgression."⁴ Subsequently, "the people carrying these men would find themselves charged with a responsibility with regard to the world. They feel the effect, they experience, they live as if they were themselves messiah for the world, in other words an anointed people, a people set apart, destined to establish the order of God upon the earth."⁵ The Lord declared, "I will hold you up as a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). If the people of Israel accept being considered as a "pariah people,"⁶ and accept being established in accordance with God's will as "hierioethnic," it is to "preserve their election to the rank of a sacerdotal people."⁷

In the millenarian *shema*, the declaration, "Hear oh Israel, the Eternal is our God" comes with the monotheist affirmation: "The Eternal is One." This provides Hebrew nationalism with an absolute guarantee. But this nationalism is unlike other forms of nationalism. It even stands opposed to all others because it is not of the same nature. According to Valentin Nikiprowetzky:

Christian nationalism is a contingent reality, a phenomenon based on fact not law, a negative deviation in the sense that it contradicts Christian doctrine and principally reflects a certain human weakness. To the contrary,

Jewish nationalism, from the perspective of the religion of Israel, is a positive and fundamental given. It is a fulfillment that none of the prophets, even those who regarded Israel most harshly or pessimistically, ever really renounced. A unique creator God, father of all men, master of empires, unique source of all good and evil, nevertheless Yahweh remains the God of a single nation.⁸

The same tendency leads to making Jerusalem an omphalos that is not only spatial but primarily temporal. "Jerusalem is both the center and culmination of Jewish and human history."⁹ The Temple of Solomon thereby becomes the center of the land of Israel, which is itself the center of (the history) of the world.¹⁰

Marxism, which as we all know only liquidated religion so that it could inherit its place, has borrowed this messianic conception for its own benefit. Referring to Hermann Cohen and Ernst Bloch, Erich Fromm, in the footsteps of many others, describes socialism as "the secular expression of prophetic messianism."¹¹ Bloch himself sees in messianism, "the red mystery of all *Aufklärung* that remains revolutionary and aims for fullness."¹² On the one hand, in Marxism the proletariat finds itself established, in its capacity as the "elect" class, as the custodian of a universal emancipation tied to its own emancipation.¹³ On the other hand, as noted by Fromm, "the Hegelian-Marxist concept of alienation makes its first appearance—although not in these words—in the biblical concept of idolatry"¹⁴—which moreover leads Fromm to declare that today's idols go under the names of "honor, flag, mother, and family."¹⁵ It is through messianism that certain neo-Marxists have created a confluence of the Bible and Marx toward what Bloch calls the "ontology of not-yet-being." The *expectation* is therefore made secular; the Bible, "an oppressed text," still has a future insofar as it is through this future it can "transcend without transcendence."

In contrast to Christianity, Judaism "presents itself as a temporal doctrine that tends to realize, *hic et nunc*, the ideal society described in the Scriptures."¹⁶ The justification for this ideal stems in part from the fact that in Judaism a fairly loose conception of original sin prevails, a conception according to which neither the substance nor nature of man was fundamentally corrupted by Adam's sin. Therefore, the establishment of a "heaven on earth," through humanity's gradual evolution in a more moral direction,

is not a complete impossibility. By the same stroke, this *hic et nunc* theology also explains why Judaism has never shared the negative judgment often carried by Christianity about this world, nor accepted the relative indifference of Christian authorities toward problems—mainly social—connected to a potential transformation of the immediate physical world.¹⁷ It also explains how Marxism, by using the messianic source as its starting point, did not have much trouble detouring this *expectation* toward the future—with the substitution of this side for the beyond.

On this plane the Church seems, moreover, determined to make up for lost time. Paul Valadier speaks of “helping politics (responsible violence management) get a grasp of its role in the tension created by the end of history.”¹⁸ “We now see the Christians in the process of regaining their memory and rediscovering their Hebrew and Jewish origins; they are gradually rediscovering a more Pharisaic reading of the Gospels.”¹⁹

It is because evil forms part of the historical condition of humanity, in the biblical perspective, that many have concluded that classic politics and even the “revolution” could not bring it to an end—that the sole recourse is therefore Utopia, in other words the perpetual affirmation, in the form of a critical Hope (and thereby *restrictive*) of a radical Other capable of inserting itself within the world. An affirmation that has no need of being realized, which is sometimes not even accompanied by any belief in its possible realization, but which holds its own as *hope*, insofar as it inspires and prompts behavior and acts that are deemed beneficial. A *negative* attitude that finds its justification in itself, which is not to be understood as the pagan sentiment of a duty to be fulfilled but a subtle form of the spirit of resentment discovering, as Philippe Nemo writes, that they alone are masters who revolt against the mastery of the world.²⁰ Some new theology has rallied to this point of view when it declares that “when God is transformed into the guardian of order, atheism becomes the condition for social change.”²¹ Utopia, finally, is itself also a profane theology founded on exile and absence.

Chapter Thirteen

Space and Time

From the creationist perspective, the main emphasis is placed on *time* and not on *space*: the account of Genesis transpires only in time and stages a “history,” which the Greeks, for example, would have interpreted spatially instead. In like fashion, if the biblical doctrine concerning personal retribution is unclear, it is because its “paradise” is confused with an *absolute before* (the Garden of Eden) or an *absolute after* (the messianic era), whereas in classic pagan tradition, “paradise” is primarily a *place* (Valhalla, the Elysian Fields, or even Atlantis or the land of Cockaigne) and, what’s more, not a place that is radically distinguished from the real world. This is the reason time is generally considered, as stressed by Ernst von Dobschütz in 1902, to play the role of *exemplary container* in Hebrew thought that was played by space in ancient European thought. Subsequently, while the Greeks paid special attention to the particularity of the *elements* of the tangible world, the Hebrews paid special attention to the *events* that transpired there. This makes it so that in the Bible, *time ends by becoming identical with its content*, whereas in paganism, it is the space that forms the world that tends to become identified with all the beings it contains.

“Hebrew man,” declares André Chouraqui, “lives in a verbal world where the notion of time trumps that of space, in which the duality between time and eternity ... does not exist.”¹ We are in fact in the presence here of a very distinctive conception of time, which is directly connected to the conception of history. Time in the Bible is not time by human standards. Time belongs only to Yahweh. The word for time in Hebrew, *olam*, is furthermore no different from the word for eternity. (The Septuagint first translated *olam* as “eternity” thereby creating an opposition between time and eternity that does not exist in Hebrew. Chouraqui’s translation uses the more correct word “perenniality.”) On the other hand, Hebrew has no present tense and verbs only have two basic clauses: perfect and imperfect. In the Pentateuch the word *quadosch*, “holy” appears first as a description of the “seventh day,” which God chose as his day; and in the Ten Commandments the only two positive commandments are related to time: “You will

remember the day of the Sabbath and make it holy" (weekly rhythm) and "Honor Your Mother and Your Father, so that you may extend your days" (rhythm of the generations). Holiness in time thereby takes precedence over all others; holiness in space appears only at the moment the Hebrews are commanded to build a Tabernacle, which will be consecrated by Moses (Numbers 7:1). In classic European tradition, to the contrary, space is such a primordial assumption that we often conceive of time spatially.² For example, we speak about a "space of time." In the Bible, the Hebrew expression generally translated as the "kingdom of God" ("time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near," Mark 1:15), an expression with a spatial resonance, in fact means to say "reign of God," an expression with temporal resonance. We also tend to give spatial proportions to our conception of eternity, imagining it as something "infinitely vast." Let's only bring up as reminders the desire for the conquest of space, which from the Age of Discovery to that of *Star Wars*, has not ceased to move us! It is this tendency to "spatialize" time that has led Europe, after its conversion to Christianity, to reinterpret the notion of linear duration into a form that makes a clear-cut, almost palpable distinction between present, past, and future, whereas the Hebrew verb, which distinguishes only between completeness and incompleteness, consistently tends—if we accept Max Müller's contention that language is a crystallized philosophy—to qualify time, not from the human perspective but from that of God, which his "nature" necessarily places above historic time.

Judeo-Christianity therefore entirely reverses the pagan problematic. Whereas this latter tends to believe that the world is eternal, while gods, like men, are not, Judeo-Christian monotheism asserts that God is eternal, but the world began and will end. These differences of sensibility are explicable by their backgrounds. As Gilbert Durand notes in his commentary on Spengler, "far from being an *a priori* form of sensibility on the same plane as space, time is the *antimony of space*. The true intuition of time is that of a direction, a meaning."³ To the contrary, in space nothing is predetermined in advance about the forms that will be created there. Here everything is much more directly dependent upon man. Asserting the primacy of space is, let me repeat, indirectly exalting man's power. Also, behind the opposition of time and space emerges another that is equally fundamental, between the time-eternity over which Yahweh rules and

human time, which is a specifically *historical* time. This opposition is the classic one from Antiquity between *intensity* and *duration*. Unable to master time by very reason of his own finite existence, pagan man masters it through the intensity of his actions—and by the resulting "intensity" of the constructions specific to it. This seems to be what Nietzsche was alluding to in a famous passage from *The Antichrist* in which he recalls what Christianity, the "vampire" of the *imperium romanum*, had contributed to the undoing of the Romans' magnificent creation: "the tremendous deed of the Romans in clearing the ground for a great culture *which could take its time* was undone overnight by Christianity."⁴ The desire for *creation* flows logically out of this desire for intensity, as do the desire for form and the desire for style. By all evidence, the Bible's choice is duration; furthermore, the intensity of human actions tries, in the strict sense, the "patience" of Yahweh.

We find here the confrontation between a purely linear conception of time and a cyclical or "spherical" conception, which accepts, among other things, the Eternal Return of the Same. There is no possibility of return in Judeo-Christian monotheism: history cannot turn back on itself; it is *going* somewhere—toward a never seen event which will be its culmination and its end. Or rather, if there is a "return," it is on a whole different level: the end of history will be the equivalent of a return to the state that existed before history, but this "return" will be an *absolute* return. It will not be one return among others, an eternal dialectical movement of always starting over, but the radical affirmation, the sign of an absolute end of time, the reabsorption of human history called upon to close itself like a parenthetical expression.

On the other hand, there is no spatial or geographical return either. Lévinas hit the nail on the head when he wrote: "To the myth of Ulysses returning to Ithaca, we seek to oppose the history of Abraham leaving his native land forever for one still unknown and forbidding his servant from even bringing his son back to this departure point." In the Bible, one must never *go back*; one must *leave*. To leave the city—Ur, Pithom, Babylon, which are human undertakings and places of perdition (but also subsequently places of redemption: it was in the cities that new-born Christianity made its most spectacular progress)—and go toward the Promised Land. "The Jewish destiny," declares Shmuel Trigano, "is to always be leaving Ur in Chaldea for Eretz-Israel."⁵ In fact the arrival point is all that matters, a point determined (in

the same way as the arrival point of history) by the "promise" of the Covenant and not the point of *origin*. Eretz-Israel is not a point of origin. It is not where the men of the Bible were engendered. Before being conquered, Eretz-Israel was a gift land, attributed and *promised* by Yahweh. Pagan man feels the *place* of his birth through its relation to his ancestral lineage. He has a "mother-country." In biblical monotheism, to the contrary, there is no native land; there is only a final land, the land of destination that does not derive from any founding myth but clearly from a finality. Singularly enough this finality is more temporal than spatial, as its appropriation constitutes a prerequisite for the advent of Messianic Times. The land of Israel was promised twice: first to Moses by Yahweh (Exodus 6: 8, 23:20-33) when it still belonged to the Hittites, Amorites, and Canaanites, then during the time of the prophets. ("I am going to take the Israelites from among all the nations where they have gone. I am going to gather them from all directions and reunite them on their ground. I will make them one nation in the land, in the mountains of Israel," Ezekiel 37:21-22). It is still promised much in the same way a fiancée was once "promised" to a man. In fact Eretz-Israel constitutes the fiancée, the future wife of the Hebrews. The Bible develops this nuptial symbolism at length. The law of the Sinai constitutes the *ketuba*, the marriage contract.⁶ The people of Israel are not children of a land; they are the sons of Yahweh, in a filial relationship whose ambiguous nature I have attempted to describe earlier. It is not on the land of Israel, by birth and heritage, that this people was formed, but in Egypt and in the desert, through a moral and religious act. Eretz-Israel is a fiancée, a wife, but she cannot become a mother—one of those *earth mothers* worshiped by the "idolatrous." It is a land that was made natal only through contractual proxy; it is a "native land that owes nothing to birth."⁷ Hence the entire theology of exile and "return" (in the limits I have indicated), combined with that of silence and the word. It is also found, perhaps further away and repeated, in the Freudian Oedipal theory that views repression of an "unresolved" attachment to the mother as the source of neurosis—just as the prophets made persistent attachment to the earth mother a source of "idolatry."

This comparison can nonetheless be interpreted in different ways.

In Genesis, one of Cain's characteristic features was his desire

for *boundaries*. He wished to materialize his ownership. According to one *midrash*, if Cain killed Abel, it was because the latter did not want to respect a division of property that the two had agreed upon. Under the terms of this division, Cain had obtained this world and Abel the "future world." But Abel then argued that he had rights over this world too, because, strictly speaking, as the world had only one creator, it could not truly be divided. (In my opinion this makes Cain's wrath quite understandable!) Condemned to exile and having settled in the "land of Nod" (Genesis 4:16), Cain then makes the distinctively "pagan" choice of intensity versus duration, space versus time-eternity. By constructing a city, as we have seen, he was visibly seeking to lay the foundations of a kingdom or an empire—and this is where his "pride" resided. He transformed, as Eisenberg and Abecassis properly put it, "his temporal issue into a spatial one."⁸

The attitude developed by the Bible with respect to "setting down roots" is therefore extremely ambiguous. A sedentary lifestyle, in opposition to a nomadic one, is given a negative value. Eisenberg and Abecassis go so far as to read in it a condemnation of patriotism as a "pagan sentiment based on man's physical relationship to the earth, identical to the filial relationship in which the child is determined genetically."⁹ "Freedom with respect to sedentary lifestyles is, perhaps, the human form of being in the world," Lévinas declares—which is only a half-truth, because "specifically human" freedom vis-à-vis a fixed dwelling cannot be construed as legitimizing the principle of rejecting *all* fixed dwellings.¹⁰ It is also curious to see how the Succoth feast, originally a typically agrarian feast (see Deuteronomy 16:13-16), subsequently became a nomadic one. Even after the formation of the kingdom of Israel and the settlement upon the Promised Land, the nomadic vocation continued to be embodied by the *gerim*, whose life is a long pilgrimage (*maggour*). It was from among them that were recruited, around 900 BC, the first sectarian Rekabites, when nomadism was regarded not as a simple life style but as an effective means of saving the Covenant's principles. It was also among the *gerim* that the Levites were found, a caste who following the return to Canaan defined themselves as the "landless tribe" and continued to pursue an ideal that appears to have triumphed following the destruction of the second Temple. "By refusing the land," states André Neher, "the Levites also refused Canaanite civilization, which was essentially sedentary. The eco-

nomic life of Canaan was based on agriculture and commerce ... Now the Levites would not *Canaanize* themselves at all. Alone among the Hebrews, they did not devote themselves to farming, as did other Hebrews upon entering Canaan, or to commerce, as other Hebrews did later, when the richest parts of the land had fallen under their control."¹¹

The universe is thus conceived in the Bible as a world with no spatial boundaries but limited in time, whereas in paganism it is considered to be limitless in time but a place where man has the duty to draw spatial boundaries. Frontiers established in space establish man as the master of the space he occupies. Boundaries in time, absolute caesuras, only show what distinguishes man from God. In the one case there are established roots and specificity, in the other, the vocation to universalism and deterritorialization. "Settlement within a country, attachment to a place, without which the world would become insignificant and hardly exist," writes Lévinas again, "is the very scission of humanity into autochthones and foreigners."¹² In principle, though, this "scission" does not imply either rejection or scorn. Rather it forms the primary condition for the maintenance and respect of collective differences. It is not so certain that the same holds true for the ideal of the abolition of frontiers, which Thorlief Boman regards, according to the Bible, as the normal state if not final destination of the world.¹³ An ideal which is very close, in any case, to the very contemporary apologia of the "man with the soles of the wind," the Deleuzo-Guattarist "rhizome" (as opposed to the "root") and of universal nomadism, in a world where the non-place of the desert's anonymity tends to be replaced by the non-place of the urban environment's anonymity—whereas the "world" cities are no longer the places where history works toward its fulfillment but rather the site of its simulacrum and annihilation.

André Chouraqui speaks of a "verbal world." It is the *activity* (of man) that produces *intensity*, but it is the *word* (of Yahweh) that acts upon *duration*. In the Bible, the word is the decisive reality of the world of lived experience. In the extreme case, the world is commingled with the word that created it; in Hebrew the same word, *davar*, can mean either object or word. In paganism the decisive reality of the world of lived experience is the result of action. Goethe's phrase: "In the beginning there was the action," responds to the phrase in the Scriptures: "In the beginning there was the word." In the face of the symphony that reigns in pagan

religions, the Bible therefore poses silence as the metaphysical form of the cosmos (André Neher), silence where only the *logos*—the word of Yahweh—resonates, although in the final instance, the being of that particular being can only be identical to silence as well.

The Judeo-Christian world is a world that has been issued from the word. This is why the *name* of Yahweh, an unspeakable name, is declared all-powerful (see Psalms 8). It is the word that creates the bond between created being and non-created being. One reads in Genesis: "God said, 'Let there be Light'" (1:3). One enters the dynamic phase of the creation through the intermediary of the *logos*. In the Bible, "to do" is linked with "to say," with what is expressed and heard, with what is uttered and understood from the onset. Spoken or written, the word is Revelation: a sublimation of verbal-motor behavior. When the Elohim "take" Adam to place him in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15), this taking is effectuated by the word. This is also the failure of Cain's "words" to Abel (Genesis 4:8) which prompted the fratricide. And likewise, finally, the fact that the world was created by ten words (in the rabbinical tradition the phrase: "In the beginning" is considered as one word, the tenth, which is added to the other nine); it is through ten "words," ten "commandments" that God gave Moses his Law on Mount Sinai.

Iconoclasm and Beauty

The substance time-eternity cannot be seen; only what exists in space can be seen. "In the beginning was the Word," also means in the beginning was what could be heard and not seen. Yahweh, by nature, is incapable of being depicted. As a super-ego, he should not have an image, for he is the super-ego of all "egos." He is beyond all the images and forms that arise from this world. The absolute, in essence, is not confinable within the limits that all representations necessarily possess. Representing God is tantamount to restraining him and reducing him to merely one of the forms he has created. In biblical monotheism, not only are the things of this world no longer seen as divine, but God himself cannot be regarded as an object anymore. Yahweh cannot be represented in the strict sense of the word because he has presented himself once and for all; he is present for all eternity. To see him is to die. Moses himself did not see the Lord on Mount Sinai; he *heard* him. The seraphim of whom Isaiah speaks (6:2) hide their faces before the Eternal One. Moses does the same before the "burning bush": "Then Moses veiled his face for he feared to set his eyes upon God" (Exodus 3:6). When Yahweh accompanied the Hebrews in the desert a Cloud hid him from their sight. The Ark of the Covenant is merely an empty throne. And contrary to what is often thought, the sin of the worshippers of the Golden Calf was not so much the desire to change gods but the desire to render the invisible visible. (This provides a precise explication for the attitude of Aaron, who built an altar before the statue of the Golden Calf and said: "Tomorrow, Yahweh's feast," Exodus 32:5). We know the importance of the desert in biblical symbolism, the desert that erases all representations and rejects them on behalf of the invisible and the uniform. Yahweh's believer must consent to transforming the imagination into a desert, which implies a ban on all representation.

Outside of the affirmation of his existence, one has no recourse therefore to *any positive attribute* to designate or characterize Yahweh. Those provided by the Bible are anthropomorphic attributes that obviously should not be taken literally. Their source, as noted earlier, is the need for the Bible to speak in the

language of man. This will lead Maimonides to say, "The negative attributes are what must be used to guide the mind to what one should believe about God."¹ This doctrine of negative attributes is a foreshadowing of the "critical theory" of the Frankfurt School.

Not only are depictions of Yahweh forbidden, but images of all worldly things are as well, starting with man of course, as he was created in God's "image." These are the instructions concerning iconoclasm first expressed in Exodus: "You will make no graven image, nothing that resembles what is in the heavens on high, or on the earth, or in the waters beneath the earth" (20:4); then in Deuteronomy: "Do not become corrupt and make a graven image for yourself of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, or like any animal on earth, or bird that flies in the air, or lizard that crawls along the ground, or fish that swims in the waters below" (4:16-18).

It is difficult to know exactly how far back these prohibitions were made. It seems they were first specifically aimed at representations of the Deity and were extended later to all imagistic representations. Over the centuries they were received and interpreted in more or less strict fashion. The Talmudic discussion deals mainly with the term "representation."² It is generally felt today that only the integral representation, i.e., the three-dimensional representation of the entire human body, is covered by this ban. Standing statuary is prohibited but, on the other hand, busts, portraits, and photographs are not.³ Certain authors, mystics primarily, held a much more radical view. Whatever the case may be, it is not hard to read a clear *anti-aesthetic bias* in biblical iconoclasm. In Genesis, moreover, Naama, sister of Tubal-Cain the smith, bears a name that means "beauty." In traditional Judaism, art essentially remains in the liturgical domain; the accent is placed not on God but on his interventions in history. "The great men of the Old Testament religion," writes Thorlief Boman, "are depicted not because of their piety or heroism, but because God has acted through them, or spoke through their actions, or, like Ezra, because he read the word of God."

Christian art, which is responsible for so many admirable works in this regard, began as a heresy. "Transported to an art-loving people, Christianity became a religion that was more artistic than it would have been if it had remained in the hands of the Judeo-Christians."⁴ However, this was only as a result of a long, slow evolution. In the Christianity of the first centuries, icono-

clasm was the rule; the Mosaic prohibition against imagistic representations was widely observed. The idea of Jesus' great ugliness was equally widespread (see Tertullian, Origen, Clement of Alexandria). Eusebius of Caesarea, in his letter to Empress Constantia, rejected as utterly impious the desire to provide portraits of Christ. Early Christianity crystallized its rejection of images in its disdain for "pagan" idols. The first Christians could only speak sarcastically when they mentioned the statues of the gods. To the question: "Should we make statues and images of God?" they all responded in the negative.⁵ It was only when the Church, following the compromise of Constantine, began to become more pagan that the birth and development of a Christian iconography was seen, an iconography destined to bloom in extraordinary fashion starting in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. However, traces of iconoclasm can still be found in Byzantine ritual and even in Protestantism. The Eastern churches long remained enclosed within an impersonal and hieratic imagery.

Iconoclasm is also present in Islam, where the rare Arabic Muslim thinkers who concerned themselves with aesthetics practically only envisioned art in its abstract form⁶. The iconographic aspiration, as shown by Henry Corbin, was most often transferred to the "imaginal." It was especially in the *hadiths* that the anti-figurative attitude was expressed, generally in the form of curses: the "image makers" would be punished on the last day by God's judgment, who would impose upon them the impossible task of resuscitating their works! Only God (*Asma Allah al-Husna*) is *al-Moussawwir*, meaning the "Fashioner of Forms." Here again is a case of not competing with God in his personal domain. Jean-Paul Charnay rightly describes Islam as an "abstract religion that represses even simply aesthetic anthropomorphic and zoomorphic symbols and representations by its refusal of idolatry."⁷

The biblical refusal of the image can be read on several levels. Its primary role is tied to the fight against "idolatry." In its strict sense, the "idol," *eidolon*, is what can be seen—that which acquires a status of existence through its created visual representation. To represent God by a form—any form—is to necessarily represent him as that very form. Now God, who has created all forms, cannot be reduced to a particular form. Restricting him to a given form amounts to reducing the universal to a particular, to treating *the being* as if he were no more than a *being*, an inconceivable and

blasphemous attitude from the biblical perspective. Between figurative art and abstract art, only the second is truly in conformity with the instructions of Moses, which engenders a certain underdevelopment of the form's meaning.⁸ Yaacov Agam goes so far as to say: Not only is it impossible for figurative art to be Jewish, it is preeminently anti-Jewish, forbidden by the Bible.⁹ Chaim Potok's novel *My Name is Asher Lev* features a child who transgresses the biblical law concerning the non-representation of the image.¹⁰

The emptying of the human representation, on the other hand, goes hand in hand with the abandonment of human particularity and diversity—with the emptying of human norms as they express this particularity and diversity, *for they are themselves images*. Furthermore, it is sufficient to look at the role they play in Christian art. The artists naturally represented God with features familiar to them. They gave him the ideal physical configuration *implied* by their own heritage and kinship connections, as it was unthinkable to them that God could have the appearance of something Completely Other. Every representation refers to a particularity and *reflects* a particularity; every representation forms a mirror by and in which a *type* exalts itself and becomes sublime. Only non-representation can "reflect" the invisible and unnameable. Only nothingness can echo nothingness. This is why, from the biblical perspective, which interprets this nothingness, this absolute *void*, to be absolute plenitude, only the *absence of form* can express the *presence of all forms*—in the same way that only man's silence can express the words of God. This is the ideal of the empty temple. An ideal that foreshadows messianic times, in which specific differences will be abolished, in which all men will be "equals" among equals, in which nothing will no longer be able to be compared to anything. "The messianic world," specifies the *Zohar*, "will be a world without images, in which there will no longer be any comparison possible between the image and what it represents." Non-figuration thereby brings us back to flat rationality. Reality is no longer perceived, sensed, and represented as such. It is no longer drawn from sensibility and aesthetics but from pure intellect and morality—an intellect that is itself operating on the basis of an abstraction where signs are no longer exchanged against the real but restricted to exchange among themselves. Reality should not be *seen* and *constructed* based on the perception we have of it; it must be *understood*.

Extensions and contemporary points of comparison with the Mosaic ban on representation have often been sought, for example, with regard to abstract art, whose birth and development coincide metaphorically with that of structural linguistics and the internationalist ideal of the removal of borders, experienced in concrete terms. In his essay *The Iconoclasts*, Jean-Joseph Goux raises the question: "Wouldn't it be the ancestral proximity to the *iconoclast exigency* that puts Marx and Freud, two faithless but indubitable sons of Judaism, in the position of perceiving all representation as imaginary and everything imaginary as ignorance?" "This is where," he adds, "the Jewishness of Marx and Freud—which has only been explained anecdotally up to now—will no doubt find a true basis."¹¹ He then concludes, "So this would not be by chance, but through the effect of digging into a common ground ... that we would encounter today—whether through abstract art, utopia, standards, the differences between the sexes—the question of the temple with no images." Certain ideological phenomena such as abstract painting, Freudianism, or Marxism could thereby be interpreted as a resurgence of a very old approach perpetually going from the universal to the particular, from the unity of the Law to the diversity of the signs. "An entire aspect of Western modernity," writes Goux again, "finds resonance with the old iconoclast exigency which makes up the base of an ancient divergence, and from this point forward, thinkers of Judaic filiation actively intervene at the tip of this modernity to mark out where it is going, not truly in opposition to it but rather in advance of it."¹²

"To be Jewish," Josy Eisenberg thinks, "is to have a series of discourses by God and about God readily available, in order to know the invisible, incorporeal, intangible God. It is to search for God through a language for which the entire history of Israel is only a sonorous echo."¹³ And again: "One can easily define the Jewish faith in the same terms used by Lacan to describe the unconscious, and say that it is structured like a language. This language is furthermore not without a relationship to the unconscious, since all Jewish exegesis consists of seeking, beyond what has been said, for what the biblical discourse leaves unsaid."¹⁴ This opinion seems to closely echo what Jean-Joseph Goux says. When the depicted representation is entirely replaced by the logos that absolutely predated it, it is clearly no longer commentary but a substitute. So it should be no surprise to see flourishing, in the

field of contemporary ideological discourse—at the same time Judeo-Christian values are depositing themselves there in secular forms like sediment—an entire thematic of non-representation and the search for what is left unsaid, for which structural linguistics, not purely descriptive history, abstract art, and the thousand and one theories of the unconscious constitute so many epiphenomena. In each case, it is a question of *describing* without *depicting*, of considering the world in some way as a coded ensemble whose *key* lies *beyond visible appearances*; of considering it, not as the site of forms to create, but a mystery to interpret, a puzzle to put back together, in which man, taken not as *creator* but as an *intermediary*, has the task of "discovering" a hidden meaning, a necessarily unique meaning that predates his very existence. The idea of the world-as-cryptogram and that of an absolute signifier allowing it to be deciphered (who might be Yahweh, but could just as well be the unconscious or the class struggle) then functions as diastole and systole. If the world is in fact *something other than what it is*, there necessarily must be a universal key, which cannot be ignored and exceeded, which allows one to know what part of the world is being and what is not. Man no longer acts; he is acted upon as the "decipherer of hieroglyphs." "For just as Freud gave himself the task of finding a meaning to dreams, which he compared to hieroglyphs, Marx, for his part, took on the goal, according to his own terms, of deciphering the hieroglyph of value."¹⁵ And this is why Freud interpreted dreams by following Joseph's example with the pharaoh precisely (Genesis 41:1-43), or even that of Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4: 16-24).

By pronouncing a general, universal law located beyond particular *events* or forms of *behavior*, Marx and Freud emerged from the Egypt of hieroglyphs—hieroglyphs of dreams or hieroglyphs of production—and left the foreign, specifically pagan land of particular meanings and, with a unique operating sign, reduced them and brought them back to an equally unique signifier. Freud's aesthetic conceptions in this regard, studied by Goux, are notable:

Freud began to say that the basis of an artwork attracted him more than the qualities of its form or technique. What stirred his emotions was the artist's *intention*. He *felt* only what he could *understand*. He tried to translate the artist's intention into *words*; he did not play with the *form*

but with the *depths*, not with the *physical aspects* but with its *meaning*. He only played if it did not disorient his *intelligence*. This is why he did not like music ... Far from stopping at what distinguished the art work and seriously considering the tangible enigma it represents, he sees it only as an opportunity to interpret a meaning, to grasp a depth that would be communicated by artists through their work. It is only *transmitted ideas*, *signified intentions*, that interest him.¹⁶

A remarkable passage that expresses many of the oppositions described here earlier between the felt and the understood, soul and mind, form and depths, image and concepts, style and meaning.

We know the kind of attraction the figure of Moses exerted on Freud. Now it was precisely Moses who brought down from Mount Sinai the tablets of the Law and with them the iconoclast prohibition. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud himself said that the ban on representation implies the relegation of sensorial perception into the background with respect to the abstract idea, a triumph of the intellect over the senses and the renunciation of the passions. Likewise, with Lévi-Strauss, the theory of the prohibition against incest as a universal given characteristic of the human species—a theory directly associated to the Freudian Oedipal theory, for which it is a kind of ethnographical and rationalizing reinterpretation—comes, on the one hand, from a renewed search for a general law that exists outside all particulars and, primarily on the other, interprets this general law as a rupture with the natural world, to the extent that the ban on incest, which most often means a prohibition on incest with the mother, retraces the old “anti-idolatrous” ban directed against the family-like relationship between man and the earth-mother. (In the biblical thematic, “idolatry” is fornication, and more specifically incestuous fornication, because in paganism man was *engendered* by the being who is the world whereas in the Bible he was *created* by Yahweh.) This is why, considering the general meaning of this data, Goux concludes, “It appears to me that the ban on depicting the deity is a radical form of the prohibition against incest, its Judaic form, and that Moses’ dreadful display of wrath toward the idolatrous is suggestive of the threat of castration that accompanies the forbidden love of the mother.”¹⁷

A connection could be drawn between the *secular* ascent of biblical values in today’s world and the depreciation of beauty that characterizes it on so many levels. Beauty today is often depreciated as “monotonous” or denounced as a “constraining” norm, when it is not simply reduced to a pure spectacle accompanied by a rehabilitation or even exaltation of deformity and ugliness, as can be seen in many areas. The degeneration of beauty and the promotion of ugliness, tied to the flowering of intellectualism, could certainly be part of the *Umwertung* stigmatized by Nietzsche.

The contrast with paganism is striking. In the Bible, the beautiful is not necessarily good and ugly is not necessarily evil. It can even happen—and this is what the *Umwertung* consists of—that good may be good precisely because of its ugliness (just as the “superb” is weak in proportion to its prowess), and that evil is handsome precisely because it is evil. Lucifer, as everyone knows, is an angel glowing with light. The devil often adorns himself with all the paraphernalia of seduction, whereas the arms of Yahweh, says Isaiah, have grown “like a root in arid soil, without beauty or comeliness to attract our eyes” (53:2). In paganism, on the contrary, good cannot be separated from beauty, and this is normal, because the good is form, the consummate forms of worldly things. Consequently, art cannot be separated from religion. Art is *sacred*. Not only can the gods be represented, but art is how they can be represented, and insofar as men perpetually assure them of re-presentation, they have a full status of existence. All European spirituality is based on representation as *mediation* between the visible and the invisible, on representation by means of depicted figures and signs exchanged against a meaning intimately tied to the real, the very *guarantee* of this incessant and mutual conversion of the sign and meaning. Beauty is the *visible* sign of what is good, ugliness the visible sign of not only what is deformed or spoiled but bad.¹⁸ For the ancient Greeks, as shown by Karl Kerényi, solemnity is inseparable from a visual, tangible representation.¹⁹ It is through the fusion of the aesthetic and the sacred that the religious sentiment attains its peak. “Among the Greeks,” says Hegel, as well, “art was the highest form in which people could represent the gods and realize their truth.”²⁰ All beings, men and gods, reveal themselves in tangible fashion by their actions. Plato himself does not describe the empire of Atlantis or the ideal city of the *Republic* in terms that are any different from those used

by Homer to depict Ulysses' court in Ithaca or the walls of Troy.

Like Wagner, Nietzsche gave aesthetics the highest standing: "The dramatic art work is likely to replace religion."²¹ He adds, "that we are already the images and aesthetic projections of the true creator of this world of art, and as works of art we attain a higher dignity, for existence and the world are only justified eternally to the extent they are aesthetic phenomena."²² It is from this criterion, moreover, that Nietzsche, interpreting Christian art as an unconscious heresy inside Christianity itself, condemns "the Christian teaching, which is and wants to be *only* moral and which relegates art, *every* art, to the realm of *lies*; with its absolute standards, beginning with the truthfulness of God, it negates, judges, and damns art. Behind this mode of thought and valuation, which must be hostile to art if it is at all genuine," he adds, "I never failed to sense a *hostility to life*—a furious, vengeful antipathy to life itself."²³

Walter F. Otto labels myth as the "true word," meaning the word that echoes the truth of the world. Henry Corbin defines it as "imaginal language," for the imagination constructs itself from *images*. In paganism, the foundational myth, the archetype, quite naturally sits in opposition to the Law. *Mythos* against *Logos*. From the start, the pagan sacred is connected to visible, tangible reality, even and especially when it idealizes it. A tree, a hill, a waterway can be sacred; they *are* the sacred. Myth is not a byproduct of a linear history hypostatized by moralism. *Myth makes history*; it is what, writes Gilbert Durand, "goes before history, affirms it and legitimizes it"; "without mythical structures, no historical intelligence is possible."²⁴ This is why modern theoreticians of depth psychology, namely Jung and his successors, when they pour over "primordial works" and "archetypes"—all notions deemed repugnant by Will Herberg and described by him as close to the "pagan abominations of Canaan"²⁵—are also working as *historians*. They are teaching us about the roots of our own history, as inseparable from a certain number of forms created by man. Paganism leads us into the marvels of sacred art; with biblical monotheism we are given an empty temple.

Chapter Fifteen

The Universal and the Particular

As we have just seen, iconoclasm finds its justification in a conception of the world in which the absolute is necessarily superior and provides the *determining* factor for specific representations. This is because the biblical approach generally posits a relationship of the universal and the particular opposite that of paganism. The biblical approach goes from the universal to the particular; it deduces what we *can* know of the particular from what we *should* know of the absolute. In Greek thought, on the contrary, although the universal also plays an important role, the approach is the opposite. The conceptualization of the universal is based on the abstraction and successive generalization of a plurality of concrete particulars. In the Bible what is first provided are totalities, categories, and *classes*, for which individual things or people are only manifestations. In his essay on biblical thought and Greek thought, Thorlief Boman writes:

The concepts of the Israelites are not abstractions drawn from particular concrete things or appearances, but real *totalities* that include these particular things within themselves. The notion of the universal *rules* Israelite thought. When, for example, the Israelite thinks of a Moabite, he does not think of an individual person who, among other qualities, would have that of being descended from Moab. The characteristic qualities of the Moabite flow from a type, which is formed from the sum total of Moabite traits. This type is called mo'ab and the individual Moabite is its embodiment.¹

Biblical thought is an all-encompassing, totalizing thought that proceeds from the general to the particular based on *deduction* from a *revealed absolute* and not by induction based on lived experience. In this system, the particular is not at all the basis from which a general concept is inferred; it is the projection of the *idea* of generality. Individuals and things are then themselves only projections, "realizations" of universal essences and ideas. Whereas in the discourse of paganism the particular can attain the universal

by virtue of its very particularity—Goethe is universal by first being German; Cervantes is universal by being primarily Spanish—in the discourse of the Bible, it is a universal that provides a statutory basis for every particular. In the first case, the general defines itself through the particular; in the second, it is the particular that is defined by the general.

It is clear that through its own dynamic the universalizing approach of the Bible leans (or risks leaning) toward reducing diversity, whereas the opposite approach makes diversity the foundation of all knowledge. Max Weber also recognizes, following others, that “when one begins from lived experience, one ends up with polytheism.”²² Moreover, the approach that goes from the general to the particular is the equivalent of discovering a meaning in things that is postulated in advance, whereas the approach that goes from the particular to the general is the equivalent of *bestowing* meaning. It is therefore only through this latter approach that man can truly establish himself as one who gives meaning. Hence Nietzsche’s remark, according to which, “the value of a people, or a man, can only be measured by his power to place on his experience the seal of eternity.”²³

The Hebrew language, which does not always make a very clear-cut distinction between word classes, reflects this tendency in its abundance of “collective” words. For example, *adham* means “man” as well as “humanity”; *ish* “a man” as well as “men”; *rekheh* “a chariot” as well as “several chariots.” The root *mlk*, implying the idea of royalty, can also mean “king,” “kingdom,” “ruling as a king,” etc. “*Ets*,” adds Boman, “does not designate the concept of ‘wood,’ but rather the Platonic Idea of wood, every real thing having the property of wood ... ‘*ets* is the veritable given and things of wood are only concrete manifestations.”²⁴ The abstract notions naturally present themselves as absolutes. And it is probably because things have an intrinsic meaning that the Bible, appealing to “natural” symbols that are immediately comprehensible to everyone, speaks so often in metaphor—and even by metaphors that contradict each other (“He straddled a cherubim and flew, he soared on the wings of the wind,” Psalms 18:11).

The notion of humanity is one of these “collective” words that can be envisioned in two different ways. So when humanity is taken from the particular toward the general it becomes the entirety of every individual member of the species *Homo sapiens*, of all the particular people existing on the face of the earth at a given

moment. Therefore, to take humanity from the general to the particular makes it an *idea* (in the Platonic sense of the word) and the essential characteristic of all men is that they share in that idea that *specifies* them. Just as every Moabite represents an incarnation of the “Moabite,” every human is an embodiment of “humanity.” (Every theory creating an abstraction of man, “man in and of himself” as the center of its reflection, is based on this last acceptance, for example, today’s ideology of the rights of man.)

The same holds true for the biblical conception of the Law. The Torah distinguishes itself by its intangible nature. It is, in its unvarying character, the always self-identical reflection of the will of a unique God, the sole master of time-eternity. In this sense, it is always radically opposed to the ever contingent law that paganism proposes. The Latin *lex*, the Greek *nomos*, “which are of human workmanship throughout, are open to revisions and cancellation,”²⁵ are also, by nature, reconcilable with the idea of a plurality of norms. The word *nomos*—practically absent in Homer, who to speak about justice resorted to *themis* or *dike* instead—originally meant “to share in lots,” and subsequently “to receive what one deserves.” In the classic sense, the *nomos* means the mores and rules specific to a city—which is precisely what distinguishes it from other cities. “The proclamations of the Torah,” writes Jean-Louis Tristani, “imply a proclaimer who escapes man’s grasp, and this forbids him to envision any possible gap between the enounced and the enunciation of the Torah. The enunciations of the *true* law, *lex* or *nomos*, on the other hand, always have a point of reference with the actual conditions of their enunciation. This concept of the law results from another theology, Indo-European theology.”²⁶

The way biblical thought operates on this point has some equivalents in the West. One of the first is the Socratic or Platonic method: the Platonic idea also begins with the general basis to arrive at the particular. The same approach can be found today in Marxist thought, which is governed by abstract entities, mainly *classes*, from which particular characteristics are deduced. With Marx, it is not the quality of men that defines the class but the class that defines the quality of men. Individual identity is based on one’s class and the class acts through the individual. (Here again man is acted through by an outside agency.) “At the base of Marxism,” writes François Georges, “there is the idea that the proletariat exists outside the proletarians, and in sum beyond

them, as an essence.”⁷⁷ Things work quite differently in traditional European thought, however. This is one of the reasons why, within Christianity, the worship of saints, with its characteristic imitation of polytheism, has enjoyed such popularity. Referring to the relatively later age when the Scandinavian sagas were set down in writing, Régis Boyer writes: “The idea of an abstract and impersonal God could only be alien to a people so strongly concerned with interpersonal relationships.”⁷⁸

Chapter Sixteen

Monotheism and Polytheism

Biblical monotheism was born of a schism: it was engendered by the separation and denial of the civilization predominant around 1,800 BC in Ur by a group of nomadic tribes that oral tradition places under Abraham’s leadership. From this separation, from this dissidence, the beginning of a new creed would be fashioned, characterized by a radical break: *dualist monotheism*. This creed distinguished, it seems, Israel from all other peoples of the world. As shown by the ceaseless war waged against Canaanite and Moabite forms of worship, dualist monotheism was the specific property of the Hebrews. Contrary to Renan’s claim—“Arabia has always been the boulevard of monotheism”—the Near East during the second millennium before Christ in no way displayed any general tendency toward monotheism. No trace of it is to be found among the Sumerians, the Assyrians, the Canaanites, the pre-Islamic Arabs, or the Syrians. Even the religion of Aten, the Egyptian solar disk, that has prompted so many familiar commentaries, notably Freud’s, is not a dualistic monotheism, but rather the end result of a process begun during the reign of Tuthmosis IV, which allowed the pharaoh to free himself of the Theban clergy’s tutelage.

Jewish tradition postulates an original monotheism that gradually disappeared because of man’s sins. (It is this idea of an earlier monotheism that provides the basis for the Bible’s prohibition of “idolatry” for the entire human race.) Specialists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries long argued over whether this theory had some basis in reality: whether the gods of paganism resulted from some sort of decadence and a decline in religious feeling, or if, on the contrary, humanity had gradually evolved from polytheism to monotheism. This discussion, somewhat irrelevant today, in fact presents two equally false theories, to the extent that both postulate a gradual unilinear evolution for all humanity.¹ In reality the monotheist/polytheist relationship is not a diachronic, chronological one, but rather the relationship of two different *mentalities*. Yahweh is neither the fallen father nor the culmination or survivor of “mythic gods.” Furthermore, the term God, which emerged from European Paganism, is an imperfect

label; it was the Septuagint which, in order to be understood by Greeks and Hellenized Jews, gave the deity of Sinai, YHWH (Yahweh) Elohim, the name *theos/dues*, which up to that time strictly speaking designated only the gods of paganism.

Although perfectly original, biblical monotheism was not formed in a day. Alfred Loisy said, "Yahweh is only God of Israel since, or if preferable, because of the Exodus."² Biblical monotheism does not in fact constitute a finished system until the prophecies of the exile era. It is far from displaying this character during the time of the patriarchs and Moses. The first literary collections of the Bible themselves only date from 1,000 BC, in other words from the time of the establishment of kingship among the Hebrews. The "Jehovist" document of Judean origin would have been written toward the end of the tenth century under Solomon; the "Elohism" (or "sacerdotal") document would have been written around 800–750 BC. The fusion of the two narratives would have taken place during the time of the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Contrary to Renan, the Hebrews had a mythology, which they apparently had great trouble undoing. These polytheistic remnants are especially visible in the Jehovist narrative. Genesis itself opens with a plural, *Elohim*, and many of its elements appear to have been borrowed from the mythologies and cosmogonies of the Near East (the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Mesopotamian, Babylonian, Sumerian, Akkadian tales, and so on). One might see traces of ancient deities in the "cherubim" (*k'ruvim*, a word derived from the Akkadian *karibu*, "intercessor") and the "seraphim" who the Bible says guarded the Garden of Eden and held up the Lord's throne in Ezekiel's vision, among other things. These would be deities that may have originated in the beliefs of surrounding peoples. Left to themselves, the Hebrews depicted the deity in the form of a calf (Exodus 32:4, 1 Kings 12:28), no doubt under the influence of certain fertility cults.

The fundamental monotheist assertion is contained in Exodus when Yahweh tells Moses: "You will not bow down before another God, for I am a jealous God. Do not form alliances with the inhabitants of other countries, for when they prostitute themselves to their Gods and offer them sacrifices, they will invite you and you will eat of their sacrifice, you will take their daughters for your sons, their daughters prostitute themselves to their gods and will prostitute your sons to their gods" (34:14–16). (With respect to Yahweh's "jealousy," Nietzsche observed, "People think them-

selves disinterested in love because they crave the advantage of another being, often against their own advantage. But this being in exchange wants to possess them. Even God is no exception here ... he becomes terrible when his love is not returned.")³ However, while this passage confirms the *unique* nature of Yahweh, it does not assert the non-existence of other gods. This is the reason why many authors when referring to Moses prefer to speak of "affective monotheism" or "monolatry." Yahwehism before the conquest of Canaan, writes Raphael Patai, is "a sort of monolatry, tending toward ethnic monotheism."⁴ The famous verse from Deuteronomy: "Hear O Israel, Yahweh our God is the sole Yahweh" (6:4), which today constitutes the beginning of the schema, is interpreted by some to mean, "Hear O Israel: Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone." This formulation, in other words, "does not radically deny the existence of other gods. It is satisfied with simply proscribing their worship. It does not go beyond the level of the First Commandment. Like it, it is not advocating monotheism but monolatry."⁵ Loisy as well supports this hypothesis and even sees in "monolatry" a retreat with regard to polytheism, a retreat connected to the hypertrophy of a "feeling of national pride and religious fanaticism."⁶ The legislation from Mount Sinai does not clearly appear to be intended for all peoples; it remains only the charter of the Covenant contracted between Yahweh and his people. Yahweh himself does not deny the existence of other gods but is content to speak ill of them. How, in any case, could one be "jealous" of something that does not exist? Wouldn't his jealousy be the very proof of the existence of other gods? Deuteronomy proclaims: "Yahweh your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords" (10:17). Similar formulations can be found in later parts of the Bible: "Our God is greater than all the gods" (2 Chronicles 2:4); Yahweh is "a god of greatness, a king who surpasses all the gods" (Psalms 94:3); Yahweh is "more dreadful than all the gods" (Psalms 95:4); he is "the Most High among all the gods" (Psalms 96:9); he "will destroy all the gods of the land" (Zephaniah 2:11), and so forth. More than a true monotheism at the time of Moses, it would be more appropriate to speak of a monolatry or a henotheism, meaning a system in which one believes that only the God one invokes is all powerful.

It is in the second Isaiah or the Deutero-Isaiah (40–55) that Judeo-Christian monotheism reaches completion. Only Yahweh is God: "Before me, no god was formed, and after me there will

be no other. I am I, Yahweh, and there is no savior but me" (43:10–11). "There is no other but me; I am Yahweh, there is no other" (45:6). The other deities are but pure nothingness: "You are less than nothing and your works are less than nothing, and to choose you is an abomination" (41:24); "Here all together they are nothing; their works are nothing; their statues are wind and emptiness!" (41:29). Yahweh is the unique god (rather than the One god; the One is a finite form and Yahweh can only be infinite). The process has not attained completion, and perhaps this *total* affirmation on its own was enough to guide the writers of the Bible to retrospectively remake their history in the direction of the *unique*. "This history," writes Jean-Louis Tristani, "in fact conforms too closely with the needs of a monotheistic era to be honest. Whether it is Abraham's exodus from Ur in Chaldea or the Exodus of the Jewish slaves under Moses' leadership, these tales are woven with the thread of one ingenuous monotheistic darkness: one sole father of the human race, Adam (monogenicism); then Noah; one lone father of the Hebrew people, Abraham; one sole legislator, Moses; one sole God, Yahweh."⁷

After the death of Ezra, Judea was subjected to a century of Persian domination. We then see a certain evolution of the Hebraic religion under the influence of Zoroastrian dualism and a multitude of new deities. The Bible's dualism was clearly heightened by this. On the one hand, it was the time in which the problem of evil was posed with the greatest acuteness. The Book of Job, which was probably set down in writing between 300 and 250 BC, attempted to deal with this problem. On the other hand, the idea that demons and evil spirits existed was spreading. Hebraic angelology and demonology took on more precise form. These themes can be found in the pre-Rabbinic literature, then later in the aggadah.⁸ In the Targum, the Aramaic translation of the Bible, the words "goat" and "satyr" are rendered as *chedim*, "demons." In the Pirkei Aboth, a morality treatise incorporated into the Mishna, among the ten objects created on the eve of the first Sabbath, there is mention of the *mazzikin*, "maleficent spirits." (The dualistic tendency will be increased significantly in Christianity, which, on the other hand, will maintain a piety that remains relatively rooted in local forms of worship.)

Yahweh's unique nature excludes any comparison, any competition, at the same time that it attracts every aspect of human life by means of tropisms. Recognition of this unique nature is to

acknowledge that nothing can be compared to or incorporated into Yahweh, and because of that no worship can be offered to any other. From its onset, Judeo-Christianity has established itself as *mythless religion*, in other words as a religion shorn of what had until that time always *characterized* religion. (Hence, perhaps the accusation of atheism the Romans lodged against the Jews.) Myths reflect the world; they make the world sacred. Now the world, according to the Bible, must be made *non-sacred*. Nature should no longer be "animated" on earth; the gods should cease dwelling there and providing man a transfigured image of himself. What is most opposed to Judeo-Christian monotheism is veiled cosmic religiosity, the hidden religiosity of the universe. This is why the Bible condemns "natural" magic so vigorously. This is the magic that Odin, as we have already seen, used in the final stages of the foundational war, the magic whose resurgence Judeo-Christianity would ceaselessly denounce, right up through the period of the witch trials, as so many diabolical manifestations.⁹ "Judaism did not elevate the idols to a sublime state," writes Emmanuel Lévinas, "it demanded their destruction"¹⁰; it "disenchanted the world."¹¹ The transition from *mythos*—the myth that has no need to know itself as myth—to *logos*, notes Jean-Pierre Sironneau, already constitutes "a primary degradation of myth to the extent it includes its rationalization as well as its historicization ... This is when myth is lived as fiction, a beautiful story no doubt, but false history nonetheless. It is no longer a way of knowing, but an object of knowledge."¹² This sets off a process of desacralizing and disenchanting the world, an *Entzauberung* which in the space of a few centuries, following the secularization of religious ideologies, fueled a pure rationalism, a conception of the world as pure object, pure machine, pure matter lacking gods and soul, which "self-elected" researchers gradually put to death with analyses that were so many reductions and examples of disassociation. For the process of *Entzauberung* was not halted mid-route. In this regard, the rationalism of the "Enlightenment," far from constituting the antithesis of biblical monotheism, represents rather its profane transposition and ineluctable culmination. As noted by Theodor W. Adorno, an entire part—the most voluminous one—of the social sciences has followed the European *Aufklärung* down the same path.¹³ And now it is the turn of modern theologians, deliberately breaking with the Christian miracles of the Middle Ages—miracles inspired in large part by paganism—to provide their own

Entmythologisierung—this “demythologization” which Jean Brun described as merely “literal fetishes that claim to prompt the pure spirit to spring from the text.”¹⁴

The rigid nature of biblical law is in fact the direct effect of an intentional rupture with that world-born religiosity specific to paganism. The relationship to the world has not been emptied of meaning but transformed by means of an immutable ritual, allowing the conciliation of life on earth with the refusal of the seductions of “mythology.” “The Hebrews,” note Adorno and Horkheimer, “did not eliminate adaptation to nature, but converted it into a series of duties in the form of ritual. They have retained the aspect of expiation, but have avoided the reversion to mythology which symbolism implies.”¹⁵ The site of the sin has been thereby conserved, but the sin itself has been eliminated.

In parallel fashion, the scribes of the Bible were led little by little to formulate their doctrine of sacrifice. An important evolution can also be seen here. The Bible stages countless sacrifices. But there can be no question of viewing these the way the Ancients viewed sacrifice: an essentially joyful occasion of offering to the gods objects, which being retired from the profane domain for this occasion, had become *sacra*, sacred objects. During the first century AD, Sallustius wrote: “The happiness of every being is its own perfection and perfection for each is union with its own cause. For this reason we pray for union with the gods ... and that is why men sacrifice.” In the Bible sacrifice most often smacks of atonement; there is the sacrifice for sin (*battat*) or the sacrifice of reparation (*asam*). (After the destruction of the Temple, expiatory sacrifices would be eliminated and replaced by repentance in return for “pardon.”) Furthermore, Yahweh obviously does not take part in sacrifices. It is inconceivable that he would seat himself, even symbolically, at the tables of mortals, as did the pagan gods who visited altars and in whose honor knife and fork were lifted. Also, the idea was gradually put forth that Yahweh despised “natural” feasts and ceremonies. He was horrified by cosmic religiosity because it carries with it the idea that life never dies, that it renews ceaselessly, that history itself can regenerate, that there is an eternal dialectical solidarity between life and death, beginning and end, man and gods. Yahweh prefers the exaltation of abstract universal notions like “peace,” “justice,” and “law” over the sacrifice of things. Criticism of sacrifices is developed specifically by the prophets who confronted pagan reality directly.

“What concern to me are your sacrifices, sayeth the Lord. I am disgusted by your burnt offerings of rams and fatted calves” (Isaiah 1:11). “It is love that pleases me and not sacrifices, knowledge of God rather than holocausts” (Hosea 6:6); “I hate and despise your feasts and feel naught for your solemn gathering. When you make burnt offerings and oblations to me, they do not please me. I look not at the sacrifice of your fatted animals. Go from my presence with the noise of your canticles, so that I do not hear the music of your harps” (Amos 5:21–23). For this reason the worship of the unique God embodied by Yahweh brings about the negation of the worship that humans would be tempted to render unto themselves through their own gods.

All the prophets fulminated with vigor and even extraordinary rage against the pagan cults. In every form of the world’s religiosity they denounced “idolatry.” There are no words strong enough to stigmatize the “impurity” of foreign mores, and especially that kind of “mixed marriage” on the religious plane: syncretism. Just as the Covenant between Yahweh and his people emerged from the symbolism of marriage, religious infidelity and compromises with exterior forms of belief are incessantly likened to “adultery” and “prostitution.” By honoring other gods, we read in Exodus, the foreign peoples “prostitute themselves” (34:15). “You have profaned the land by your prostitutions and misdeeds,” screams Jeremiah (3:2). Jerusalem itself, the “faithful city” becomes a “harlot” according to Isaiah (1:21). The formulation reoccurs with Hosea as a metaphor about the “sons of prostitution” (2:6), as well as in Ezekiel. This vocabulary is not employed by chance. If we adopt the arrangement suggested by Rachi that consists of placing the Ten Commandments in five opposing pairs, it will be noted that the First Commandment “You shall have no other gods before me” is paired with the Sixth: “You shall not commit adultery.”

The object of the ritual prescriptions in the Pentateuch, in their great number and great detail, is to keep Yahweh’s faithful protected from “Canaanite” influences, to establish a *discrimination*, a separation between them and the pagans. Just as the religion must not be contaminated by surrounding cults, those who gather in its name should avoid outside contamination. The *enclosing within the law* results from this preoccupation. According to the words of Blandine Barret-Kriegel, the Hebrew people “only attain their identity through submitting to the yoke of the law.”¹⁶

This also, in the same stroke, checks assimilation—prevents what would later be called *chukat hagoy*, imitation of the Gentiles (*goyim*).

The Bible displays a particular horror of mixtures. To be holy is to be separate; the mixture is “impure” (see Nehemiah 13:30). It is forbidden to yoke together beasts of different species, to mix seeds at the time of sowing, to weave wool and linen blends, to switch the garb of men and women. Many of the food prohibitions seem to obey the same preoccupation. It is about respecting what Yahweh has separated; above all, it is about man not combining and surpassing related contraries, not attributing to himself the powers of surpassing and unifying that belong solely to Yahweh. For this reason all hybrids are condemned. Also mixed marriages are most vigorously condemned. These are subject to legal action by what Léon Poliakov calls “the rigorous directives decreed by the law of Moses against hybridization or crossbreeding.”¹⁷ In fact mixed marriage also represents a compromise and a synergy and for this reason is “adulterous,” or in any case an *adulteration*, meaning an act of “prostitution.” In Genesis it is in response to the transgression of such a prohibition—the union of the “sons of God” with the “daughters of men” (6:1–4)—that Yahweh “repents” his decision to create humanity and decides to drown them with the Deluge. This law will be twisted on numerous occasions, and these infringements are not of a lesser nature (Moses, “immigrant in foreign lands,” weds the daughter of a priest of Midian; David is descended from Ruth, a Moabite), but it will nonetheless be constantly reasserted. The prophets appointed themselves its most ruthless defenders. Malachi sees the source of Yahweh’s wrath in the “abomination” of mixed marriages (2:10–12). During the reforms of Ezra, mixed marriage became practically a crime, a “betrayal” of Yahweh and the names of the “guilty” were made public (Ezra 10:18–44) and their unions dissolved (Ezra 9:1–12). The first part of the historical books of the Bible ends on this description by Nehemiah of these sorry combinations: “Even in these days, I see Jews who have wed Ashdodite, Ammonite, and Moabite women. As for their children, half speak Ashdodien or the language of this or that people, but no longer know how to speak Hebrew. I rebuked them and called down curses upon them. I struck several and pulled their hair, and made them swear an oath by God: You should not give your daughters to their sons, nor take for wives any of their daughters,

for your sons or yourselves! Was this not the sin of Solomon, king of Israel? ... Am I to understand that you too will commit this great crime: betray your God by marrying foreign women?” (13:23–27).

For this reason the struggle against “idolatry” forms one of the core points of biblical thought. From the Pentateuch to the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah, it may represent the most often repeated theme. Idolatry is the very source of all evil and all morally indefensible behavior.¹⁸ This is why the tradition places its interdiction as high—seeming even higher at times—than the worship devoted to Yahweh himself. So just what is idolatry? It is the fact of rendering unto someone else, man or god, the worship that should be exclusively given to Yahweh. In other words, it is taking for an absolute what the Bible declares is only relative, or vice versa—which amounts to saying that the preeminent form of idolatry for man consists of declaring himself the sole bestower of meaning, free to construct himself, autonomous with respect to everything that is other than him. Hence the incessant denunciations of human “vanities,” the anathema against human “pride”—and the appeals for “humility” that Christianity will propagate. Man should occupy the whole of his place, but *nothing but his place*. He is forbidden to go beyond himself. Under these conditions idolatry is everywhere; the “idols” are legion. When Paul entered Athens to attempt to sway the people from his own ancestral convictions, he described the city as “filled with idols” (Acts 17:16); among these “idols” there were statues of the gods (17:29) but also of “Epicurean and Stoic philosophers” (17:18). This did not prevent Paul from declaring: “Athenians, in all respects you are, as I can see, the most religious of men” (17:22).¹⁹

What is most remarkable about the biblical conception of “idolatry” is that it is expressly forbidden even to those who do not believe in Yahweh’s existence. In fact, the prohibition of idolatry figures highly among the seven “Noachidic” precepts that are allegedly valid for all humanity.²⁰ Going to the opposite extreme, tradition also maintains that Yahweh cannot be truly worshiped until every trace of idolatry has been eliminated. “For he who refuses idolatry,” says the Talmud, “it is as if he fulfilled the entire Torah.”²¹ So it is clearly idolatry, not atheism, that is condemned. For the biblical mentality it is better to claim that God does not exist than to worship a “false god.” Yahweh is more ruthless against those who excite his jealousy than those who deny his exist-

tence. A complete negative theology has developed out of this idea, according to which the observance of the “no” prevails in certain respects over that of “yes.” This theology is a generalized rendering to the attitude of the Noachides; for want of respecting the positive principles, at least one should heed the negative commandments. In the extreme case, it is even maintained that the first were created in order to ensure that observance of the latter was respected. Most significantly, certain neo-Marxist authors have borrowed the same idea, from the perspective of a strict transfer of biblical values to this plane. “Mankind, for its salvation, does not need to worship God,” writes Erich Fromm. “All it needs is not to blaspheme and not to worship idols.”²² A similar opinion can be found in the writings of Ernst Bloch and some of the more recent adepts of a “Judeo-Christianity without God.” When “idolatry” finally disappears—something that will not please the gods!—Yahweh’s declaration will in fact become superfluous. The objective will have been attained. Humanity will live without God but in accordance with the principles of Yahweh. By all evidence this is the contemporary meaning of the fight against “idolatry.” Afflict man with a critical incapability and impotence when confronted by the diffusion of biblical values; *neutralize* those who cannot be won over—transform them into “objective allies.” The ban on idolatry is nothing other than an *incapacitating myth*.

One of the designations for the Sinai is Horeb, a word whose root elicits the idea of destruction (of paganism). In fact it seems that any and all means are good when it involves the destruction of idolatry. “You shall abolish all the places where the people you dispossess will have served their gods, on the mountain tops, the hills and under every green tree. You shall demolish their altars, break their steles; their sacred devotions you shall burn, the graven images of their gods you shall strike down, and you shall erase their name from this place” (Deuteronomy 12:2–3). During this ancient time, the fight against idolatry authorized murder, “If your brother, son of your father or son of your mother, your son, your daughter, the wife who rests on your breast or the companion liken unto yourself, secretly seek to seduce you by saying: ‘Come, let us serve other gods, that you and your fathers did not know...’ Yes, you should kill him; your hand should be the first against him to put him to death, and the hand of all the people will continue the execution” (Deuteronomy 13:7–10). If an entire city remains faithful to its gods, then mass slaughter becomes a pious

duty: “If it be clearly proven and well established that such an abomination has been committed in your midst, you must put the inhabitants of this city to the sword, you should condemn it to execration, it and all it contains ... It will become forever a ruin, never to be rebuilt” (Deuteronomy 13:15–17). For this reason Yahweh ordered the extermination of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivvites, and Jebusites (Deuteronomy 20:17). Christianity, as we know, zealously continued to pursue this program against a perpetually renewing European paganism—because the “people turned Christian” can always surrender “to the pagan temptations they carry inside,” as Monsignor Jean-Marie Lustiger wrote with quite unintentional humor.²³

Why this rabid behavior? Because of Yahweh’s “jealousy?” No doubt. But this jealousy is itself only a *sign*. As said earlier, Yahweh is not simply unique because he is alone. It is also because he is *radically other*. A pagan who worshiped only a single “idol” would nevertheless remain an “idolater.” In fact Yahweh does not forgive “idols” for being intermediaries between man and the world, for abolishing the distance between man and the being of the world, or, at the very least, for proclaiming that the distance is not unbridgeable. The bond Yahweh seeks to break is the bond that unites man to God within a being in which both are beings—a bond by which man may rise out of who he is, in complete freedom, toward what is more than he is.

Certainly condemnation of idolatry can appear justified in an era when man is overly prone to considering as absolutes things that are not worthwhile. But it is not because they are taken as absolutes that these things should be condemned. The primary reason, rather, is that they are not worthwhile. I would be the first to condemn an “idolatry” that *diminishes* a person, by which he deconstructs and unmakes himself. But I exalt, on the other hand, the “idolatry”—by which I mean the real *faith*—that enables a person to grow, with which he elevates himself above his present condition by establishing himself fully as the measure of all things. “In worshipping the idol, man worships himself,” says Erich Fromm.²⁴ The phrase is correct but not devoid of a certain ambiguity. Let’s say in more simple terms that by honoring his gods, man honors his ability to live in symbiosis with them, that he honors his own capacity, by means of a free will to power, to become equal to the models he has chosen.

Chapter Seventeen

Tolerance and Intolerance

"I believe," declares Gilbert Durand, "that the human world is polytheist when it tolerates the Other, when it does not fall back onto a single book. If this is forgotten, knowledge is blocked. Polytheism always leads to the creation of a comparative literature." It is generally acknowledged that paganism contains a constituent principle of *tolerance*. A system that accepts a limitless number of gods not only accepts the plurality of the forms of worship that address them, but also, and especially, the plurality of mores, social and political systems, conceptions of the world for which these gods are so many sublimated expressions. We know that the Ancients believed that the best proof that all the gods did or could exist was that the people worshipping them also existed.² In Athens there was even an altar to the unknown god!

This "freedom of thought resulting from the absence of all religious dogma" was quite naturally transposed onto the political plane. For centuries the Roman Empire respected the customs and institutions of all the peoples it conquered; it multiplied the number of provincial cities and organized their freedoms; it knew how to federate people without subjugating them. Pagan tolerance—which subsequently played into the hands of Christian propaganda in some instances—is expressed in these words of Symmachus: "To each his customs, to each his rites. The divine spirit has given certain guardians to the cities. Just as each mortal receives a soul at birth, each people receives its guardian spirits."

Paganism is tolerant by nature, not only because it is (potentially) polytheist, and polytheism is already a sublimated form of *pluralism*, but also because it is not dualistic, because it opposes to the fundamental *discontinuity* of God and the world, the *dialectical continuity* of everything—men, gods, "nature"—that forms and embodies the single being that is the world, and because it postulates that a god who is not of this world is precisely incapable of being a god. Because it is either one or the other: either God is unique and distinct from the world or the world is unique and contains both men and gods. To the assertion of the preeminent non-god, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), is opposed the preeminent divine affirmation, "The abode of men is

the abode of the gods."⁴ Likewise, from the standpoint of a *non-dualistic* monotheism, the affirmation of God's *uniqueness* is not opposed to that of the world's uniqueness; it makes it sacred. This kind of God also remains tolerant, because he is made from all the diverse elements of the world. It could be said that he even represents the *unique diversity* of a being who has not excluded any otherness, any difference, because he exalts and reconciles all differences.

J.B.S. Haldane lists fanaticism and totalitarian intolerance among the "inventions" made between 3,000 and 1,400 BC and attributes their paternity to Judeo-Christian monotheism. "The characteristic intolerance and fanaticism of the prophets and missionaries of the three monotheist religions," writes Mircea Eliade, "have their model and justification in the example set by Yahweh." These opinions should not be cause for surprise. The unique god of the Bible is the sole possessor, the sole *author* of an equally unique truth. He represents absolute good. How could he not oppose evil? If there is a unique, universal truth, if truth is entirely independent of the events and configurations that take place in the world, if evil is no longer *id quod malus est*, what people say is evil merely arises from the misuse of freedom by created beings, then one cannot be *both* right and wrong, and one certainly cannot act beyond good and evil. With the idea of a unique truth comes the principle of an absolute identity and its corollary: the *excluded middle*. Henceforth, one lives in error or truth, in evil or good. There can neither be relative verities nor several conflicting truths. It will be "or else ... or else." The struggle against "error" then becomes not only a right but a duty as well—whether this duty is exercised effectively or not.

That absolutism, more than relativism and pluralism, leads to intolerance, that it brings about, more than paganism, the disappearance of *sophrosune*, would seem to be self-evident. What characterizes the Law in the Bible, Jacques Goldstain emphasizes, "is its savage theocentricism and absolute totalitarianism with respect to what concerns reference to God."⁶ But absolutism is not the only thing implicated. What intrinsically connects Judeo-Christian monotheism to intolerance, as we have just seen, is not only the fact that this unique God is conceived as radically distinct from the world in his nature. Fundamentally, the gods of paganism are *non-others*. The God of Judeo-Christian monotheism is the preeminent example of Otherness. He is the *Completely Other*.

Now the very fact of setting up a Completely Other necessarily tends to promote the lesser significance of the Other. This biblical rupture in some way eradicates the Other to the benefit of the Completely Other. By devaluing the very concept of alterity, the Bible forbids the Same from *linking* with the Other. Whereas paganism preserves all freedoms, tolerates all acknowledgments, legitimizes all *interpretations*, to the very degree that the gods do not represent the negation or suffocation of some gods by others, Judeo-Christian monotheism, in its smothering, imprisoning aspect, can only reject everything that it is not. In his capacity as not only the solitary, but the incomparable *one*, Yahweh can only assert the falsity of what *others* venerate and thereby assert the falsity of the lifestyles and world conceptions this veneration expresses. From Yahweh's viewpoint, the differences between men and between peoples are transitory, secondary, and in a word, superficial: "All the nations of the world are as nothing before Yahweh, he holds them as nothingness and emptiness" (Isaiah 40:17). Yahweh is the *god who refuses the Other*; the god who started by setting himself up as superior to the other gods, then later declared that he regarded them as *non-existent*. For the other god does not exist. He is depicted as only an "idol," an appearance of god, *a god lacking the value of a god*. Transposed onto the secular plane, this reasoning would appear to legitimize all forms of *fear of otherness*, all forms of racism, all exclusions. From the notion of the god without the value of a god we move on to that of *the man without the value of a man, of life without the value of life*. Man acts toward his fellows the way Yahweh acts toward other gods. In biblical monotheism hell is other people, in the true sense of the term.

It can be seen from this that a favorable, in short, logical relationship exists between totalitarian intolerance, the refusal of the Other, the assertion of a unique God and a unique truth, and the anthropology of the Same induced by Judeo-Christian monotheism. And the process runs in both directions. Just as the refusal of the Other logically leads to envisioning its suppression, this refusal also chips away at the identity of the one expressing it. We can in fact only become fully aware of our own identity through confrontation with a general variance. One only posits oneself by being opposed to another; we also have need of the Other to understand how we differ from it. The rejection or the devaluation of the Other is therefore at the same time the rejection of the

dialectical movement that allows self-construction and self-transformation through positive confrontation with the Other. "Based on a sufficient degree of *ignorance about others*," notes Jules Monnerot, "my God is certainly the only god." This is perhaps why all forms of universalism, religious and profane, while they bring about the negation of others' identities, also require the abnormally enlarged ignorance or unawareness of their own identity by those who lay claim to or proclaim them. Where self-awareness is immediately transparent to itself, the Other is first perceived as an "object" that is interpreted, or more exactly instrumentalized' by consciousness based on the consistently subjective data it receives. The temptation is therefore quite great in such a system to interpret the other-in-this-world as a simple projection of the self, which can then lead to the desire to eliminate everything in it that is *different* and does not conform to this projection. This is precisely the case with racist xenophobia, which carries with it an interpretation of a *reductive*, "monotheist" nature, and consists of instituting, whether explicitly or not, a unitarian, *one-dimensional* hierarchy connected to allegedly objective criteria, which are in fact purely projections of individual values. But this is also the case, and perhaps even more so, for the racism of *identity denial* or racism of assimilation (as opposed to racism of exclusion), that consists of reducing the Other to the Same and proclaiming that there are only men and peoples who are all "like the others." Subsequently this implicitly legitimizes the destruction of the *unique way of life* of a populace, the disintegration and absorption of its institutions, beliefs, its characteristic moral, social, and cultural values, and the loss of its personality, its destiny, and its soul.⁷ By asserting the primacy of the Completely Other, biblical monotheism creates the secular conditions for the devaluation of the Other. But with the same stroke they also dialectically create the conditions for a denial of the relative Same. In fact, if the Other is devalued, then the Others tend to amount to the Same. Humanity is no longer composed of relative Others and relative Sames, but of the appearance of Others, Almost-Sames, Others-with-the-vocation-of-the-Sames, facing the sole absolute of the Completely Other. This is why the biblical resistance to the "domination" by the Other can also caricature itself in resistance to "domination" by the Same—whose counterpart is acceptance of domination by the Completely Other.

Undoubtedly Nietzsche is among those who have perceived

this division best. Evoking paganism, he writes in an aphorism from *The Gay Science* entitled, "The greatest advantage of polytheism":

There was only one norm, *man*, and every people thought that it possessed this one ultimate norm. But above and outside, in some distant overworld, one was permitted to behold a plurality of norms; one god was not considered a denial of another god nor blasphemy against him. It was here that the luxury of individuals was first permitted; it was here that one first honored the rights of individuals. The invention of gods, heroes, and super-humans of all kinds, as well as near-humans and sub-humans, dwarfs, fairies, centaurs, satyrs, demons, and devils was the inestimable preliminary exercise for the justification of the egoism and sovereignty of the individual: the freedom that one conceded to a god in his relation to other gods—one eventually also granted to oneself in relation to laws, customs, and neighbors. Monotheism on the other hand, this rigid consequence of the doctrine of one human type—the faith in one normal god beside whom there are only pseudo-gods—was perhaps the greatest danger that has yet confronted humanity.⁸

Yahweh is not only a "jealous" god. He also feels hatred: "I loved Jacob, but I hated Esau" (Malachi 1:3). He recommends this hate to those who invoke him, "Do not I hate them, O Yahweh, who hate thee, and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with a perfect hatred; I count them as my enemies" (Psalms 139:21–22); "In your bounty, O Lord, destroy the impious" (Psalms 139:19). Jeremiah cries out, "Render them their just recompense, O Yahweh ... Exterminate all of them from beneath your heavens" (Lamentations 3:64–66). The book of Jeremiah is itself only a long series of curses and anathemas against peoples and nations, in which the enumeration of future punishments fills the narrator with a dark joy: "May they know terror and I be not terrified! Bring down on their heads the day of misfortune, break them, break them twice" (17:18); "Abandon thus their sons to famine, deliver them to the mercy of the sword! May their wives become sterile and widowed! May their husbands die of plague!" (18–21), and on and on it goes.

We have seen that the fight against "idolatry" is a legitimate one because idolatry is incorporated into evil: "You will banish the evil from your midst" (Deuteronomy 17:7). Yahweh therefore promises the Hebrews his support in any wars they undertake, "When your God Yahweh shall have cut off the nations from before thee so thou may invade and dispossess them, you shall succeed them and dwell in their lands" (Deuteronomy 12:29). "As for the cities of those people which Yahweh has given as your inheritance, you shall leave none that breathe alive" (Deuteronomy 20:16). Yahweh himself provided a fine example of genocide by unleashing the Deluge against a humanity that had displeased him. During the time he resided with the Philistine King Achish, David also practiced genocide (1 Samuel 27:9). Moses organized the extermination of the Midianite people (Numbers 31:7). Joshua massacred the inhabitants of Hazor and the Anakim: "Hazor was once the capital of all this kingdom. Everyone that lived there was put to the sword because of the anthema. Not a single soul was left alive" (Joshua 11:10–11; see also 11:20–21). The messianic king extolled by Solomon was also to unleash a similar reign of terror: "May he purify Jerusalem of all the gentiles who trample upon it miserably, may he exterminate with his wisdom and justice the sinners of this land ... May he destroy the impious nations with the words of his mouth." Hatred against the pagans also explodes out of the books of Esther and Judith, and so on.

"Not one ancient religion, except that of the Hebrew people, displayed this degree of intolerance," notes Emile Gilibert.⁹ This was something Renan also asserted earlier: "The intolerance of the Semitic people is an inevitable consequence of their monotheism. The Indo-European peoples, before their conversion to Semitic ideas, never regarded their religion as an absolute truth. Rather they viewed it as a kind of family or caste heritage, and for this reason intolerance and proselytizing remained foreign to them. This is why we find among these peoples a freedom of thought, a spirit of critical inquiry, and individual research."¹⁰ There is certainly no question of looking at this in such stark terms or of contrasting one unsound truth with another. There have been massacres and exterminations everywhere at all times. But one will seek in vain in the sacred or profane texts of paganism for an equivalent of what can be found repeatedly throughout the Bible: the idea that such massacres can be morally justified,

the idea that they can be expressly authorized and desired by a god—"because of the anathema, as commanded by Moses, servant of Yahweh" (Joshua 11:12)—so that among these authors good conscience continues to reign, not *in spite of* these massacres, but purely and simply *because of* them.

Starting in the time that directly followed the life of Christ, Christianity essentially took over this tradition of intolerance with renewed energy. The message of Jesus recorded by Luke, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters—yes even his own life—he cannot be my disciple" (14:26) has caused lot of ink to be spilled. Some perceive this word "hate" as a Hebrew idiom and claim that it should simply be taken to mean that Jesus wished to be preferred absolutely over all other beings. Others see a trace of Gnostic contamination in this phrase, connected to renunciation, the voluntary despoliation of worldly goods, and the refusal to procreate. In this context this obligation to "hate" one's parents would be a corollary of not wanting children. Obviously these interpretations remain purely speculative. What we do know for certain is that Christian intolerance made its appearance very early. Over the centuries it was employed against "infidels" as well as against pagans, Jews, and heretics. It began with the extermination of ancient culture: the murders of Julian and of Hypatia, the ban on pagan cults, the destruction of temples and statues, the suppression of the Olympic Games, the arson of the Serapeum in Alexandria instigated by that city's bishop, Theophilus, in 389 (which brought about the pillaging of the immense library of 700,000 volumes collected by the Ptolemies).¹¹ This was followed by forced conversion—*compelle intare*—the extinction of positive science, persecution, and burnings. Ammianus Marcellinus had said earlier: "The wild beasts are no greater enemies of men than the Christians that are in their midst." And Sulpicius Severus: "Now, everything is troubled by the discord of the Bishops. Everywhere hate and favor, fear, envy, ambition, debauchery, avarice, arrogance, laziness: it is a general state of corruption."

Theocracy, in the proper sense of the word, is born in tandem with the reduction of the human political order to the moral prescriptions that govern the "city of God." It, too, is a return to the unique. Renan noted earlier that in the monotheism of the Bible, "the government of the universe" became "an absolute monarchy." Georges Nataf defined the "theocratic ideal" with this for-

mulation: "anarchy plus God."¹² This ideal, based on the illusion of a "natural order," resumes and considerably transforms the opposition between an immutable law (Torah) and the laws men give themselves (*lex/nomos*). "One could pose as a hypothesis," writes Jean-Louis Tristani, "that the Torah/*nomos* couple provides the opposition that allows, in an initial stage, for the organization of different cultures on an axis that goes from servitude to liberty. Mosaic Law would constitute in some way the zero point of freedom, whereas the Greek *nomos* causes the conditions for the formation of such a system to emerge."¹³

All forms of exclusion will henceforth bear the mark of the *odium theologicum*. The pagan could "err" but not be obstinate. *Perseverarre diabolicum*: seeking to persevere in the way he lives would thus become "diabolic." Fidelity (to the ancestral faith) will be condemned whereas its denial, called "conversion," will serve as exemplary. This conversion, when not the result of conviction or self-interest, can be forced, as the Saxons, the Stedinger, and the Cathars knew quite well. By legitimizing the massacre *ad majorem dei gloriam*, Christianity continues to support the phenomenon of a *good conscience* among the perpetrators. Over the course of the centuries the will to suppress the Other would ceaselessly be reborn, in wider and wider circles, from the revelation—contrary to the *Revelation*—of the existence of an Other, confident in his own completeness. For this reason, there was "during the early days of colonization," notes Jean Baudrillard, "a moment of disbelief and stupefaction before this very possibility of escaping from the universal law of the Gospel. This created a dilemma: either one accepted that this law was not universal, or one exterminated the Indians to erase the proofs. Generally, converting them was enough, or simply even discovering them, which was enough to ensure their slow extermination."¹⁴

The Jews were the first to suffer from the monotheism of others. Christian anti-Semitism, which finds its earliest "justification" in the fourth Gospel, perhaps under the influence of Gnosticism, and to which numerous studies have been devoted, has never stopped developing across the ages.¹⁵ It is clear that the current tendency of Christian churches to reintegrate their origins and reappropriate the "Hebrew roots that support them"¹⁶—a tendency that only proves one thing: the conversion has instead worked in the opposite direction than planned—alters nothing of a past that has re-presented itself for so long.

What appears to me as the best explanation for the cause of Christian anti-Semitism is the very *closeness* of the Jewish faith to the Christian. As Jacques Solé wrote: "One always persecutes one's neighbors."¹⁷ Only a "small ditch" separates Christians and Jews, but for this reason, as Nietzsche pointed out, "the smallest ditch is (also) the most impossible to bridge."¹⁸ More precisely, during the first centuries of the Christian era, anti-Semitism was born *from the Christian claim to have supplanted Judaism*, to have "fulfilled" it and given it its "true" meaning. For the Christians, "salvation comes from the Jews" (John 4:22), but it is Christianity that is the *verus Israel*. (Hence the expression *perfidii*, used until recently by the Church in Good Friday services in reference to the Jews, an expression that does not have the modern meaning of "perfidious," but the original meaning of "faithless.") It was Saint Paul who first expressed this claim more forcefully. At the same time he substituted Grace for law, Paul distinguished the "Israel of God" from the "Israel of the flesh" (1 Corinthians 10:18), which led him to oppose the circumcision of the spirit to just plain circumcision: "A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inside; and circumcision is that of the heart, by the spirit and not by the letter. Such a man's praise comes not from men but from God" (Romans 2:28–29). Conclusion: "It is we who are the circumcised" (Philippians 3:3). From the Christian viewpoint this reasoning has a certain coherence. As Claude Tresmontant said, if the last of the *nabis* of Israel, the rabbi Yeshua of Nazareth (meaning Jesus), is truly the Messiah, then Israel's vocation to become the "light of nations" must be fully achieved and the universalism implied by this vocation must be put completely into operation. Just as the Law, having reached its end (in both sense of the word) with the Christ, has become useless, the distinction between Israel and the other nations has become moot; there is no longer "either Jew or Greek" (Galatians 3:28). And it is clearly universal Christianity that is the *verus Israel*.

This process, triggered by Pauline reform, has had a double consequence. On the one hand, it led to the persecution of the Jews, depicted as the worst enemies of Christianity by very reason of their "genealogical" proximity and their refusal to "convert," that is to say, to recognize Christianity as the "true Israel." On the other hand, as noted by Shmuel Trigano, "by setting itself up as the new Israel, the West has recognized a factual if not legal juris-

diction over itself by Judaism."¹⁹ This amounts to saying that the West has become "Israelite" to the very degree that it has forbidden Jews from asserting their true identity. The result is that the very notion of "Judeo-Christianity" is a double incarceration, imprisoning both the "Christian West"—which by its own doing is subject to a "jurisdiction" that is not its own, and puts it in the position, in order to assume it, of denying this jurisdiction to its legitimate keepers—and the Jews themselves, who find themselves unduly nailed to the alleged *site* of their "fulfillment" by another religion than their own. In fact, Trigano goes on to write, "if Judeo-Christianity founded the West, then the very place of Israel is also the West."²⁰ Subsequently, the requirement of "westernization" becomes a requirement for assimilation and "normalization" and the denial of identity. "The crisis of Jewish normality is the crisis of the westernization of Judaism ... Therefore leaving the West means for the Jews to turn their backs on their 'normality' and open themselves to their *otherness*."²¹ In the final analysis, this may be why Jewish communities today can no longer criticize the "Western model" unless they adopt a semi-amnesiac and semi-critical attitude toward their own specific history.²²

Christian anti-Semitism can therefore be correctly described as a neurosis. For this reason, writes Jean Blot, it is because of a "constituent alienation" that the West should "never attain itself, never find itself,"²³ and that the anti-Semitic neurosis stems from this. "Anti-Semitism permits the anti-Semite to project his neurosis onto the Jew. He will call him foreign, because that is how he feels; a thief, powerful, an upstart, because that is what he is; in a word he calls him a Jew because he is this Jew, in the very depths of his soul, definitively devious, constitutively alienated, foreign to his own religion, to his God, who embodies him."²⁴ By exchanging its foundational myth for that of biblical monotheism, the West has transformed Hebrewness into its super-ego. From that point it can only turn against the Jews, whom it accuses not only of having failed to follow, by their "conversion," the "logical" evolution leading from Mount Sinai to Christianity, but even attempting, through an alleged "deicide" of preventing this evolution. The *conversion* of the West goes hand in hand with the accusations of non-conversion made against the Jews. Returning to a proposition I put forth earlier, it could be said that West became anti-Semitic to the very degree it attempted to become "Israelite." It will stop being anti-Semitic by leaving this neurosis,

by returning to its foundational myth, ceasing to wish to be something it is not in a way that allows the Other to continue to be what it is.

Many, even today, believe that if Jews were to renounce their distinct identity, the "Jewish problem" would vanish. A naïve proposition at best, in the worst case it often conceals a conscious or unconscious form of anti-Semitism. This proposal, which evolves directly out of the racism of assimilation and identity denial I mentioned earlier, is only the reverse side of the racism of persecution and exclusion. In the West, Trigano reminds us, Jews, when they were not being persecuted, were only "recognized as Jews on condition they were no longer Jews."²⁵ In other words, to be *accepted*, they had to first *reject themselves*; they had to renounce being Others in a way that allowed them to be reduced to the Same. In the second form of racism Jews are recognized but denied; in the first they are accepted but not recognized. The Church has served the Jews notice that they must choose between exclusion (or physical death) and renunciation (historical and spiritual death); by converting they became "Christians like everybody else." The French Revolution freed the Jews individually but condemned them to disappear as a "nation." Here again they were compelled to become "citizens like everybody else." Marxism, too, claimed to ensure the "liberation" of the Jews by imposing a class-based division from which their destruction as a people would necessarily result. Just as the end of anti-Semitism will occur through the renunciation by the West of its claim to be the *verus Israel*, the—positive—end of the "Jewish question" will take place through the recognition of the Jewish people's identity and its right to live out its difference without allowing itself to be either reduced to a radical state of Otherness or to the Same.

When one examines the great modern totalitarian systems, it is not hard to find there, in secular form, the same radical causes of intolerance whose religious roots we have just examined. This is mainly the structure of *reduction* of all diversity, of every relative Other, to a *unique* Absolute, sometimes identified with class, race, the State, a Leader, or a party, and so on. Modern forms of totalitarianism have only secularized and transformed into a profane theodicy the system of the unique truth and one model to which all diversity must be boiled down. Simultaneously the organization of these totalitarian systems is modeled on that of the Church and similarly exploits the themes of the "masses," themes that are

distinctive features of contemporary democracy. This secularization of the system has made totalitarianism all the more formidable—independent of the fact that religious intolerance has often provoked an equally destructive revolutionary intolerance in return, an *enantiodromia*, to borrow the term employed by Jung. "Totalitarianism," writes Gilbert Durand, "is further strengthened when the powers of monotheistic theology—which left the game of transcendence intact—have been transferred to a human institution, to a Grand Inquisitor."²⁶

The same holds true for the many versions of Utopian thought that also led to the creation of totalitarian systems. Leszek Kolakowski has shown that utopian thought includes three fundamental features: "The belief that the future, in some mysterious way, is already upon us and we are in the process of seizing it (and not only vaguely foreseeing it). Next is the idea that we have at our disposal a sure method of thinking and acting capable of leading us to a society free of flaws, conflicts, and dissatisfaction. Finally, the belief that we know what man truly and *really* is, as opposed to what he is empirically and believes himself to be."²⁷ It is not hard to find in these three components of utopia simple transpositions of the concept of monolinear and irreversible time, the explicatory reductivism specific to the theory of the Unique, and the *categorical* anthropology, based on an abstract universal.

To think that the true nature of totalitarianism is based on its use of particularly crushing means of coercion as its method of choice seems to me, consequently, to be a grave error. Historical experience has shown—and continues to show—that there can be a "clean" totalitarianism that "through tenderness" yields the same results as classic forms of totalitarianism. The "happy robots" of *Brave New World* do not enjoy a condition preferable to that of the slaves and prisoners of the concentration camps. Nor does totalitarianism essentially arise from Saint-Just, Stalin, Hegel, or Fichte. Totalitarianism appears when a "flexible form of plural, polytheistic, and naturally contradictory totality that is inherent in organic interdependency" is replaced by a rigid, "monotheistic" system that is based on an explicative uniqueness and a fatally reductive unilateralism.²⁸ Totalitarianism is born from a desire to achieve social or human unity by reducing individual and popular diversity to a single model. It is in this sense that it is legitimate to oppose with Michel Maffesoli—but also with Gilbert Durand, Max Weber, James Hillman, David Miller,

and others—a “polytheistic social system that refers to multiple and complementary gods” to a monotheistic politics “founded on the illusion of unity.”²⁹ Once the polytheism of values “can no longer function we are facing totalitarianism.”³⁰

Chapter Eighteen

Universalism and Particularism

Pagan thought, which is fundamentally attached to roots and to place as the preferred center around which identity can crystallize, can only reject all religious and philosophical forms of universalism. Universalism, to the contrary, finds its basis in Judeo-Christian monotheism. “The ideal of man is biblical,” declares Blandine Barret-Kriegel.¹ The Bible is in fact the first to put on the stage, at the beginning of time, a unique man (or humanity) created by an equally unique God. Universalism finds its primary foundation in the story of Genesis, which makes the myth of Adam an archetype of the unity of the human race, which holds both moral and “historical” value. Although contemporary Christian theology (P. Grelot, Karl Rahner) has at times tried to reconcile the doctrine of original sin and all men’s predisposition to sin with a moderate polygenism, it is clear that this tale suggests or tends to justify a strict monogenism.² The covenant Yahweh establishes with Noah then aggravates the symptom. We are confronted here with a bias toward unity, which, according to biblical ethnology, makes all the people of the world the descendants of Noah, and makes the world the field of operations for this large family. We know, in addition, how much trouble modern thought had freeing itself from the fable of the *ex oriente lux* and the conviction that the history of the oldest humanity was written exclusively in Hebrew.³

This universalist assertion of the unity of man-as-man is apparently devoid of all foundation. For the Ancients, “man” did not exist. There were only men: Greeks, Romans, barbarians, Syrians, and so forth. In the early nineteenth century, Joseph de Maistre repeats this idea, nominalist in nature, when he wrote: “There is no such thing as *man* in the world. In my life I have seen Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, and so on. I even know, thanks to Montesquieu, that one can be Persian: but when it comes to man, I declare that I have never in my life actually met one.”⁴ Of course one can always speak of “man”—in the singular—in common parlance. But this is only a convenience of language, nothing but an abstraction that in the final analysis is based on the perception of a certain number of individual men. Generic man, “universal,”

abstract man does not exist. For a generic man to exist, there needs to be a common and *specifically human* referent capable of qualifying all men in a paradigmatic way. Such a referent would be necessarily cultural, as what distinguishes man in the world, as we know it, is his capacity as man to create cultures. Now there is no such thing as a unique human culture. There are only cultures. The diversity of cultures stems precisely from the diversity of men. What does exist on the other hand is a *zoological* unity of the human species; strictly speaking, "humanity" is the human *species*. But such a notion is of a purely biological order. To contend that it is implicitly demonstrated that "not only all men, taken individually, are members of a unique, universally predominant animal species, *Homo sapiens*, but that this biological fact includes moral implications,"⁵ simply amounts to reducing *culture* to *nature* and reducing history to biology. Paradoxically, this is what the biblical myth appears to do: at the very moment it casts a ban on any sympathy between man and the rest of the world, and most specifically the living world, it sacralizes a unity of man, which, in all strictness, has only a purely biological scope.

In reality, it is not of course this perspective in which the Bible places the problem of human uniqueness. It is not posed on the level of *naturalness*; it is not reduced to the lower end of the scale; it is posed at the level of the creative act of God and reduced to the higher end of the scale. The uniqueness of generic man echoes, in this sense, that of Yahweh. Our *excursus* from the side of "biological" humanity has not been useless though. It allows for a thorough understanding of how Yahweh takes up a fact that normally emerges from pure naturalness and, by making it sublime, turns it to his own benefit; how the cancellation of differences by a Completely Other is the equivalent, through merely changing levels, to their cancellation "by the lower"; how, finally, the radical excelling of human differentiation by Yahweh overcompensates for the very fact of this differentiation by which man established himself as man, by hoisting himself, in obviously relative fashion, above pure naturalness. Whether man's uniqueness is envisioned from the *natural* level or the *theological* level, the result is the same in both cases. It is the distinctively human level, the one where man does not define himself in terms of unity but plurality, the one in which he constructs himself, in consistently diverse ways, and declares himself self-created, that is denied. Radically outstripping this human level is the equivalent of

returning to his earlier state, a pre-human state—the state that was precisely that of Adam and Eve at the time of their "creation." Assigning to man the task of realizing this unity attributed to him, is again compelling him to abolish his own history, a history that is essentially perceived as a negative parenthetical expression between an absolute previous time and an absolute messianic future.

The idea of a generic man, an abstract, "universal" man, has also not been spared secularization at the hands of modern ideologies. As said earlier, it constitutes the heart of the ideology of the rights of man.⁶ It is also present in Marx, who in a famous passage defined communism as the "real appropriation of the human essence by man for man." One can also feel that it is this spontaneous adherence by Marx to the approach consisting of the systematic deduction of the particular out of the general that led him, throughout all his work, to minimize the importance of human differences. This is already noticeable in his approach—ambiguous to say the least—to the national question, as well as in his polemics against the anarchists and certain revolutionary syndicalists. Classless society in Marxist futurology will be perfectly homogenous and uniform. Generic man will be *realized* completely there. Against Bakunin, Marx "challenges the difference that is for him synonymous with distance. He ignores or chooses to ignore the notion of pluralism. In his republic he abolishes all stratification and differentiation and replaces it with coordination and subordination."⁷ But the idea of generic man can also be found in the works of Engels, Morgan, Lévi-Strauss, or Freud.

The tension between the particularist element and the universalist element in biblical thought has given rise to countless commentaries. It first establishes itself as a means of conciliating the refusal to proselytize that characterized Judaism for the greater part of its history—with some notable exceptions nonetheless—with the messianic conviction, which implies the final unification of the world, the end of universal history, and the salvation of all the righteous. "The essence of Jewish particularism is to be a universalism," writes Blandine Barret-Kriegel.⁸ Election is in fact not in contradiction with universalism. This election, "which is not composed of privileges but of responsibilities" (Lévinas), is primarily a moral assumption. As such, it connotes a particularism destined to abolish itself one day, a particularism representing an exemplary foreshadowing and the neces-

sary condition for universality. It is by means of the law he entrusted to his people that Yahweh means to determine the fate of all humanity. The Hebrews form a people of priests (Exodus 19:6). "Israel will thereby be the priest for whom the rest of humanity is the laity," notes Jacques Goldstain.⁹ Election in this sense is only the sign of the duty of all: "The one is the sign of all in so far as all have a duty to recognize themselves in the one," according to Paul Valadier's formulation.¹⁰

The assertion of biblical universalism really explodes in 2 Isaiah, at the same time that Yahweh declares his unique existence more forcefully. The mission of Israel is then made completely explicit: "It is not enough that you be my servant, to raise the tributes of Jacob and lead back the survivors of Israel. I make of you a light among nations so that my salvation will reach the very ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6). Henceforth, the righteous from around the world will have a place in the future world: "Of Zion it is said, every man is born there" (Psalms 87: 5). On the "day of Yahweh," it is all peoples who will be judged "on the subject of Israel" (Joel 4:1-17). In these Messianic Times, human unity will be realized. "The mountain of the Temple of Israel will be established at the head of the mountains and rise over the hills. The peoples will then flood toward it, numerous nations will arrive saying: Come, let us ascend the mountain of Yahweh, to the Temple of Jacob's God, so that he may teach us his ways and we may follow his paths. Because from Zion comes the Law and from Jerusalem the word of Yahweh" (Micah 4:1-2). "Yahweh becomes the focal point of the unity of the righteous among all peoples" (Ernst Bloch)—these righteous that Karl Marx would identify as the suffering proletariat, but soon redeemers of themselves: "Workers of the world, unite!"

From Christianity universalism will receive a new and decisive emphasis. Originally, though, Jesus' preaching seemed directed at the Jewish community. "Do not take the roads of the pagans," said Jesus to his disciples, "and do not enter a Samaritan town, rather go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Matthew 10:5). The universalization of Christ's teachings results especially from the Pauline reform. God "wants all men to be saved and to attain knowledge of the truth. Because God is unique, so too is the mediator between God and men unique, the Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:4-5). This does away with people's right to arrange their lives by following, on the level of faith and the level of val-

ues, their own paths. The nations should only form one "humanity" in Christ, and the Church of Christ should become the universal Church. "The religion taught by God to men is the same in all times and all places, because it cannot be mistaken or deceive us, whereas that religion of which man is the author, not only is it false, but is not the same anywhere," is the pleasant observation recorded by the author of the *Mythology* that forms part of the complete studies course used by religious schools that appeared courtesy of Briday Publishers in Lyons, in 1860.

Politics and Anti-Politics

The fact that man comes from a unique source in the biblical story of creation does not only cast the foundation for philosophical universalism. It also represents a deliberately *egalitarian* option. "The Hebrews, in their reflection on the first moments of humanity's existence," write Eisenberg and Abecassis, "spontaneously elect a single ancestor to serve its origin. Why? Because, on the plane of the spiritual values that haunt them, they are seeking to forcefully emphasize man's equality and to trace it back to the original unity ... Unity of man but also the unity of the human race. Our rabbis say: This is why God created humanity from a single ancestor; it is so no one can say, my ancestor came before yours."¹ They add, "All men are equal because they are created by the same unique God ... If God created just one man, it is so no one would think there could be several gods."² Before Yahweh, in other words, all men are equal because they all share the same origin. It is because Yahweh is the only God that all men come from the same source and, in reverse order, it is because they all come from the one same source that there are not several gods. The differences between men are secondary with respect to their common identity with regard to Yahweh. They are of little account in comparison to him, just as the Other is of little value when compared to the Completely Other. All men are essentially equal; all men are placed at an equal distance from Yahweh. The anthropological foundation of the biblical theory of politics is perfectly clear.

The Bible does not acknowledge any political specificity. In the perspective it establishes, politics is continually brought back to morality, sovereignty to the Law. The sovereign political power exercised by men cannot possess the slightest tinge of divine nature; only Yahweh is sovereign. Subsequently, justice is entirely distinct from power. It is what will provide happiness: men will be "happy" when the justice of Yahweh reigns.

It is the *judges* and sages, not the *kings*, who represent the political ideal of the Bible. "It is not the state that conditions the society's possibility of being," say Eisenberg and Abecassis. "The sole indispensable power is judiciary power."³ The constitution of

judges immediately precedes the revelation from Sinai in the Pentateuch. All the ideology of the Mosaic Code sanctifies the primacy of the judge over the king and of moral and juridical matters over political and military matters. On arrival in Canaan, the country is divided into a confederation where each tribe is subject to judicial authority. The Elder delivers justice in his tribe, whereas the judge exercises supreme authority in times of war and directs the executive branch during peacetime. Later on, the judge will even earn the title of "Elohim" (Psalms 82:6). Following the institution of royalty, the king will remain strictly answerable to the Law. Among the Hebrews, the king is obliged to study the Torah and apply it. Following his ascent to the throne he must keep the Scriptures in his close possession and consult them regularly. Civil authority is independent of sacerdotal authority, but must remain strictly dependent upon the Law. The great king is neither a builder nor a conqueror. He is one who governs according to the Bible and strives to realize the moral ideals of the Torah. His glory lies in "doing good in the eyes of the Eternal One." This is how the biblical "model" has inspired the principle of the "limitation of powers," the principle of the submission of politics to the judiciary, the idea that political problems are fundamentally of a "moral" nature and can be completely resolved by juridical means. In modern times, this system has found its basically logical extension in American nomocracy, the republic of judges founded on the spirit of the Bible and in which the Supreme Court plays a privileged role. "One cannot help but be struck by the dialectical kinship of American constitutional law and the Mosaic Code," writes Pol Castel, who adds, "It is not by chance that the American democracy displays so many similarities to the first government of the Hebrews, because the Founding Fathers were very knowledgeable about the world of the Bible, so thoroughly in fact that several of them knew Hebrew well enough to read its texts."⁴

It is only ~~reluctantly~~, if I can put it that way, that Yahweh responds to the Hebrews' desire to give themselves a king. Royalty—like marriage for Saint Paul—is only a stopgap. "If you say I wish to establish over me a king, like all the surrounding nations, it is a king chosen by Yahweh your God that you should establish over you" (Deuteronomy 17:14–15). This desire exhibited by the Hebrews forms part of their propensity to sin; it is a temptation.⁵ Moreover, Judaic tradition explicitly connects the

idea of royalty and royal power to the serpent that “tempts” Eve in the garden of Eden.⁶ In one of the two versions of the first book of Samuel, the appearance of the monarchy is depicted as blasphemous. Samuel reports to Yahweh on the desire of the Hebrew people, and Yahweh responds, “It is I they reject, wishing that I no longer rule over them” (1 Samuel 8:7). (This passage apparently represents a correction to the monarchist version found in 1 Samuel 9:1–16). “The royal role in Israel is itself contaminated and discredited,” writes Alex Egète. “Wouldn’t it presume or wouldn’t it oppose to God’s absolute royalty another authority?”⁷ This is in fact clearly the reason for biblical hostility to royal power; this power is a *human power*; it is one of the instances in which man declares his autonomy and sovereignty. If royalty is criticized in the Bible it is because it represents or tends to represent a rejection of nomocracy. It is quite remarkable, furthermore, that for various reasons, all the kings of Israel would be led to transgressing the law, starting with Solomon. The sole exception is Joseph, who, after being named viceroy of Egypt, had practically complete authority over this country and obtained the title of *tsadik*, “the Just,” precisely because he dispensed “justice” before sovereignty. The history of the kingdom will later justify the darkest predictions. After the exile and the rebuilding of the Temple, during the reforms of Ezra, the Hebrews returned to a strict nomocracy, and it was determined that neglect and transgression of the Law were the root causes of all their misfortune.

A mentality founded exclusively on the Bible can therefore not have any kind of political autonomy insofar as by its very nature it is compelled to reduce every human undertaking to one of morality. Shmuel Trigano goes even so far as to say that if it were possible to have a “Jewish political theory,” there could not be “a Jewish *political theory* with the aim of basing Jewishness in politics, as the very essence of politics is the negation of Jewishness.”⁸

If political autonomy is rejected, it is because it is one of the favored forms of a greater autonomy: the autonomy of man in general. Now, one of the fundamental relations implied by the essence of politics is the relation of *authority*. In this regard there is a logical relationship between the challenging of man’s authority over man and the assertion of Yahweh’s authority over the human race. The “mastery” of man by man is challenged proportionately to the very extent it is exponentially transferred to God.

Yahweh is absolute Master and man his servant—“with all that implies,” notes Will Herberg.⁹ One can read in Leviticus, “It is I to whom the children of Israel are enslaved; they are my slaves.”¹⁰ The man of the Bible has greater justification for his refusal to fully recognize the sovereignty of a human authority because he owes as his first priority total obedience to the Completely Other, the faceless face of the absolute master. Obedience to God also negates submission to man, observes Erich Fromm.¹¹ A similar argument can be found when Blandine Barret-Kriegel asserts that a human law is only legitimate as long as it remains subjected, subordinated, secondary—as long “as it does not work on the *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, a white page, as long as it *does not compete with God*.”¹² Such a law does not necessarily entail “slavery” on condition it is promulgated by slaves. “As it has no power over the property of others, as it is limited by the rights of man, it is not a form of *servitude*.”¹³ The refusal of “mastery” therefore pushes as far as *possible* the refusal of the *normal* situation in which the social human substance is dichotomized—in a way that is always plural, subject to challenge, never unilateral or frozen—between “objects” and “subjects.” This is, in short, the refusal of any situation that would mean more power for man and self-expansion. It still involves the description of happiness and “justice” as antagonists of power, the “kingdom of freedom” as incompatible with the “kingdom of necessity”—and this kingdom itself as a place in which an ever *relative* human mastery will only be abolished to place it beneath the *absolute* supervision of Yahweh.

It is in the Bible, writes Ernst Bloch, that we find “the most impassioned reaction against those on high and against worshipping them; only the Bible contains an appeal to revolt against them.”¹⁴ This appeal to “social revolution” finds its most enthusiastic forms in the books of the prophets, whose tragic fate stems from the fact that they continually developed, in the face of the “powerful,” a perpetually *critical* ideology. “This is the social ideal of Jewish propheticism,” writes Gerard Walter, “a sort of general leveling that will cause the disappearance of all class distinction and lead to the creation of a uniform society in which privileges of any kind will be banned. This egalitarian sentiment goes hand in hand with an irreducible animosity *toward the rich and powerful, who will be denied entry into the future kingdom*.”¹⁵ On countless occasions the Bible condemns as intrinsically evil imperial undertakings and powerful cities and nations. It multiplies the anathe-

mas against the "haughty ones" who by the same token are also the "accursed" (Psalms 119:21). It calls for the toppling of beauty, power, and "pride." To the pluralism of civilizations and their achievements, born from the creative will of men, it opposes the voluntary deprivation of the monotheist affirmation, the desert of the absolute, the equality in the non-created being. It legitimizes weakness and makes strength illegal. A day will come when the weak, who are the "just," will triumph, when the powerful are cast down from their thrones, and when human "pretensions" will crumble before Yahweh. This will be "the day of the Lord of Hosts ... over all that has been raised up, so that it may be rebuilt" (Isaiah 2:12); "human pride will be humiliated, the arrogance of man will be humbled, and Yahweh shall be exalted" (2:17). For Yahweh knows how to humble those who walk in pride" (Daniel 4:34). This conception of social justice, based on a spirit of revenge and resentment, anticipates all forms of socialism. The Bible identifies the relationship with God "with social justice."¹⁶ But this affirmation is only a means of contesting *human authority in principle* and not in one or another of its applications. It is for this reason that the prophets, by mounting a full frontal opposition to the princes of *this* world, can appear as the fathers of the socialism of "liberation," the first theoreticians of the "resistance" to mastery, or, as Roger Garaudy puts it, the "pioneers of the struggle against alienation." "Yahweh," writes Jean Lacroix in his commentary on Ernst Bloch, is "he who directs the subversive preaching of social apocalypse."¹⁷ He contests human "alienation." But only to replace it with another form—against which there is no recourse.

It would also be in this spirit, it seems to me, that we must interpret the constant preference shown by the Bible within its "family stories" for younger brothers, in other words for those who come *second*. In Genesis, Abel is the younger brother of Cain. Moses is also the younger brother of Aaron. Isaac, the second son of Abraham is preferred over Ishmael, his elder half-brother. This opposition is particularly explicit in the case of the twins Esau and Jacob. Esau was the first to be born (Genesis 25:25), and the Bible explicitly states that he fought with his brother in Rebecca's belly before birth because he wanted to come out first. Now Jacob and Esau correspond to symbolic types that are quite comparable to those of Cain and Abel. Esau is a redhead (*adom*) and hairy (*sair*); he is also a hunter. He will wed Hittite women (Genesis 26:34)

and have as a descendant Edom, also called Seir, who would become the enemy of Israel.¹⁸ Jacob, to the contrary, continued the nomadic lifestyle; he was "a tranquil man, remaining beneath his tents" (Genesis 25:27). In Judaic tradition, Esau refused to be circumcised, whereas Jacob was circumcised at birth.¹⁹ The parallel with Cain and Abel is striking, but it is a reverse parallel, because where Cain killed Abel, Jacob "killed" Esau as the first-born by buying back his birthright as the elder son (Genesis 25:29–34). He then, by deceiving his father as to his true identity, obtained the "blessing" of Isaac (Genesis 27:6–29). Now, what would be the right of the elder if not the fact of *naturally* coming first, according to the order of things of this world? To this *natural hierarchy* the Bible opposes another: the hierarchy according to Yahweh, which represents its reversal. The preference given the younger versus the elder brother is only a metaphor for the preference given to the second (to the last) as opposed to the first, to the "weak" against the "powerful," to he who is "humble" (therefore blessed by Yahweh) against he who is "proud" (therefore pagan). The biblical narrative itself further shows the general range of this metaphor, when Yahweh tells Rebecca, pregnant with Jacob and Esau: "There are two nations in your womb, two peoples that once issued from you will separate, one people will dominate the other, the elder will serve the younger" (Genesis 25:23). This is already the announcement of his selection.

Nothing more would remain to be said if Yahweh claimed to be correcting a particular unjustified situation, if he claimed to be reacting against the ever-present possibility of an abuse of authority. But this is not what is involved here. It is not the abuse of power that Yahweh condemns; it is power itself. From the biblical perspective, human power established as sovereign is intrinsically evil; it is evil in its very essence. The "just" are not just in one part and weak in another. They are just because they are weak, by very virtue of this weakness, just as the powerful are evil by very virtue of their power. So it is not the weak that are touted by the Bible as much as weakness itself. Let's read Psalm 119. Its author establishes a *logical* parallel between the status of being one of the just, one who respects the word of Yahweh, and status fact of being a "stranger" down here (verse 19), the status of being persecuted, humiliated and scorned. This condition, to which this author has been reduced, constitutes his own grace. *Otherwise it would be inexplicable*. God *cannot* be wrong, and on the other hand, weakness

cannot be an evil. So it must be that the powerful are only triumphing in appearance. And what better appearance could there be than their very power? We find here the entire apparatus of general reversal of cause and effect that characterizes this literature. It is because he feels like a stranger, and feels humiliated and persecuted, that the psalmist transforms his disgrace into grace by using the sole means at his disposal, in other words, looking at it as the effect of the superior will of Yahweh. And just as the evil fortune that strikes him is the surest sign of his election, the "triumph" of the powerful is the no less certain sign of their wickedness and the proclamation of their punishment. This interpretation even operates retrospectively. Moses, having been chosen by Yahweh to receive the Revelation of Sinai, could only be greatly humble and ascetic, "the most humble man the earth has ever carried" (Numbers 12:3)—and it is by very reason of this humility that mankind have remembered him. In Yahweh's order the last are always the first. In this sense Yahweh is clearly a god of vengeance. He will realize in the absolute of history what his people were *incapable of doing* in the relative order of their own history (see the Book of Jeremiah). The metaphysics of revenge, the ideology of resentment as source of the reversal of all values, as source of the substitution of the negative for the positive, finds its most profound basis in this system. The spirit of vengeance produces the necessary condition for bad conscience, which itself implies the idea of sin. The instilling of guilt is only the means, the sole means at the disposal of one who feels victimized by an "unjust" domination, to convince himself of the absolute compensation his condition will prompt, and, by the same token, for attempting to incapacitate the powerful by awakening in them the infection of doubt about the causes of their own power.

This idea running through the Bible according to which it is just, intrinsically just, that the first shall be last and the last shall be first, probably made it difficult to start relying on the notion of "love." This love still finds itself confined by the intolerance that forms its relative antithesis. A very current profane transposition of this can be seen in the prominent saying about the freedom that is appropriately denied to the "enemies of freedom." The culmination of this idea in Christianity will be the discourse of the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12, Luke 6:20–26), a veritable program for the reversal of all values, and first the reversal of the classic equation of paganism: "good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy =

beloved of God."²⁰ "The wretched alone are the good; the poor, impotent, lowly alone are the good; the suffering, deprived, sick, ugly alone are pious, alone are blessed by God; blessedness is for them alone—and you the powerful and noble, are on the contrary evil, the cruel, the lustful, the insatiable, the godless to all eternity; and you shall be eternally the unblessed, accursed, and damned."²¹

Max Weber, like Nietzsche, could read in the Sermon on the Mount the sketch of a slave revolt. The New Testament subtly develops themes that are connected to this regarding the curse of "wealth," the immorality of material possession, and so on. To his disciples Jesus declared, "You know that those regarded as the leaders of the nations are as lords to them that live there, and the great ones make their power felt. But so shall it not be among you; to the contrary, whosoever will be great upon you shall be your servant, and whosoever would be first among you will be the slave of all" (Mark 10:42–44). This theme comes up several times, notably in Matthew (20:25–27). We can even find the echo of this social morality in the Fathers of the Church—and even in the theory of value enunciated by Saint Thomas Aquinas, which was an early foreshadowing of David Ricardo and Karl Marx. As we know, early Christianity began by directing its appeals to the classless and ignorant. "In the second and even third centuries, the Christian church was still overall (although with many exceptions) an army of have-nots."²² This fact, moreover, contributed to its success, as it allowed it to benefit from the aspiration toward social revolution. "Christianity offered to the underprivileged the conditional promise of a better legacy in the other world. Several rival pagan religions did as much. But Christianity had a bigger stick and a juicier carrot."²³ Christianity, finally, did not fail to develop the idea of the just suffering and triumphing, by leaning on the example of Jesus himself, who would only return to glory after having consented in advance to his degradation on the cross, a degradation intended to redeem humanity. "*God on the Cross*—is the fearful hidden meaning behind this symbol still understood?—Everything that suffers, everything that hangs on the Cross, is *divine*—We all hang on the Cross, consequently *we* are divine."²⁴ The dialectic of weakness that is not weakness and the strength that is not strength—in other words, the appearance of strength and the appearance of weakness—can also be seen in Saint Paul, whose poetics Claude Tresmontant has no hesitation

in comparing to the Chaplinesque anti-hero.²⁵ It is Paul who said that as wisdom was folly and power was weakness, he must glorify his weaknesses: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. This is why I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in persecutions, and anguish endured for Christ's sake, for when I am weak then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

In the political domain, Christianity did not begin, logically enough, to assume more pagan features until after its accession to power. It is in the Euro-Christian blend that the biblical problematic reverses itself, and it is asserted that man must obey the king in the same way the king obeys God, that temporal authority is itself the expression of divine will, and so forth. The *institution* of Christianity could only survive at the price of a compromise between its constituent principles and an elementary political realism of primarily Roman origin. As Julius Evola writes:

In theory, the Western world accepted Christianity but for all practical purposes it remained pagan ... Thus the outcome was some sort of hybridism. Even in its attenuated and Romanized Catholic version, the Christian faith represented an obstacle that deprived Western man of the possibility of integrating his authentic and irrepressible way of being through a concept and in a relationship with the Sacred that was most congenial to him. In turn, this way of being prevented Christianity from definitely shaping the West into a tradition of the opposite kind, that is, into a priestly and religious one conformed to the ideals of the *ecclesia* of the origins, the evangelical pathos, and the symbol of the mystical body of Christ.²⁶

Over the course of the centuries, this hybrid model has never detached itself from its ambiguities, which have affected every form and ideal of a "Christian State" or a "Christian politics." In Evola's words:

We should not try to dissimulate the antithesis existing between, on the one hand, the pure Christian morality of love, submission, humility, mystical humanism, and, on the other hand, ethical-political values such as justice, honor, difference, and a spirituality that is not the oppo-

site of power, but of which power is a normal attribute. The Christian precept of returning good for evil is opposed by the principle of striking the unjust, of forgiving and generosity, but only to a vanquished foe, and not to an enemy who still stands strong in his injustice. In a virile institution, as contemplated in the ideal of the true State, there is little or no room for love (conceived as the need to communicate, to embrace others, to lower oneself and to take care of those who may not even ask for it or be worthy of it). Again, in such an institution there can be relationships among equals, but without a communitarian-social and brotherly tint, established on the basis of loyalty, mutual acknowledgement and respect, as everyone retains his own dignity and a healthy love for distance. I will not discuss here what consequences would ensue on the political plane if we were to take literally the evangelical parables concerning the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, as well as all the other nihilist teachings that are built on the overthrow of earthly values and on the idea of the imminent advent of the *Regnum*.²⁷

Under these conditions it is completely natural that Christianity, which is today carrying out a critical analysis of its own history, would take some distance with regard to the principles that allowed it to establish itself as a power. The oft proclaimed return in the Gospel, the primacy of the pastoral over the dogmatic, thus bring an end to an equivocal situation, which I wholeheartedly agree has gone on too long. Faustian energy and the Christian spirit are in the middle of a divorce at the end of a union that was never truly consummated, and the notion of "Christian politics," even inside the Church, is increasingly a subject of contention. Better, the very notion of politics faces accusations coined in the very spirit of the original biblical mentality. Jacques Ellul did not hesitate to write, "The accumulation of evil, the rise of danger, it is politics and politics alone that has caused this. It is the current image of absolute Evil. It is Satanic, diabolical, the very heart of the demonic."²⁸ The motif invoked is always the same: "It is politics that is mistaken for the universal, and dethrones God."²⁹

How could it be cause for surprise that such an accusation is now being launched from every corner? Insofar as the majority of

contemporary ideologies are merely crystallizations of Judeo-Christian values in secular form, it was inevitable that the ideal of the nomocracy, the devaluation of the very idea of power, the delegitimization of politics would again become theoretical watch words. In *Barbarism with a Human Face*, Bernard-Henri Lévy declares that it is power that is evil.³⁰ In *The Testament of God* he declares his wish “to restrict politics in order to make room for ethics” and “to reduce politics to its simplest expression.” He adds, “My ideal State is the State with no ideal.”³¹ Michel le Bris exclaims, “I have come up with the plan to write the end of politics.” Shmuel Trigano takes a position for “going beyond the master relationship, the invention of a man who is neither slave nor master.”³² There is no need to multiply the examples; it is a veritable concert. The common denominator of all these opinions is that politics is the struggle of man’s power over man and that “mastery” arises from the fact that all human power tends, by its own nature, to exceed itself by a tendency to “mount to extremes” similar to the one described by Clausewitz. One may note in passing the kinship of this hypothesis with Marxist theory, which sees politics, as we know, as deriving from (economic) alienation. Nor is this hypothesis a stranger to a certain liberal, mainly American, mode of thought based on the primacy of economics and juridical morality.³³ From Saint Augustine, who saw the history of Rome as the history of a “band of thieves,” to Erich Fromm, who denounces European heroics as a “history of conquests, pride, and rapacity,” the tendency remains identical; it still involves opposing a Completely Other that inhibits self-excelling, the immobility offered by “universal peace” to the flow of vital antagonisms and the limitations of egalitarianism—“a pretext offered to *rancune*”³⁴—to the limitless energy of free wills.

This aspiration to void politics is obviously a utopia—and a particularly dangerous utopia. Man lives in society, and there is no society that can live without politics. As an activity, variable in form but invariable in essence, at the service of practical organization and the cohesion of society, politics is derived from humanity’s elementary sociability. As Julien Freund writes:

Politics does not obey man’s desires and fantasies. Man cannot change things to be as if he never existed or to be something he is not. He cannot suppress it without suppressing himself ... Politics *is* an essence in a double sense,

where on the one hand it is one of the fundamental, constant, and ineradicable categories of nature and human existence, and, on the other hand, a reality that remains identical to itself despite the variations on the face of the earth. In other words, man did not invent politics, nor did society, and in addition, throughout time politics remains what it has always been.³⁵

The essence of politics includes three presuppositions: the relationship of command and obedience, which determines order, the relationship of public and private, which determines opinion, and the relationship of friend and enemy, which determines struggle. It is the way it *mobilizes* these presuppositions, especially the first and third, that the essence of politics prompts the radical hostility of those who refuse to accept that relations of authority—not necessarily despotic!—necessarily derive from human diversity, to the point, moreover, that acts of resistance and refusal can only have meaning with regard to the factual givens of obedience and command. A society without politics would be a society without order (this would be anarchy, the prelude to the overcompensation provided by dictatorship), opinion (this would be the most total absence of liberty imaginable), or struggle (this would be death). Hence the now classic definition provided by Freund: politics is the “social activity that proposes to guarantee by force, generally based on law, the exterior security and interior concord of a particular political unit by ensuring order in the midst of all the struggles that are born from the diversity and divergence of opinions and self-interests.”³⁶

The normal political authority is the State.³⁷ Its two essential roles are *designating the enemy* outside (actual or potential) and preventing personal conflicts inside from degenerating into civil war. Machiavelli primarily conceived of the State as the most appropriate means of putting to an end the private wars between Italian lords. The State, therefore, has a completely natural recourse to that specific political method known as force.³⁸ It is in this perspective that we should place the problem of reasons of State that have ceaselessly haunted sociological political analysis since the seventeenth century. The reason of State is exercised in the name of the collective good; it has the character of “public safety.” It is *not* the right of the State to take action in the name of the collective interest and do what it pleases under the pretext

that, as upholder and guarantor of sovereign authority, it is not subject to its own rules. It results rather from the principle of antireductionism; the whole of the nation, as a whole, has prerogatives that each of its constituents cannot possess separately, and these prerogatives are exercised by the State. Thus the principle of the reason of State is:

conceptually inseparable from the political conduct of a state. Not only could a State not be constituted without this principle, but it would be incapable of surviving, insofar as the political question, even with respect to morality, is less one of denying or abolishing it than it is of finding the conditions of justice capable of attenuating the rigor of its application ... No doubt the reason of State constantly runs the risk of degrading into a simple instrument for political ruses or to serve as justification for a tyrannical politics; it does not prevent the fact that by nature it is reasonable, measured and wise, in other words, that it consists of finding the most effective solution that reduces individual and collective prejudices to a minimum with an eye to the general economy of society ... In short, to believe that abolishing the reason of State is possible is to imagine that there could never be any exceptional situations. It also amounts to a refusal of the transcendence of the State and reducing it to one individual association among other associations.³⁹

As for the old debate, instituted by the Bible, on the antagonism between force and law, it becomes moot on realization that no law is viable unless means to apply it exist. Now law cannot obtain its application in and of itself; constraint is not one of its inherent qualities. As Julien Freund writes again, law "is normative and prescriptive, but it does not possess within itself the force of imposing or compelling respect for what it prescribes. Constraint comes from without; it is political or hierarchical depending upon the case."⁴⁰ It is force that is *a priori* excluded by the law; it is violence. "In the lawful State where the Law reigns exclusively," adds Freund, "not only would law be impotent but politics would be paralyzed ... Peace is a primordially political and not juridical matter. It is when politics are powerful enough to counter violence both within and without that it can impose solu-

tions by law."⁴¹ Law is not essentially original. It presupposes politics as the very condition of its existence and perpetuation. To simultaneously wish for the rule of law and "the least politics possible" is a contradiction in terms. Law cannot be boiled down to force, but it cannot establish itself save through a relationship of strength. To replace the political with the juridical would necessarily lead to impotence, anarchy, and an overall state of injustice. It is the extinction of politics, and not the assertion of its primacy, that brings about a return to the law of the jungle.

In the "ideology" of Indo-European paganism not only is the biblical antagonism between morality or law and political sovereignty non-existent, but these two notions, to the contrary, are closely connected. It is this which is vigorously expressed by the theology of the first function, to which Georges Dumézil has devoted several books.⁴² Among the Indo-Europeans, law and sovereignty are embodied by gods representing the two fundamental and *inseparable* aspects of this first function: Dius Fidius and Jupiter for the Romans, Mitra and Varuna for the Vedic Indians, Tyr and Odin-Wotan for the Germans. This religious fact presents a very clear teaching that is more relevant than ever.

The idea according to which the use of force necessarily leads to its pathological escalation is contradicted by historic experience, which shows us the most contradictory formulations in this domain. All power does not "mount" to extremes. As for the idea that law should substitute itself for force, it is purely utopian as I have shown, since the situations that are exceptions cannot be governed by the juridical angle. Force will always remain necessary to counter those who do not respect the law. The balance of force and law under the strict control of political sovereignty is the characteristic of every organic society, and it is only the disappearance of one or the other that will lead either to despotism or anarchy. In Antiquity, the refusal of tyranny, resistance to a power gone mad, to an order that has become no more than established disorder, is symbolized by Antigone rising up against Creon—by Antigone, who, with the choir was seen by all Greece as being in the right (contrary to what Lévy, against all the evidence, declares). The affirmation of the primacy of politics is therefore a far cry from the legitimization of despotism; in fact it is the exact opposite. Instead, it is clearly its negation that appears to denote a disturbing mental disposition, a subjectivity that is so pathological that it is spontaneously compelled to transform every

object into an "idol," a subjectivity so materialist that it can only escape its own tendencies by submitting to the absolute decrees of a Completely Other, a subjectivity, which, through its protest against hierarchies, is in fact aiming at their reversal. Dare we say it: the interpretation of all power as an evil, every recourse to force as "unjust," does not only arise out of propaganda that may or may not be effective, it also reveals a profound inability to grasp these notions in any other way. It reveals, in a word, what our preachers of "justice" and universal peace would do with power if the opportunity arose for them to claim it.

Likewise, freedom is not the state that results from the suppression of all human constraints. It is not a *natural state* of man that society, power, the social order, and so on have taken from us, a formless freedom corresponding to the very nature of man according to Rousseau, a liberty inherent to the subject of law based on a sovereign conception of individual will (as sharing in an absolute sovereignty that predates society), a freedom that power must recognize as axiomatic—as *license*, as emancipation from all necessity. Liberty is a *political* notion and not a *moral* one; as such it cannot escape the presupposition of politics. Liberty must be conquered. There are no "spontaneous beneficiaries" of it, but founders and guarantors. Freedom results exclusively from the action taken to install it or take possession of it, whether this action is taken by individuals or groups. It therefore assumes, by nature, a *full sovereignty*. People and nations, like individuals, are only as free as they are sovereign. "The free man is a warrior," declares Nietzsche, and this formulation is made explicit by the definition he provides; freedom consists of possessing "the will to self-responsibility so that the distance that separates us may be maintained." Therefore, it is not so much an absence of constraint as it is the free will to impose upon oneself the constraint that encourages a state of power and full mastery of one's abilities, the foremost condition of their being put into operation, the free ability to keep the promises that one has made to oneself. To eliminate politics in the name of freedom amounts to creating the conditions for freedom's own elimination. As Carl Schmitt wrote in a now celebrated passage, "If a people no longer has the strength or will to maintain itself in the political sphere, it is not the end of politics in the world. It is only the end of a weak people."⁴³

As an ideal at the end of history, the Bible aspires to "universal peace." These words of Isaiah are inscribed in enormous let-

ters on the front wall of the United Nations building in New York: "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (2:4; see also Micah 4:3). The coming of the rule of the One God entails the abolition of the conflicts born out of the diversity of the real world.⁴⁴ The same occurs in Marx with the realization of the classless society. "History, like existence, is eluded by an initial solution that guarantees the final solution, the state of non-contradiction, the end of the secular theodicy, the homogenous and conflictless society. In this sense Marx falls under the criticism of Nietzsche, denouncing the metaphysical illusion in his own way: 'This world is contradictory, therefore there is a world stripped of contradictions' (*The Will to Power*)."⁴⁵ This ideal of "universal peace" is an ideal of *non-contradiction*, which logically implies the disappearance of differences—and until that disappearance, their theoretical devaluation, as it is differences that generate the contradictory. Contradiction is the very motor of life; the desire to make it vanish is a death wish.

It is entirely different in paganism, where the conflict of opposites and its resolution in and by the being of the world sacralizes the struggle as a positive fundamental reality. Struggle is not the foundation of an *order*, but forms the *framework* of the universe. Implying both conservation and transformation, contradiction, which is not mechanistic and fixed but clearly dialectical, ensures its own transcendence (*Aufhebung*). At the empirical and preconceptual stage, we can find the clearest perception of it from the time of high Antiquity, notably by Heraclitus, "It must be known that the fight is universal, that justice is a struggle, and that all things are born in accordance with struggle and necessity."⁴⁶ Regarding Heraclitus, Nietzsche writes:

The strife of the opposites gives birth to all that comes to be; the definite qualities that look permanent to us express but the momentary ascendancy of one partner. But this by no means signifies the end of the war; the contest endures for all eternity. Everything that happens, happens in accordance with this strife, and it is just in this strife that eternal justice is revealed. It is a wonderful idea, welling up from the purest strings of Hellenism, the idea that strife embodies the everlasting sovereignty of strict jus-

tice, bound to everlasting laws ... It is Hesiod's good *Eris* transformed into the cosmic principle; it is the contest idea of the Greek individual and the Greek state taken from the gymnasium and the palestra, from the artist's *agon*, from the contest between political parties and cities—all transformed into universal application so that now the wheels of the cosmos turn on it.⁴⁷

Throughout European history, this implicit philosophy will constitute the profound justification of an exaltation of the values of struggle. Saxo Grammaticus says to Bjarei, "War comes from the well-born; the makers of war are of high lineage. For the dangerous actions undertaken by the chiefs are not the deeds of common men."⁴⁸ And it is also this idea, not of a universal peace but a universal struggle, that is expressed in the beautiful engraving by the mysterious Petrarch Master, "Der Kampf in der Natur" (1520).⁴⁹

Whereas Judeo-Christian monotheism, vehicle of the obsession with the unique and homogenous, demands (or believes itself justified in demanding) the extinction of conflicts, without realizing that the conflictual structure is the very same as life, and its extinction implies entropy and death. European paganism rests on an *antagonistic pluralism of values*. In its most immediate manifestations, polytheism is the expression of this antagonism, which never terminates in irreversible opposites and a radical dualism but naturally resolves itself in a harmonious whole. The pagan gods fight amongst themselves, and yet this struggle never provides a challenge to the tripartite structure that emerged from the foundational war.⁵⁰ In agreement with Jean-Louis Tristani, Michel Maffesoli emphasizes that "the tripartite division given by Georges Dumézil to the Indo-Europeans tends to make prominent their recognition of social plurality; there are various roles that are assumed, which perhaps construct, oppose, and fight each other, but are recognized for what they are, and if there is a hegemony of a given type, it is momentary, precarious, and ever subject to challenge."⁵¹

This is because, as Max Weber says, "the gods who are fighting each other" are also fighting and confronting an ever plural array of antagonistic forces, none of whom are absolutely dishonored in advance.⁵² In the spirit of paganism, even the public enemy (*hostis*, as opposed to *inimicus*) cannot represent evil in and of itself. It always remains a *relative* adversary. Furthermore, recip-

rocal esteem may be born from this confrontation. Far from necessitating the dishonoring of the enemy in order to fight him (an inevitable obligation in a "pacifist" system) by the same token an opponent can be acknowledged as a peer for standing up and fighting well. Hence the fundamentally pagan appeal to the "fraternal adversary"—an appeal rarely heard today, I should note—that is the strict opposite of the "forgiveness for offenses" and the left cheek that is presented after the right cheek has been slapped. Hence also the very ancient practice of the duel, which is the very concretization of this mentality (and we all know how it has endured through time, even independently of the technical development of means of destruction).⁵³ In paganism, the war of religion (a war between categories of belief) is excluded, along with the class struggle (war of social categories), by very reason of their irreducible nature. "The enemy, the other, is not perceived as a criminal, but as a figure of a momentary issue; the existence of the other and alterity is not denied, but is the measure of a social existence that finds itself in confrontation."⁵⁴

The motif of enemy brothers, which in Indo-European tradition seems to be grafted alongside the theme of divine twins, clearly illustrates the way in which pagan thought places conflict and confrontation far beyond good and evil.⁵⁵ It is enough in this regard to compare, on the one hand, the opposition of Cain and Abel, or Jacob and Esau, to that, on the other, of Eteocles and Polynices, or Epimetheus and Prometheus (or even more exactly Romulus and Remus), to perceive it. It is no less remarkable, moreover, to see how the Faustian soul, mainly during the *Sturm und Drang* era, with Schiller (*Die Braut von Messina*) and Goethe (*Pandora*), has transformed the biblical myth of Cain and Abel. Either there is a reduced preference for the "Abel" type or a more overt liking for the "Cain" type, or maybe even both types are viewed, beyond the conflict that opposes them, as strictly complementary. These two types then become metaphors of *sapientia* and *fortitudo*: where would wisdom be without strength? And it is through the reunion of these two types that harmony is created. This is the basis of the Wagnerian conception of the *Wiedervereinigung der Gegensätze*.⁵⁶

In political sociology this philosophy fully intersects with Carl Schmitt's *Freund-Feind* theory, the introduction of which in France is due to Julien Freund and Raymond Aron. In *The Concept of the Political*, a work that since its publication has been one of the

intellectual poles of German political theory, Carl Schmitt shows that the distinction between friend and enemy, the *relationship* (and consequently the conjunction as well) of the friend (*Freund*) and the enemy (*Feind*), is the *distinguishing* relationship and very criterion of politics: the criterion of politics is the possibility that any form of opposition may develop into conflict.

Carl Schmitt also shows that the replacement of politics by morality, far from leading to the extinction of conflicts, instead leads to their *aggravation*. In fact, from the moment conflict falls under a moral interpretation—and a morality that poses good and evil as absolutes—it becomes *inextinguishable*. The enemy is not suppressed but transformed from a temporary, relative adversary into an *absolute enemy*. The enemy in fact can only represent evil. It is the evil he embodies that one is fighting, and for this task all means are good or capable of being good. The enemy is *guilty*; he must be *punished*. This assignation of guilt to the adversary is a necessary condition for the entire system. When one is an adept of “universal peace,” how can one wage war unless it is in the name of a self-evident good? “Under pretext of suppressing the political enemy in the name of an allegedly more human conception,” notes Freund, one “denatures enmity and makes it crueler, as its main concern is discovering the guilty.”⁵⁷ The entire development of contemporary international law, founded largely on the values of the Bible, actually aims at making the enemy the *guilty party* from the moral-juridical viewpoint. Step by step, we have arrived at the idea that the enemy *should not exist*. If the enemy does exist, then he does so outside of human laws—*outside of humanity*. We then end at this paradox:

that it would be permissible to exterminate a group or social class in the name of humanity, since one is not slaying an enemy but killing the guilty. Finally—and we have already come across indications of this evolution—the soldier will no longer have a military role but the role of policeman and executioner. This is the logic: a society without enemies that wishes to see peace reign through justice, i.e., by law and morals, would be transformed into a kingdom of judges and culprits. Far from justice replacing politics, one would witness a parody of justice and politics.⁵⁸

The wars waged in the name of an abstract universal morality—yesterday it was religious morality with its wars of religion, today it is ideological morality—have always been the most atrocious. Adding the radical devaluation of some people and the good conscience of others to traditional conflicts abolishes the classic distinctions of civil and military, the state of war and the state of peace. Such wars imply the *destruction* of the adversary, eventually replaced by his “conversion” or “reeducation,” to the very extent it is deemed impossible (and unthinkable) to *come to terms* with what the adversary represents. It is not merely more perfected technical means of destruction that have rendered modern wars atrocious; it is the conjunction of these means with the general diffusion of a biblical ideology of “universal peace,” which, when confronted by the *reality* of alterity and the relative enmities that flow out of it, can only confront it by putting the enemy outside humanity.⁵⁹ To accept, on the contrary, the specificity of politics—and by the same stroke, the entire autonomy of man it denotes—is not necessarily the same as considering the enemy as a culprit. It is to acknowledge him as still qualified to be of equal dignity. If conflicts do not *intrinsically* fall under a moral interpretation, then the adversary does not represent “evil”; he is only the *figure* of a given problematic, and one can still respect the *individual* man he is inside. If my relationship to him is beyond good and evil, the Other can be both my enemy and my brother.

It is also by reason of its universalism that biblical thought rejects politics. Politics “is essentially a particularist and non-universalist vocation ... Also, insofar as the clergy and intellectuals claim to be the servants of the universal, they can only be hostile to the political.”⁶⁰ To be specific, Yahweh will not shift his eyes from the absolute of humanity except to the individual absolute. In face of this gaze, individual nations, empires, and cultures are at best only contingent events, transitory outgrowths of human history and at worst merely manifestations of an undying “pride.” To the pagan principle of a totality connected to the world that encompasses all collective specificities, the Bible opposes a twofold and non-contradictory disassociation of a uniform humanity and the individual disenfranchised of all he belongs to. “To the idea of totality in which ontological philosophy veritably reunites—or includes—the multitude,” writes Lévinas, “it is a question of substituting the idea of a separation that is resistant to synthesis.”

Paganism naturally legitimizes politics, to the statutory extent in which it gives its blessing to the pluralism of collective identities—in which it even encourages, between *humanity* and the *individual*, the *intermediary* dimension of the specific culture with which man constructs and transforms himself. “The one God,” writes Freund again, “is not a political being. Only polytheism is a political view of the beyond. For the same reason the whole of human society reconciled with itself as announced by Marxism, cannot be political either.”⁶¹ From the political standpoint, the universal state is a contradiction in terms. “The political world is not a *universum* but, if one might put it this way, a *pluriversum*. This corresponds with the position that all political theory is pluralist.”⁶² Politics is only made in conjunction with the Other; alterity is the very condition of politics. This is why the negation or devaluation of the Other to the profit of the Completely Other, goes hand in hand with the negation or devaluation of politics. In the etymological sense, politics remains the activity of the *polis*, of the city, and it so happens that only paganism can accept that different cities have different gods.

All sickly types aspire to form a herd. Quantity compensates them—at least they think it does—for what they lack in quality. If several suffer together they believe their suffering is reduced. Those who boast Judeo-Christian values sometimes attribute to the “powerful” the feelings they would have or be tempted to have if they were there in their place. They do not see that true power is an end in itself and does not aim, on condition it is tranquil, at any utility—that “the will to will denies any end in itself and only tolerates an objective as a means in order to best itself deliberately in the game and organize a space for this game.”⁶³ In paganism, happiness is never the antagonist of power. But nor is it an antagonist of *equity*. By condemning the exaltation of weakness, paganism is not in any way aiming at justifying the crushing of the weak by the strong, nor forming the “ideological alibi” of any sort of established disorder. To the contrary, it claims to contribute to the formation of the spiritual framework that allows every individual, whatever his rank, assuming only that he has the will, to cultivate what inside strengthens and does not undo him. Paganism does not reproach Christianity for defending the weak who are unjustly oppressed. It reproaches it for exalting them in their weakness and viewing it as the sign of their election and their title to glory; it reproaches Christianity for not helping them to

become strong. So it is not a question of opposing the strong versus the weak—today, in any event, it is paganism that is weak and Judeo-Christian monotheism that is strong—but purely and simply of opposing a system of *remaining weak* with a system of *becoming strong*. It is also a question of making a world that is not a vale of tears, nor a theater of shadows, nor a stage where man with erratic happiness *acts out his salvation*, but the natural field of self-expansion for a man capable of asserting his autonomy and establishing himself as his own *project*.

Chapter Twenty

Man's Place in Nature

"The desert is monotheist." This is the well-known phrase that Renan added to the rereading of a manuscript, a phrase which has become famous today. It figures in the *General History and Comparative System of Semitic Languages*.¹ "Nature holds little place in the Semitic religions; the desert is monotheist; sublime in its immense uniformity, it first revealed the idea of infinity to man, but not the feeling of an incessantly creative life that a more fertile nature inspired in other races." This turn of phrase is no longer so common today—independently of the fact that the desert is not so monotonous and foreign to alterity as one might think. It is nonetheless possible that it holds a kernel of truth. Erich Fromm, for example, without regarding the desert as the source of monotheism, accepts the possibility of the influence of one's life environment on one's general conception of the world. Evoking its significance as the "symbol of the unfettered, unpropertied life," he considers the desert as the "key symbol" of the exit from Egypt. "The desert is no home: it has no cities; it has no riches."² Was it not then necessary that the Torah was given to man in the desert, in this landscape that frees the mind of all visible things and plunges it into the abyss of its own night? "Pastoral life, solitude, and pure time facilitate the revelation that, as we know, is produced in the desert," write Josy Eisenberg and Armand Abecassis. "God has chosen a people of nomads and not a sedentary people and forged it in the desert before giving it the Promised Land, so that it would not become affixed there, and remain faithful to its vocation."³ A similar idea was displayed in the sixteenth century by Maharal of Prague: "Because the Torah is divine, because it is absolute intellect and not a collection of proprieties, it was given in the desert, because the desert presents an affinity with what is derived from God and intellect."⁴ Mircea Eliade observes, finally: "The only preeminently pure and holy region is the desert, because there is where Israel remained loyal to its God."⁵

Renan writes again: "There are monotheist races just as there are polytheist races, and this difference stems from an original diversity in the way they envision nature."⁶ A somewhat extreme

opinion certainly, but one that has the advantage of emphasizing this much debated notion of "nature." If being is the world, there would in fact necessarily be kinship, filiation, and consubstantiality of beings and ways of being—and the ways of being between them—consubstantiality consequently of man and "nature" like that of man and God. This bond of man to "nature," let's say right off, should not be interpreted as flat naturalism—the "return to Nature" dear to Rousseau's disciples, ecologists, and *völkisch* sects—but as an active participation of man in all that exists, based on his clear awareness of what exists. In this perspective, God can be in all things, not in the sense of a *logos* that contrives tangible reality from within, but as a *dimension* of this reality, its *depth* dimension. The mist on the mountain, the song of a bird, the flickering path of an insect can bear its mark. God can spread out toward man in the movement of the waves, the seeding grass, the blossoming flower. (See the Christian paganism of Saint Francis of Assisi, who praises "our sister the moon," "our brother the wind," "our mother the earth, our mother who bears and nurtures us," and "especially my lord our brother the sun.")

In the Indo-European religions, as I've said earlier, man is the measure of God. The society of gods is modeled on that of men, whose perpetuation and duration it secures by giving it an ideal representation. Man is the sole *creator* of the gods, because he is the sole giver of meaning. In Olympus or Valhalla, the gods exercise a functional social role in accordance with the model of the tripartite ideology, which has its equivalent in the city of men, either concretely or "ideologically" (in the Dumézilian sense of the word). Far from being the opposite of this human world, the pantheon provides its most intense and solid justification. It constitutes its *exaltation*. The gods themselves display the characteristics of humans and testify to the same variety of aspirations. In the *Illiad*, when Zeus envisions rescuing Sarpedon from the sword of Patroclus, Hera tells him: "Do as you please, but do not expect the rest of the immortals to applaud."⁷ Likewise, when Brynhildr (Brunhilda) disobeys Odin—an episode alluded to in the *Edda*, in the final verse of Fafnismál—her father imprisons her inside the circle of fire as punishment only reluctantly. She will eventually be freed by Sigurdr (Siegfried). This is because Zeus and Odin are sovereigns, not despots. And religion here forms the natural cement of these collective structures which the religions of individual salvation—especially in their profane forms—will often

have the effect of breaking. The gods, finally, are mortal. At the end of the cycle, they disappear.

Among the Indo-Europeans, Jean Varenne observes, "there is a *continuity* between the most humble of creatures and the highest of the gods. This in no way implies that all these beings are commingled or equal; quite the contrary, they form clearly separate and hierarchical groups ... The norm is for each living being to fully assume his personal station or, as said in the Vedas, his *dharma*: both his 'status' and his 'position,' that is to say his place in the hierarchical scale of things."⁸

This continuity that connects the divine sphere and the sphere of men, as well as the sacred and the profane, unlike the dualism inherent to the world of the Bible, is one of the most characteristic features of paganism. In pre-Christian Antiquity, there was no distinction between religion and civic life—not, in this instance, to subjugate it and deprive it of its own norms, but on the contrary, to *sacralize* it. Among the Romans *pietas* is primarily a social virtue. Religion in Rome sacralized organic collectivities, from family to fatherland—hence the importance of the domestic cults, and on the other hand, the civic cult, which was later expanded to the imperial cult. It refers especially to respect for social norms and natural relations between individuals. It expands common discipline and extends the hierarchy. In this sense, it rests less on "morality," or more exactly belief, than on participation in the rituals. To "practice" a cult is to be a good citizen and to affirm one's solidarity with the destiny of the city. Among the Germans the cult is the foundation of the sacred, which is the foundation of law. Religion is inseparable from the *heidinn sidr*, the "pagan custom." "This detail is illuminating," says Régis Boyer emphatically, "because it provides sufficient grounds for concluding that the Germanic religion only existed in cultural practices and operations as a whole ... It is in the practice of the rituals as participant or spectator that the German enters religion."⁹ The same could be said about the Iranians, the Vedic Indians, and the Celts. Judeo-Christian monotheism, in contrast to what has been often asserted, created less the conditions for respect of the individual than those of its deformation under the form of *individualism*, the ideology, which, once transposed to profane life, justifies in the name of an abstract universal truth the rupture of the individual's solidarity with the city. The relationship to the divine then becomes a purely individual matter: one

makes one's own salvation. (This feature, as we have seen, is given special emphasis in Christianity; Judaism compensates for it in large part by the ideal of the "election" of an entire *people*.) In paganism, religion tends to primarily govern situations of collective interest; it gives a large role to the person (rather than the individual), but while taking into consideration those groups the person belongs to which are indispensable toward the grasp of his or her identity. "It is not as an individual," notes Jean-Pierre Vernant, "that the Greek man respects or fears a god, but as the head of the family, the member of a *genos*, a *phratry*, a *demos*, a city." This communitarian bond is so strong that in numerous ancient European societies, proscription is considered an exemplary punishment on its own. (The idea according to which the outlaw, by being removed from the community, endures a kind of sacred curse, remained vital right into the Middle Ages.)

Subsequently, in paganism, the person is inseparable from his lineage. In ancient Scandinavian spirituality the family constitutes one of the foundations of existence, with honor and destiny. A number of important decisions and actions are based solely on familial membership—and it was not considered "prideful" to wish to equal one's father, but, on the contrary, a dishonor if one showed less value than him. Immortality itself is connected to the world, as a memory that is left behind and transmitted like a living model. In this example any *shame* or transgression of honor is a denial of the sacred. "Physical" and "spiritual" eternity combine. The majority of Indo-European peoples believed in some sort of "beyond" (in Sanskrit *paradesha*, in Iranian *pairi-daeza*, from which comes the word paradise), but this was still a *trans-position* of this world. Far from representing the antithesis of real life, far from even suppressing the conflict that forms the contextual framework of the world, it carries them to a higher level. "In Valhalla, there is still fighting. And the casualties arise anew, unharmed, at the evening of every day, by their mortal wounds."¹⁰ Before even the appearance of the theme of Valhalla, which some authors regard as a relatively late creation, Nordic devotion toward the souls of the dead was all the greater as those souls did not truly leave this world; the dead were believed to find shelter in some part of the earth or sky, and they "inhabited" a given *site* in the neighborhood of their former hearth, and so on. All commentators are in agreement with the view that belief in the *landvaettir*, the souls of the dead, for example, was an essential feature of Icelandic paganism.

(These souls sometimes became elves, which Christianity transformed into demons.) Among the Greeks, the Elysian Fields were also only a sublime projection of this world. Among the Celts, the *sid*, located “beyond the seas,” at the bottom of lakes, in the hills, or beneath the mounds, is “a world parallel to our own that, while it is different or remote, is superimposed over this world or bathes it.”¹¹ In my opinion, this Celtic “paradise has almost nothing in common with the Christian paradise, and is very conceptually close to the Germanic Valhalla and Islamic heavens. Its occupants lead a life of pleasure and delight; there they are loved by women of extraordinary beauty and high social rank. Sin (a Christian notion) and transgression (a pre-Christian notion) are unknown there.”¹² The Swede Stig Wikander has established, for his part, that the theme of the “kingdom of heaven” was of Indo-European origin.¹³ This brings to mind the words Nietzsche had Zarathustra shout: “I love those who do not seek beyond the stars for a reason to die or sacrifice themselves, who to the contrary, sacrifice themselves to the earth so that one day will come the reign of the superman.”

This fundamental idea of a continuity between the human being and the world being can, however, only be fully grasped on condition, let me repeat, that it is not interpreted from the standpoint of naturalism. In my opinion, there has been far too much depiction of paganism as a “nature religion” that disregards all transcendence and is limited in some sense to only sacralizing natural determinisms. Some of its aspects, namely in folk and rural paganism, whose more or less deformed “survivals” have been numerous, have given that interpretation a foothold. Furthermore, this interpretation was systematized by Christian propaganda in order to have an easy means of opposing with the prerogative of the “spirit,” which this new faith claims as its monopoly, the naturalistic cloddishness of those “who worshiped stones and imaginary things.” This image is essentially false, and clinging to it is a grave error.

In fact *nature* is only one aspect of the world; it is not to be confused with it. Asserting the existence of a continuity between man and the world is not tantamount to reintegrating man into things—both animate and inanimate—and is even less a case of reducing him to his own “nature” (to the biological, the animal inside him) or stripping him of his specific character. Not only must continuity be viewed in a plural and even dialectical way (the

laws of human consciousness cannot be boiled down to the biological any more than the biological can be boiled down to the micro-physical), but it should be accepted that it works in two opposing directions, “upstream” and “downstream,” man going toward nature and man going toward divinity. This gives us reason to share Julius Evola’s opinion, according to which “what characterizes the pre-Christian world, at least in its higher forms, has nothing in common with the superstitious divinization of nature; rather it involves a symbolic comprehension of it through which all phenomena and all exterior actions appear as the tangible manifestation of a world beyond the tangible.”¹⁴

We find here all the ambiguity of “good nature.” It is true that “nature,” as a representation of an aspect of the world, is fundamentally “good.” It is not so much that it determines us fully—so that, to a certain extent, we draw our meaning from it. On the contrary, it is far more a case of man who, by shaping it according to his will, determines nature and gives it meaning. There is in a certain school of neo-paganism—the very same that Evola criticized—a whole thematic of the “golden age,” of “primitive pagan innocence,” which appears to me extremely open to criticism, for the same reason as the doctrines that are often attached to it (neo-Rousseauism with its ultra-federalist resonance, *völkisch* ecologism, anti-State primitivism, and so on). This thematic implies a determinist and “biologistic” conception of man that does not correspond to reality, and paradoxically, intersects with the Judeo-Christian myth of Adamic innocence (which probably influenced it to some degree).

The theology of paganism is not a theology of *nature* but a theology of the *world*. Nature displays the face of being, but does not constitute its ultimate determination. And just as the continuity between all the states of being, notably between men and gods, does not imply that these beings are commingled or spontaneously equal, the protest the European spirit has ceaselessly expressed against the divorce of heaven and earth, man and God, body and soul, does not imply that all these terms are placed on the same level. Body and soul are extensions of each other; they are both consubstantial to the world, yet it is the soul that “rules.” With regard to the body, it is what one could call an *emergent* quality. This is why paganism poses as a postulate the primacy of the idea—an idea that should not, however, be confused with the Platonic *logos*. This is also why I refuse all primarily naturalistic

interpretations of the Indo-European religions, to seek out the "core," not in a deification of the "natural elements," nor even in a series of historic events transfigured by myth, but purely and simply in an *ideological system*, a particular *view of the world*, which from the onset gives meaning to all its components. From this perspective, we could say that man "creates" the world through the way he looks at it, that the soul "forms itself" a body, that a collective view of the world "forms" a society by *in-forming* it, and so on. We find ourselves in a place that is the exact opposite of naturalism.

"Creator" of nature, man is also the creator of the gods. He shares in God every time he surpasses himself, every time he attains the boundaries of his best and strongest aspects. This idea will be repeated by Nietzsche, under a particular angle, with the theme—so often poorly understood—of the superman. It finds in modern "philosophical anthropology" (Gehlen, Portmann, Plessner) its epistemological justifications with the theme of man the builder, constructor of himself. It will finally be developed by Heidegger—and Lévinas is right to see in this "piety devoted to mythic gods" what is the most alien to him: an "offensive return (of the) standards of human elevation."¹⁵

Paganism takes natural determinisms into consideration, but it does not make man subject to them. It always opposes human freedom and heroic will to the inevitable. In pre-Christian Antiquity, whether in Germanic sagas, the Roman representation of *fatum*, or Greek tragedy, we constantly come across the idea that the impossible must be attempted, even and especially when it is truly impossible. The notion of *destiny* is different from that of *predestination*. It is an embodiment in every man of the sacred, which, as such, is associated with a process of *becoming*. Man does not suffer his fate; he can freely fulfill it, take charge of it or attempt to oppose it if he has a different *idea* of what it should be. Among the Germans, Régis Boyer reveals, destiny "undergoes a kind of assimilation," the translation of which is the spirit of struggle (*víghugr*). "Man creates an idea of himself that is the translation of his destiny, he will seek to manifest it through his actions his entire life; his objective will have been attained if this idea is acknowledged by his contemporaries in common accord. Society is the enclosed field where a man's reputation is made, where the shape of his destiny proves itself."¹⁶ Destiny for the ancient Scandinavians was not a harmful, hostile power. It is

rather the entire set of authentic states that experience allows one to undergo. When we read the texts of the sagas, notes Peter Hallberg, "it is not primarily an immutable and dark destiny that draws the reader's attention, but rather the heroic attitude of the characters toward this destiny—not as defeat but victory."¹⁷ It is the importance of the notion of destiny that determines that of the notion of honor and not the other way round. It is because of the fact that one has a destiny that it is dishonorable to not face it. "In a world where, after one has sounded one's capabilities, one decides to go all the way to the end, honor is to not betray the idea that one has of oneself."¹⁸ (In this sense, dishonor is also mediocrity.) In a more general fashion, explains Jean Varenne, "it seems that the Indo-Europeans professed that destiny is in fact the expression of the necessary progression of our actions (law of causality). For this reason, my free will (or that of a god intervening in the course of events) appears as a materialization of my destiny. I can be a hero if that is what I wish; and if I become one (if my will is strong enough, if the gods are not against me), one will be able to rightfully say this was my destiny."¹⁹

The notion of *fatum* does not entail "obedience," submission, or renunciation. To the contrary it stimulates the desire to take action and upholds the *tragic* sentiment of life. As stressed by Schopenhauer, the tragic is connected to the clear awareness man has of his weakness, the ephemeral nature of his life—and at the same time, his ceaselessly reasserted desire to compensate for this weakness with a creative *intensity*. In other words, the tragic implies a will to measure oneself against time, without ever finding the slightest pretext for renouncing it in the certainty of its final outcome: death. It upholds this "pessimism of strength" that Heidegger opposed to the "pessimism of weakness" and which "demands awareness of the conditions and powers which, in spite of everything, secure the mastery of our historical situation."²⁰ Heroism thus consists of struggling against what will eventually triumph—but a "natural" triumph, to which it is always possible to oppose another specifically human triumph. It is because there is a destiny that man, by attempting to fulfill or oppose it, can be heroic, surpassing himself and partaking of divine status. *Amor fati*: the sole means of submitting without submitting, exaltation carried to the deepest depths of an agonistic temperament which makes struggle—starting with the struggle against oneself—the very essence of life.

Among the Stoics we also find the idea that free will, the condition of individual worth, is not excluded by predestination. This view was one that Chrysippus developed at length. Cicero in *De Fato*, Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *Treatise on Fate*, distinguished “antecedent causes,” about which we can do nothing, from “immanent causes” that depend solely on us. Destiny governs the world, said Seneca, but man’s inner freedom is never afflicted by adversity; man can always freely determine the meaning of his actions. Later, within the very heart of Christianity, a current of “heretical” thought would fight against the determinism of hereditary sin, while theologians confronted each other on *predestination* and *grace* to arrive at the conclusion that man is still free to act within what has been “given” him in advance. Hölderlin, a fervent admirer of ancient Greece, declared that it is by realizing oneself in what is most removed from one’s nature—that is to say, in what mandates the greatest self-constraint—that a people can give the best of themselves. This conception of freedom is closely tied to a certain conception of history: “nature,” the innate, and the past may *condition* man’s future but they do not *determine* it. It is within this semantic space between “conditioning” and “determining” that our freedom lies. *Man can only work with what he has, but it is with what he has that he is able to be and do as he likes.*

Chapter Twenty-One

Sex and the Body

The distance separating all forms of naturalism from the conception of the world proposed and studied here, also allows us to refuse the reduction of paganism to a sort of “Gallic” or Rabelaisian sensualism, if not one that is libertine or Don Juan-like. If one believes some people, to live in the “pagan” style consists of unbridling the senses, uprooting any idea of fault or examination of conscience: to eat well, drink well, copulate well—in opposition to the morality of the “men in black” who preach asceticism, abstinence, and poverty. Accordingly, an entire strain of paganism “lite” has developed, based on Casanova-style libertinism when it isn’t “sexual esotericism” or a Hollywood inspired sensationalism.¹ This primarily Latin interpretation,² which smells of its inverted Catholicism—a Carnival Catholicism of the “festival of fools”—obviously finds its principal justification in the Christian attitudes that led to the devaluation of woman, the body, sexual desire, and made “carnal lust” one of the seven deadly sins. It still appears highly debatable to me nonetheless.

European Antiquity displays the spectacle, and is itself proof positive of a freely assumed “natural” sexuality in which taboos and prohibitions later carried by Christianity are largely non-existent. This fact has been pointed out hundreds of times, and it is enough, for convincing proof, to refer back to the testimonies of ancient authors as well as to modern research. (See, for example, Paul Veyne’s studies on Roman sexual life.) This does not mean that paganism can be summed up as sexual freedom. Nor does it mean that it is appropriate to imagine a pre-Christian Europe that disregards modesty and chastity and honors a pan-sexuality that accepts any and all practices. Such a picture corresponds too closely to Christian propaganda to be taken seriously—and those who subscribe to it, satisfied to make a positive out of what Christians deemed negative, are indirectly playing into their hands. While the sexual ethics of early Europe is generally free and devoid of any idea of sin, it is not free of standards. Sacred prostitution, pansexuality, unbridled passions, and the Eastern orgy are foreign to it, for the most part, and it is only during periods of decline that sexuality abandons all norms. History has

recorded the terrible way in which the Roman Senate repressed the worship of Dionysus after the Bacchanalia scandals of 186 BC. Homer applauded the amorous jousts of his heroes as much as he sang of their virtue. Stoicism expresses with exceptional vigor a great distrust toward certain forms of unbridled sexual passion. We can also be assured that in archaic Greece, under the Roman Republic, or among the ancient Germans, a master of sexual teratology like Gilles de Rais would not have lived to enjoy a ripe old age! Wasn't it Georges Sorel who, in *The Illusions of Progress*, maintained that the decline of aristocratic values went hand in hand with that of ascetic morality?⁴ Casual sexuality—again not to be confused with a tranquilly assumed sexual freedom—is not essentially distinguishable from other forms of personality deconstruction.

In Christianity, the devaluation of the body and sexuality, just like its scorn of women, furthermore comes partially from the waning of Hellenic society. Without fully subscribing—far from it—to the opinions of a Claude Tresmontant or a Pierre Chaunu on this point,⁵ it is certain that Christian theology clearly accentuated features that only existed in more moderate fashion in ancient Judaism. This hatred of the body, as Nietzsche observed, contributed no small amount to the creation of a feeling of guilt that Christian moralists exploited constantly. For Catholic theologians, the “shame” tied to “physical lust” is the direct fruit of original sin.⁶ Without going to the extremes of Gnosticism, early Christian philosophy was influenced by Plato, who depicted the body as a prison for the soul and death as liberation, as well as a doctrine of the fall, which views physical existence as the cause of human woe. During the first centuries after Christ, even the theory of the resurrection of the physical body was hard pressed to divert Christians from their scorn of the physical world, as well as certain deluded negative ascetic practices (which would eventually be banned by canon law).⁷ “What an unhappy man am I!” exclaimed Paul. “Who will deliver me from this body destined to die?” (Romans 7:24). Marriage itself, whose result would be the “Christian hearth,” is only a stopgap measure to which celibacy will always be preferable. The Council of Trent, in its tenth Canon, would reassert against the Reformers: “Anathema on he who would say that the conjugal status be considered in any way superior to that of virginity or celibacy and that it is not better or more delectable to remain virgin or celibate than to contract a

marriage.” The Alexandrian writer known as Philo the Jew, whose philosophy had a marked influence on Christian thought, wrote, “God has no reason for his hatred of pleasure and the body.” Saint Anthony claimed to blush every time he ate or performed a bodily function. Saint Jerome would go so far as to say that “cleanliness of the body and clothing signifies impurity of the soul.”⁸ Saint Brigitte exclaimed, “God cannot inhabit a wholesome body.” Early Christianity heaped praise on filthiness; the Church began by killing the bath.

This tendency is not to be found in Judaism. This tradition generally provides a much less misogynistic reading of the story of Eve's “seduction” by the serpent (Genesis 3:1–7). In the opinion of a number of rabbis, if the serpent did not address Adam it is not because as a male he would have been harder to seduce, but simply because he was “busy elsewhere.” Likewise, for a whole school of Judaism, sexuality is not a consequence of original sin; Cain and Abel would have been produced before this event occurred. (This is notably the view of Rachi, in opposition to Ibn Ezra's interpretation.) The first of all the *mitzvot* is the stipulation to found a home; furthermore it is the importance of this precept that explains such practices as levirate marriage. The bachelor is considered to be an “incomplete” man; he is not eligible to preside over the day of Yom Kippur. As for physical health and cleanliness, the Talmud specifically says that “it is forbidden to live in a town that does not have public baths”¹⁰ and adds that the delights of which Ecclesiastes speaks are pools and baths.¹¹

What really needs to be grasped here is that the *taboo* and the *transgression* of the taboo belong to the same world—and it is this very world that paganism claims to leave through surpassing it. Excesses walk in pairs and provide mutual justification. The priest needs the sinner, just as the sinner allegedly needs the priest. The modern incitement to reach sexual fulfillment “for reasons of hygiene,” when all is said and done, has the same *sense* as the ancient admonitions for abstinence or the Christian imperative to procreate. Certain “revolutionary” sexologies define themselves with respect to the same values as “bourgeois” sexology. From Hippocrates and Galen to Wilhelm Reich, we remain within the same *ideology of the effusion* (of the temperaments). Georges Bataille, a theoretician of Dionysian intoxication and a pantheist close to a surrealist mysticism (and whose theory of eroticism reveals the strong influence of Hegel and Nietzsche), writes,

"What one calls the pleasures of the flesh ... pollutes not only my body and my thoughts, but also ... the great starry universe." There could be nothing more Christian, in short, than the carnivals and other grotesque excesses where natures overflow, under a form of intentionally emphasized lunacy, to sponge up the overflow of constraints and permit the dogma, once the Chinese lanterns have been extinguished, to take back its rights. There is nothing more Christian than this pornography whose only attraction is that it is forbidden, nothing more Christian than these "lewd" songs, with which the deflective ritual of diversion expresses itself. (And it is perhaps not by chance that negative asceticism was especially preached by two Africans of excessive sensuality, Augustine and Tertullian in this instance, following their conversion to Christianity.)

I am definitely on the same side as those who exalt the strength and beauty of the physical body against those who try to devalue it in the name of the primacy of universal reason identified with the Judeo-Christian *logos*—like Malebranche when he bellows against man with the "free and jaunty air," master of the "figures that flatter the senses and excite the passions." But I also refuse "liberating" pansexuality, and do so for two specific theoretical reasons. First, because man is not pure *naturalité*: he cannot be reduced to biology, instinct, and impulse. Second, because what gives him specificity is based on his ability to *construct* himself, not by refusing to accept constraints, but by those constraints he imposes upon himself. These two affirmations are obviously connected: it is because man is not fully acted upon by nature that he is *compelled* to form himself. Now, if we accept that man is not merely an animal, if we accept that he constructs himself through the mastery and channeling of his impulses, it is impossible to accept the subsequent reduction of paganism to "libertinism." Even better, if man does *construct* himself, if the object and content of his impulses are not predetermined, if the mind shapes the body by exercising constraint upon it, then any anarchic unleashing of instincts is the equivalent of the very annihilation of the personality. The "liberation" of all impulses is not paganism but sub-Freudianism. In no way does paganism consist of thinking oneself free of all obligation and constraint, the avoidance of all examination of conscience, the deliverance from all existential anguish and even all idea of fault. In many respects it is exactly the opposite.

Nietzsche himself said that the normal rule of life is not complete casualness but the constraint exercised upon the self; grand style consists of "becoming master of the chaos one is, and forcing one's chaos to take form." As was clearly stressed by Paul Valadier—one of the best current experts on Nietzsche—the opposition established by the author of Zarathustra between Dionysus and the Crucified One is *not* the opposition between a surging vital energy, content with itself, and a morbid taste for suffering, but actually the opposition between a *tragic* way of living though suffering and the *Christian* way of tolerating it. There is a bond between the truth of the Eternal Return of the Same and the renewal of the sufferings we endure. Nietzsche knew full well that the idea of suffering disappearing was in no way a "superhuman" desire, but on the contrary a desire expressed by the last man, attached as he is to the quest for comfort, individual well-being, and security at any price. "Only great pain is the ultimate liberator of the spirit."¹² This is the tragic value of suffering, which gives a value to the individual *as being sacred* enough to again justify an immensity of suffering.¹³

The original experience of Faustian man is the experience of *free will*. Nature not being a fundamental determinant for him, man makes himself a man by fully assuming his historicity. Henceforth entirely responsible, he finds himself prey to an inevitable—and fertile—existential anguish by virtue of this fully assumed historicity. This anguish, the new form of the tragic sentiment, is conducive to burning up the individual's freedom to transform him into a creator—in order, still, to compensate for his lack of *duration* with *intensity*—which leads him continuously to make *choices* in conformity with his *plans*. Hence the introspection, the examination of conscience, the unease about meaning, indeed also about guilt. To negative asceticism, which is a flight from the real and a negation of vital energy, paganism thereby opposes a positive asceticism, which results from the constraint one exercises upon oneself to construct oneself in conformity with the idea one holds of oneself. In the second case it involves giving form to impulses; in the first extinguishing them. Therein dwells the true contradiction.

This does not provide grounds for the necessary rejection of *aesthetic* and *literary* paganism, infatuated with myrtle and laurel, the splendid body and tranquil sensuality, which for many centuries has inspired so many painters, writers, and sculptors.

Devotion to the Greece of white marble, the fragrant odors of Olympus, the Alexandrian graces, all of these have their charm—and even a bit more. And it is also true that for the French literati of the nineteenth century, Antiquity primarily represented a life more boldly sensual, more beautiful, and more hedonistic at the opposite extreme to the dark and guilt-inducing melancholies maintained by a Christian dogma which only seemed to disappear to make way for the ugliness of the present day. Nietzsche also extolled the “great health” of the pagan in comparison to the “sickly contemplations” of the Christian mind. Nevertheless, this too often academic paganism, congealed in the inherent static state of “Apollonian” finitude, this paganism with a base of laurels and cypress, round-bellied women and chaste naiads, sun and cicadas, this sweet, rural sensuality, this luminous and aromatic world, is quite often essentially reduced to a vibrant, exalting description of nature, its maternal warmth and hidden voluptuousness. This description implies and inspires an obvious sympathy for the pagan world. But by itself, it can in no way sum up its spirit. Paganism is not simply a matter of polished marble and acanthus, no more than the organization of Platonic banquets is enough to give one any basis to talk of real-life paganism. (And this is why this form of literary “paganism,” of Greco-Latin inspiration, which gives a large spot to beauty but almost none to faith, has been “recuperated” so often by the Church or been lost in the quicksand of university academicism.)

Let's note, to bring the discussion on this point to a close, that it can in no way be a question of reducing paganism to isolated and fragmentary surviving relics either, such as folk beliefs or rural traditions. Of course this is not an entirely negligible domain. We know that after 370 AD or thereabouts the word *paganus* had the double meaning of “peasant” and “pagan.” To Christians, remaining loyal to the ancestral faith, as the majority of rural dwellers did, was to serve the devil!¹⁴ The problem of pagan survivals in the calendar feasts or the “cradle to grave” cycle therefore forms a core subject for consideration. I need only cite the works of Arnold Van Gennep, P. Saintyves (Emile Nourry), and Paul Sebillot in this regard. Countless authors have shown how the Church, after fiercely combating “pagan” folk customs, subsequently did its best to “baptize” them by giving them a more or less superficial Christian veneer, and how these practices have been maintained, sometimes powerfully, into the present. It is

obvious that the reactivation of these traditions—intended to give rhythm to work and the days of the year, and whose utility was evident for maintaining the organic cohesion of families, cities, and clans—today appears a great necessity in the much more general work of reestablishing community roots. We must nevertheless realize that these festivals and customs probably only give us a fairly distorted echo of what they were originally—and, most importantly, in the best of cases they only reflect the lower forms of belief and worship. In fact, this folk paganism is only, to borrow a term from Dumézil, a paganism of the “third function,” which would explain its almost exclusively rural character. At the time of Christianization, the “great gods” mobilized the greatest hostility of the preachers. The “little gods,” considered less dangerous, were more easily given “amnesty.” Baptized in a more or less proficient way, they became local saints or characters of folklore. The paganism of the “first function,” the sovereign paganism is therefore also the least preserved for the very reason that it was quite often the established “elites” who betrayed it soonest or most deeply. This sovereign paganism nonetheless remains, even today, the most fundamental. At a time when rural life seems to be the reality of fewer and fewer people, it would be paradoxical, to say the least, if a *recourse* to ancient Indo-European religions confined itself to a repeat of a “peasant rhythmic” scheme. It is another reason to keep one's distance from naturalistic tendencies.

Early Christianity and Late Paganism

At the time of Constantine, when Christianity became the religion of an empire, a practically unique event in the annals of history occurred. In the words of Jean Blot, "An empire, for its own survival, changed its foundation—the same on which the Christian West would expand—adopted a foreign religion, or to be more precise, but this qualification changes nothing, a heresy of a foreign religion." Christianity is interpreted here in the standard way as a gradually "Westernized" dissident form of Judaism. Others have seen it, in a more original vein, as a form of Gnosticism, that is to say, an anti-Judaic faith that gradually became more Judaic.¹ Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that Christianization triggered a whole process of European pseudomorphosis, which caused a certain number of interactions that ultimately led to the creation of a hybrid religious category. Once Europe had become Christianized, neither Europe nor Christianity conformed any more to their origins and their own "natures." To a certain extent, Christianity has, at least for the time being, changed European man, but, as noted by Spengler in *The Decline of the West*, European man has also changed Christianity (also perhaps only for the time being). This was also noted by Nietzsche: "It appears hardly possible to transplant with lasting success a foreign myth without irremediably damaging the tree by this transplant."²

Europe gave its adherence to a Christianity that it had already influenced to the point of no longer being what it originally was. Absolute monotheism, in its dualistic form, was profoundly foreign to the European mind. Christianity represented the composite, intermediary form necessary for its acclimatization. As Alfred Loisy rightly noted, "it was, on the one hand, by tempering monotheism with the gnosis of the trinitarian dogma, and on the other, by identifying Jesus with God, that Christianity made the doctrine of the one God acceptable to the pagan world."³ The one god was only accepted in Europe because he became one "god in three persons," by integrating the old trinity that the Vedic Indians called Trimurti. It also required that this God be *embodied*, that he be endowed with a *human* face and that, subsequently,

the father of this God made man could also be *depicted* in human form. This process was certainly a reversal of the one familiar to the pagan world. It was not a man who ascended to the status of a god but a god who made himself a man. But at least the appearance was there. So while one can read in the Bible, "I am God and not man" (Hosea 11:9), Christianity proposed the apparently familiar face of a Son who was *embodied* and at the same time consubstantial with the Eternal Father. Thus certain conditions for acclimatization were made possible. "European peasants," says Mircea Eliade, "could only eventually find communion with Christian theology by transforming Christ into a bearded god who lived and worked like them."⁴

This observation has been made on numerous occasions, both for the sake of rejoicing and bemoaning it. "As for paganism," writes Maurice Bellet, "it is not at all so sure that Christianity simply succeeded it. In certain cases, the latter is only a Christian coating over an old and forgotten religious patrimony that has in fact remained unchanged, with its myths and superstitions."⁵ It is by basing their argument on this observation that a number of authors have been able to claim that Europe has never been truly Christian, although it was, here and there at certain times, permeated by a faith that officially claimed to be Christianity. They also maintain that today, when churches are emptying and religious vocations are mute, the opposite is true and that Judeo-Christian values are much more deeply established in hearts and minds. (We will revisit this point again later.) The conversion of Europe to Christianity was therefore "largely a sham" as Erich Fromm has written.⁶ An opinion that is perfectly valid in fact to maintain, on the condition that this "sham" is located at the level of a collective unconscious gradually but lucidly admitting its desire to either emancipate itself from the Christian heritage or, conversely, in complete awareness, to join it with even greater force.

This syncretism took place, and nothing could have prevented it from taking place. It is very hard for Christianity today to abolish its own history—whatever the desire may be of some of its representatives in this regard. Conversely, even if paganism could have been the "naturalist" religion—an opinion I do not share—depicted by Christianity (and which certain neo-pagans have naïvely attempted to reactivate) its rebirth and re-appropriation would exclude this kind of integral resumption in the form of *rep-*

etition.

Post-Christianity cannot be an *ad integrum* return; it cannot be the simple “restoration” of what once was. In evoking, with Heidegger, the perspective of “another beginning,” I have already defined what I mean by “other.” A new paganism must be truly new. To surpass Christianity demands both the reactualization of its “before” and the appropriation of its “after.” It is, negatively, not by “grace” but “on the occasion” of their conversion to Christianity that Europeans were able to acquire a clear awareness that they did not *specifically* belong to “nature”—that they possessed a constitutive “super-nature” and could acquire another by making the transition from human to superhuman. It was through this “circumstance” that they were able to fully feel like *historical* beings. But this was also the “circumstance” that let them interpret Judeo-Christian monotheism as a radical attempt to *develop a negative anthropology by means of a negative theology*—as a “desperate,” radical attempt to prevent man from bestowing upon himself a “super-nature” by pairing the world with an anti-world, “nature” with an “anti-nature,” and by asserting the existence of an absolute mastery that renders all human masteries futile and by which all human freedom will eventually be subjugated. This attempt cannot be abolished—because as part of our past it is also part of our present—but it can be surpassed. The way in which Judeo-Christian monotheism has posed the question of man’s relationship with his own history (and his own historicity) demands, on its own, that one actually moves on beyond this problematic. The “return to before” is unworkable. Just as it needs to leave behind all naturalism, cease to identify with standards and “averages,” and rethink the articulation of ethics between what is and what should be according to a given plan, neo-paganism must take into account history, whose notion has been conceptualized by Judeo-Christian monotheism, not to assign it now a sole, unique end, but to make it the ever-plural result of a will that is ceaselessly reoriented in new directions. For the same reason, neo-paganism must also re-present the pagan system of values in a form that is not simply the antithesis of Judeo-Christian monotheism. Goethe’s emphasis on the primacy of action resulted from his confrontation with a thought that held God is at work in history. The paganism of the future will be a Faustian paganism.

Furthermore, pagan thought under Christianity had already

begun to evolve before it seemingly died. Fourth century paganism had three fulcrums: the first was the ancient aristocracy that was pagan by tradition (*mos majorum*, the ancestral custom), and patriotism. (“Rome will live as long as its Gods.”) The second fulcrum were the high officials who protested against the Easternization of the empire and the despotism of the Imperial regime (see, for example, the matter of the Victory Altar, whose return was demanded by Symmachus under Valentinian II). The third, finally, were the schools, as is demonstrated by the education of Julian, the importance of Libanius to Nicomedia, then to Antioch, and so on. This paganism can be sometimes devout, sometimes quite intellectualized and philosophical. The other constituent elements of the “new religiosity” are the rise of the Imperial cult, the progress of Christianity, and the influx of Oriental cults. Now what is interesting here is that, when confronted with this new situation, the partisans of paganism seemed to “rethink” their system and offer a new formulation.

Contrary to what is in fact written far too often, the “one god” who was generally claimed by the last phase of Greco-Roman paganism is in no way comparable to the god of Judeo-Christian monotheism. Far from being radically distinct from the gods of the traditional pantheon, it represents their common principle. Far from forming an absolute that is entirely separate from the world, it is identical to the world’s very being. Stoicism, whose religious foundations are essential,⁷ constitutes a significant case in this regard. The Stoic’s God is the “soul of the world.” The cosmos is a “living being full of wisdom.” The *logos* that furnishes it its information is entirely consubstantial to it: it is incorporated into the itinerary and very substance of the cosmos. There is no *Hinterwelt*, no “world beyond.” The universe is not dependent upon another being, and it is in this world that man must realize his ideal. When the Stoics speak of the world’s “duality”—by accepting, for example, the Pythagorean opposition between the celestial world, which is the perfect world of the stars to which souls belong, and the terrestrial, sublunary world—it only involves a substantial opposition within a unitarian world. Wisdom and virtue consist of living according to the “order” of this universe. Even better, the cosmos, insofar as it contains the totality of beings, is absolutely perfect; therefore nothing can remain outside of it.

This “last” paganism remained faithful to the principle of tol-

erance. For cultivated pagans, it was precisely because they represented the different faces of the same Deity that all the gods are equally respectable—whereas the Christians, who never stopped regarding the gods of pagans as “idols,” “demons,” and even, as Martin de Braga writes, thought ancient deified figures to be “extremely evil men and rogues.” Paradoxically, E.R. Dodds⁸ reminds us that in Origen’s polemic against Celsus, it was believed that Celsus was “a monotheist of greater consequence than Origen,” because he considered as “blasphemous the way the Christians placed another god on the same plane as the supreme God.”⁹ If all the gods are only in fact emanations of one unique God, how could they compete with him? The Stoics, while they maintained the idea of a unique God, also accepted the existence and anthropomorphic representation of minor gods and confined themselves to giving them allegorical or symbolic interpretations. For example, they explained Zeus as a representation of the eternal principle by which all things exist and become, and made the other gods particular attributes of this principle. Julian the Apostate himself, when he restored solar worship, took pains to point out that, beyond the physical sun, it was the Sun of divine intellect, for which the star was only an epiphany, that he worshiped. Diogenes Laertius wrote, “God, Intelligence, Destiny, Zeus are one sole being, and he is still given yet several other names.”¹⁰ Maximus of Tyre asserted, for his part, that the Greeks simultaneously supported two truths.¹¹ The first is that “there is only one sole God, King and Father of all.” The second is that “there are numerous gods, children of God, who share his power.” Perhaps this is also how we should retrospectively interpret the belief of Heraclitus that “the law is to obey the will of the One”¹² and that “the One, which alone is wisdom, suffers and does not suffer to be called Zeus.”¹³

At the time the world of Antiquity was sinking, paganism was therefore evolving considerably. If it referred at times to a unique God, it was not in the sense of Judeo-Christianity. More than a *stricto sensu* monotheism, it was a unitarian pantheism, professing that the Deity was the soul of the world (in the sense that Plato speaks of a “tangible god”), or, if you prefer, a henotheistic syncretism, making a pantheistic god from a supreme principle, for whom the other gods are hypostases. This paganism is characterized on the “ideological” plane by the interpenetration of specifically religious and philosophical elements. It was not given time

to establish itself and was condemned to gradually disappear. Left to its own devices and spared Christian infection, perhaps the whole of European paganism may have evolved in this direction.¹⁴ It is in this sense that one can subscribe to Loisy’s opinion: “Greco-Roman paganism has undergone many changes and alterations during the course of its existence, but to the end it remained a polytheistic religion. It ceded its place to Christian monotheism, being incapable of either absorbing it or transforming it, or even incorporating it, at least directly, by transforming itself.”¹⁵

Chapter Twenty-Three

*Divine Immanence,
Human Transcendence*

Following the Christianization of Europe, paganism survived its demise in several forms, first in the collective unconscious, which would mainly find release in music,¹ then on the level of beliefs and folk traditions, finally within or on the margin of official religion, through "heretical" trends that have extended even into the present. In spite of the interest it presents, this last area is perhaps the one that has received the most superficial examination. Yet it is in the work of some of the great "heretics" where we must search for some of the fundamental principles of a neo-Faustian paganism, truly the rudiments of what could have been a pagan theology of modern times.

Sigrid Hunke, one of the rare authors to have tackled this subject systematically,² has shown that broad convergences exist between the "great protests" that emerged over the centuries from the encounter with the dominant ideology constituted by the official faith. She reads a *spiritual continuity* in these convergences, expressing the lines of force of "another European religion"—the *true* religion of Europe—a religion which appeared at the end of the fourth century with Pelagius, reappeared in the ninth century with Scotus Eriugena, and continued after the fourteenth century with Meister Eckhart and his disciples (Henry Suso, Johannes Tauler, Sebastian Franck von Donauwörth), Jacob Böheme, Paracelsus, Joachim de Fiore, Lucilio Vanin, Almaric de Bene, David de Dinat, and so on, and whose heirs, on various accounts, are Erasmus and Leonardo Da Vinci, as well as Henry More, Shaftesbury, Valentin Weigel, Pestalozzi, the core of the German Romantic and idealist movement, Goethe, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Herder, the Russians Theophanus and Berdiaev, the French Teilhard de Chardin and Saint-Exupéry, and so forth.

Among most of these authors, we find, carried to the highest level, certain fundamental themes of pagan thought, as I have attempted to define them thus far. In the first place is the transcendental unity of the cosmos, the continuity between God (or the gods) and the world—a world whose being is "perfect," but

not unmoving, which is the site of a permanent *becoming* in every direction; a God who renders the finite itself infinite, who encourages time and space to be thought as infinite.

Scotus Eriugena, excommunicated by the Church after his death, wrote in the eleventh century, "Everything is in God and God is in everything; nothing can come elsewhere but Him, because everything is born in Him, through Him, and in Him." "To look at things," he adds, "is to contemplate the Word." He does not mean by this that things are limited to echoing the *logos* of the God that created them, but he lets it be understood that there is an identification or at least a consubstantiality between things and the Word of God. Nicholas of Cusa (Nikolaus Krebs), who was not a heretic but whose views nevertheless reduplicate those heretics were drawn to supporting, came up with this explanation, "what is God if not the invisibility of the visible?" which corresponds to the same idea. Then there is Giordano Bruno who taught "the infinity of the universe and the action of the divine power in its infinity." And Dante exclaimed, "All things whatsoever observe a mutual order; and this is the form that maketh the universe like unto God ... wherefore they move to diverse ports o'er the great sea of being."³

For the entire Romantic tradition, God and the universe are only different aspects and different names for one and the same thing. This is the reason for the rebirth of this heavy "religiosity of the world," that Eduard Spranger defined as the very foundation of the pagan spirit and whose modern source he placed with Goethe then Schleiermacher.⁴ "To deal with God and nature separately," wrote Goethe in 1770, "is difficult and dangerous. It is exactly as if we thought our body and soul were separate entities; for we know the soul through the body, and we know God through nature." "How could a nature outside of us be possible?" wondered Schelling.⁵ According to Herder, "the Deity displays himself organically, that is to say, by active forces." Hegel declares, "To love God is to feel as if one is in the infinite when one plunges totally and unrestrainedly into life." This is the way paganism seals a covenant, not with an absolute that is distinct from the world, but with the world itself. "To arrive at thinking God and the earth in one single idea" (Rainer Maria Rilke).

According to Heidegger, all beings flow out of the world's being: the *sky* like the *earth* and *men* like *gods*, and this is why Jean-Luc Marion accuses him of "idolatry."⁶ D.H. Lawrence declares,

"There is an eternal vital correspondence between our blood and the sun ... We and the cosmos are one. The cosmos is a vast living body, of which we are still parts. The sun is a great heart whose tremors run through our smallest veins."⁷ For Saint-Exupéry, who celebrated the way in which the earth, "through the tree, wed the honey of the sky," "I am telling you that there is no divine grace that excuses you from becoming. You would like to be. You will only attain being in God. He will gather you in when you have slowly become, when you have been shaped by his actions."⁸ Certain "materialists," like Karl Ludwig von Knebel (1744–1834), strove, for their part, to attribute to the laws of matter an intrinsically finalizing orientation to arrive at a new idea of God. Even before Jean Charon, Raymond Ruyer, or Costa de Beauregard, we can find an echo of this concern in Teilhard de Chardin, when he celebrates the "being of the universe" and seeks to "reconcile" God and the world. "I believe there must be a healthy reconciliation effected between God and the world."⁹ Matter and mind, Teilhard would also say, are not at all "two things," but "two states of one same cosmic fabric ... The fabric of the universe is spirit-matter."¹⁰

It is thereby in the world and *by the world* that God attains his highest form of existence. God is not separate from the world. And yet he is not commingled with it. God is the *depth* of the world: he is above all but beyond nothing. This is an obviously decisive assertion. Whereas in Judeo-Christian monotheism, the soul "is ontologically distinct from the absolute, created by it and not emanated from it; it is not part of the divine substance,"¹¹ in the "religion of Europe" the soul is of divine essence. By virtue of this fact, man and god maintain a relationship of reciprocity. The union of man with God, the embodiment of God in man, the elevation of man to the level of divine substance is possible in this world. Oswald Spengler described the "Faustian" religion as a religion in which human will deals with divine will as an equal. Heidegger, repeating the saying of Heraclitus, "The abode of men is the abode of the gods," said that the Deity is united to mortals and palpitates in the place where they are combined. Insofar as they are tied to the uninterrupted unfolding of the world, the gods can engender themselves in "creatures." The existence of the gods is as dependant upon men as that of men is upon the gods. To the question: "Is there a God?" the answer is that God *can be*. This is an idea developed by Heidegger with the

notion of "possibilization"—the opposite of the "actualization" of classic metaphysics—but which appeared as early as Jacob Böheme's notion of "potentiality," and even with Nicolas of Cusa's *possest*.

Scotus Eriugena declared: "We cannot consider God and his creature as two separate and distinct entities, because they are one and the same thing (*unam et id ipsum*). The creature has its roots in God, and God creates himself in them ... Creator of all things and created in all things, God who perpetually engenders himself and, although unmoving, transforms and embodies himself in all things, continuously becoming all in all." In *The Aurora*, Jacob Böheme writes, "You should not say: where is God? Listen, blind man who are yourself in God and in whom God is. If you live a saintly life, you yourself will be God and wherever you look you will see God." The same idea is expressed by Paracelsus: "There is nothing on heaven or earth that is not also in man. For God who is in heaven is also in man; for where else than in man would heaven be?" Again with Angelus Silesius: "Heaven is within you, and to seek God elsewhere is to lose it forever." Giordano Bruno himself said that it was through "raising oneself within one's inner being" that the soul lifts itself "toward Heaven," because "God is near; he dwells in the soul, closer to its deepest depths than even the soul itself can be, as the soul of souls, the life of all life, the being of all beings." This conception of the relationship between man and God is fairly close to that encountered among some of the great mystics. It is also sometimes reminiscent of the doctrine of *homoiosis*, the "assimilation with God" that Plato established and which was later resumed by Plotinus, which has its origin in the human soul's latent identity with its divine foundation—so close that an element of *reciprocity* can be added: the union is "desired" by man as well as by God as necessary to their mutual fulfillment.

Meister Eckhart also reacted against the biblical idea of a remote God who is inaccessible to man. He is one of the first, with Böheme and Silesius, to place God in the heart of hearts instead. Seeking to set his sights beyond the soul, beyond the powers of the soul—and even of powers superior to the soul—he believed that God must be "humbled," in other words brought closer to man. He would even write, "So that God may exist, I am one of the causes; if I did not exist, then God would not exist either."¹² In a very beautiful passage from *Fragments*, he adds, "My being a

man is something I share in common with all men; that I see and hear, and eat and drink, is something I share with all the animals. But that I am *I* is something that belongs to me exclusively; it belongs to me and no one else, to no other man or angel or God, except insofar as I am one with him." The soul and God can therefore lead a common life; the soul can be *engendered as God*. In other words, *God is born in the soul of man*; present in the world, he is also *engendered* in and by the human soul. God comes to man to be born, to "become" within his very soul. This idea of an irregularly occurring consubstantiality of God and man goes so far that, for Eckhart, man should not even "make a place" for God in himself, for to "reserve a place would be to (still) maintain a distinction." And Eckhart adds, "I therefore pray to God for the power to free me from God"; only a man "freed" from a God who would only occupy a *place* in him could fully and totally belong to God.

In tandem, Eckhart protests against the search for "godliness" tied to retreating from the world. He denounces an "evasive attitude that flees from things" and preaches "the apprenticeship of an inner solitude" that allows him to "penetrate to the bottom of things, to grasp his God there and be able, through a vigorous conscious effort, to give him form within himself according to a consubstantial mode."¹³ Eckhart's notion of "being" is therefore essentially dynamic and vital. It is a pure outpouring. Being is not folded back upon itself, nor it is a limitation of and by itself. Being is active. Activity to it means to "emerge from itself." The man who manifests his being *emerges from himself*. It is something that gushes into and out of the self. It "runs continually," says Eckhart, "and it is this constant running that makes it ascend to the divine."

Luther, however, clung to the idea of a God who is inaccessible to man. Furthermore, he absolutely denied free will.¹⁴ Nevertheless he established the problematic of man's unity in God, which led him to reintroduce the idea of *Deus absconditus* and to distinguish a dual divine will: the will of God as "preached, revealed, offered, and worshiped" and that of God that was "not preached, not revealed, not offered or worshiped." This allusion to a non-revealed, unknown and unknowable God, *Deus absconditus in majestate*, indirectly opposes two antagonistic conceptions of God: the God that is the Word, in the *logos*, and the God that is in the world. Furthermore, this Lutheran theory has been compared to the nominalist doctrine with its distinction of two "orders of truth."¹⁵ On the other hand, in a fairly paradoxical fash-

ion concurrent with his declaration of their infinite separation, Luther does, however, permit man to approach God by initiating the suppression of intermediaries—institutions, the Church, celestial hierarchies, and so forth—that had been multiplied by Catholicism. "The mediation of the priest between man and infinite disappeared" (Spengler), which agrees with the pagan idea according to which, the universe being identified with being, man has the possibility of entering into contact with the infinite and communicating directly with God. Finally, the Reformation emphasized more than ever before the primordial role of *faith*. (This is the theme of justification by faith, as opposed to justification by works.¹⁶) Here again we note a contradiction: for Luther it is because our fate is stopped in advance that man must first be a believer. But intensely lived faith will also lead man to surpass himself and in the pagan perspective make him then the equal or the kin to God.

Whereas Goethe defined man as "God's dialogue with himself," Hölderlin asserts that it is man's *divine* portion that senses the divine in nature. Novalis' intention was to anchor himself "in the immutable and in the divine within us." Schleiermacher said that it is *impiety* "to seek the infinite outside of the finite." Like his friends of youth, Schelling and Hölderlin, Hegel declared war on dualism and viewed the radical opposition of man and God as the basic error of traditional metaphysics. "The being of the soul is divine," writes Schelling, who adds, "For he whose soul is seized by God, God is not something outside of the self nor a future located in an infinite remoteness; God is in him, he is in God." Later, in his *Book of Hours*, Rilke will pose the eternal question, "What will you do, God, if I die ... Losing me, you lose all meaning."

If man is God's kin and partner, he is not himself an object placed in the world but is himself partially connected with the world. Man is like the universe, the microcosm like the macrocosm. Man, says Paracelsus, comes from dust, *limus terrae*, and this is why the entire universe can be found within him. Man, extracted from all creatures "contains" all creatures. So it is not a question in paganism of *putting man "in God's place."* This would be setting up an idol, in the true sense of the word this time. It is not a question of ensuring "that mastery over being passes from God to man," as Heidegger says. (He goes on to say, "Those who share this opinion spare little thought for the divinity of God.

Man can never put himself in God's place, because the essence of man will never attain the domain of the essence of God.") Man is not God. But he can share in God, just as God can share in him. Man should not have the ambition to become God, but to become *like the gods*. Already, in the *Eddas*, man is present not as a fallen angel but as a being related to the gods, and who can rejoin them. Man does not represent a *less* with respect to what preceded him. He represents a *plus*: a cord extended between the "giants" and the "gods."¹⁷ Man, if he was created, should surpass his creator, in the way a son should "surpass" his father. And just as nature, practically identified with the father by Paracelsus, is surpassed by "super-nature," man surpasses everything from which he issues. He *sublimates* the world. He does not deify it, in the basic meaning of this term, but makes it a place where the deity can emerge. In the same perspective Paracelsus said that the apostles "surpassed" Christ; the created surpassed the creator.

Man only fully realizes himself by being more than himself, in other words by going beyond himself. "Man is only fully himself by leaving the self," writes Raymond Abellio, who spontaneously discovers here the same words used by Eckhart.¹⁸ The ontological dimension of the human being is the "Open," Heidegger emphasizes—and this definition repeats that of philosophical anthropology (the *Weltoffenheit*, the "opening-to-the-world," of which Gehlen speaks), at the same time as that of modern ethnology, according to which man is only acted upon by his membership in the species insofar as the latter is the basis for pure potentialities. This opening to the world is both a gift of being and a perpetual re-creation of man. Only man can rise to the implicit grasp of being as such; only he can attempt to unveil it as such, in a transcendental and not merely "natural" way. Opening to the world does not dissolve us in its totality but, on the contrary, gives us specificity. It establishes the enclosed field of the disclosure of being as such, and it could even be said that it withdraws us from the world by preventing us from ever being a "natural" being, one being among beings, like the tree of the forest is only one tree among others, or the sheep of the flock is only one sheep among hundreds. More profoundly, this is what, by its relative exclusion from the order of things, allows the totality of beings to form a world for us and by us without itself being a being."¹⁹

This doctrine of the partially and, especially, potentially divine character of human nature is in fact the basis for all man's

existential meaning. In paganism, man *elevates the deity by elevating himself*; he devalues it by considering it like an Eastern despot whose "commandments" should be followed on penalty of punishment. Eckhart speaks of "the spark in the soul" (*scintilla in anima*) by which man can attain the divine. After Paracelsus, Valentin Weigel developed the idea that man finds in himself and by himself knowledge of God, without any intervention. The same conception was developed by Shaftesbury. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi declared, "The will of God and the best I can attain are simply one and the same thing." Here again the idea is asserted that man touches the divine when he surpasses himself. This has a profound, and specifically pagan, logic. Man should not be merely himself and conform to his own "nature." He should still seek to give himself a "super-nature," to acquire a *superhumanity*—that superhumanity that Judeo-Christian monotheism's vocation, if not object, is to prevent him from acquiring. The idea that a human being could after his death become similar to a god was widespread in Antiquity, as is shown by a large number of tombstone inscriptions from the Hellenic and Roman eras. Paganism today proposes to man, during the very course of his life, to exceed himself and thereby share in the substance of God.

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Coincidence of Opposites and the Problem of Evil

Pagan thought does not overlook any antinomy but exceeds them all within a "unitarian" conception of the world and the Deity. The *birth of opposites in the divine unity* comes at the end of dualism. Here again paganism conforms to the general rules of life, insofar as life's very nature and criterion is to combine opposites. "The world is not a whole divided into clearly demarcated compartments," says Renan, "but a painting whose colors all vary by intangibly subtle degrees."¹ To irreducibly contrast opposites amounts, as Nietzsche clearly saw, to opposing life. The opposite approach, which leads on the epistemological plane to anti-reductionism,² is developed around three fundamental axes. These are, first, the principle of the union of opposites and the definition of God as that union, second, the unfolding of God within this world and the subsequent unfolding of the contradiction of the opposites whose necessary confrontation is recognized as one of the manifestations of the Deity, and finally the structuring of the human mind on the same model. "God, like the unity of opposites," writes Sigrid Hunke, "also determines the structure of the human mind. Formed by the divine model, it is given structure by the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the method of holistic knowing and thinking ... For, although reason, by dividing and combining, analyzes the all-encompassing thought of the intellect, as the world does for the infinity of God, it does not escape the need to find unity and a vision of the whole."³

The great modern theoretician of the coincidence of opposites is Nicolas of Cusa (1401–1464), who anticipated certain works of Copernicus and was claimed by Giordano Bruno as his main inspiration. The coincidence of opposites, he said, is still the least imperfect definition we may give of God. God is the "non-other" (*De non aliud*). He is "above all the opposites," and he combines them together in him. He is harmony, *concordantia*. For Scotus Eriugena, God "encompasses even what we view as being opposite to him and combines the similar and dissimilar, being himself the resemblance of the similar, the non-resemblance of

the dissimilar, the antagonism of antagonistic elements, and the opposition of the opposites." We find here the *harmony* extolled by the Greeks, which was based on alternation, excelling, and an antagonistic complementarity. "The opposites find accord, and a beautiful harmony is born from what differs. Everything is born of struggle."⁴ (And it is not by chance that Dionysius rules over the oracle at Delphi once a year while Apollo is away in the land of the Hyperboreans.) One of the principles of Shivaite philosophy incorporated into Aryan Hinduism similarly defines the divine as that "in which the opposites co-exist."

This theme also responds to the Alchemical principle of *solve et coagula*, which combines separation and dissolution on the one hand, and reunion and "coagulation" on the other—just as myth, at its birth, frees contradictory mythemes that are destined, when all is said and done, to be reabsorbed within a rediscovered unity. During the modern era, it is probably Carl G. Jung who has analyzed with the most finesse how alchemy strives to combine opposing factors within the same "conjunction."⁵ Citing Nicolas of Cusa, Jung himself writes that "the real opposites are not of incommensurable magnitudes, otherwise they could not combine; despite all their opposition, they always display a tendency to do this." The phrase *coincidentia oppositorum* here echoes the testimonies collected by depth psychology and likewise those of depth sociology,⁶ and even, in microphysics, the propositions of Stéphane Lupasco on the balancing structures of three matters and the logic of contradictory elements. "By opposing paths, we follow on our palms the lines of force of the same game. In you alone, Lord, are they found again."⁷

As a unity of opposites, God necessarily sits beyond good and evil. This is a point of view that is perfectly excluded, of course, by Judeo-Christian monotheism. If God is all-powerful and infinitely good, why does he tolerate evil and how is evil possible? Catholic theology, when it is not hiding before the "mystery," generally answers this question by appealing to the notion of free will and by asserting that man must deserve his salvation (which in fact only evades the issue). The responsible party, in any case, could not be anyone but man. Evil in fact either comes from God or from man. Now as God is absolute perfection, nothing imperfect or evil could come from him. Following the death of Abel, when Cain is being questioned by Yahweh on the fate of his brother, Cain vainly tries to push the fault back on his interroga-

tor. ("Cain says, it is I who killed him, but is you who created the Evil Tendency within me."⁸) Everything evil that occurs, in the Judeo-Christian creation story, occurs because of human failings. The original sin caused man's transition from a naturally good state to a fallen state. "The designs in man's heart are evil from infancy"⁹ has shown how the moralization of God implies the *guilt* of the creature to explain the birth of evil. The embodiment of absolute good by a unique God leaves no other way out: man must be responsible. This is what Pascal said: "We must be born guilty, if not God must be unjust."¹⁰ (And, as I said earlier, it is precisely insofar as the guilt of the creature excuses the creator, whom it *exculpates*, that one can ask if, in fact, it does not serve to mask the "fault" of the creator.) The guilt of the creature in turn implies the economy of salvation and redemption. In Judeo-Christianity, evil comes from sin, as the excess of its own cause. The misfortune coming from evil is then taken as a signal calling for its expiation—in order for adversity to disappear in turn.

The result, as we have seen, is the moralization of history. If the people of Israel experienced exile, it was because of their "sins." If history produced a Syrian assault on Palestine, it was a sign of Yahweh's vengeance against the religious infidelity of Israel. The infidelity of a people cannot entail the infidelity of God. "God is not a man who regrets," says the Torah. All the misfortunes of ancient Israel—with the exception perhaps of certain persecutions, such as those of the Hasmonian era—are thereby interpreted as so many negative theophanies, which is, in short, logical when history is conceived as the epiphany of God. Catastrophes are necessarily "punishments." If all is going badly, it is because Yahweh is obliged to act ruthlessly. And why is he acting so harshly? Because "all of us who have been engendered, are bathed in our sins, and are full of injustice, and our sins are heavy" (Ezra 9:6-7).

Accordingly, as Renan observed in the Preface to his *Ecclesiastes*, the messianic perspective is necessarily absolute in this system, because it compensates for and thereby justifies the presence of evil. The "day of Yahweh," says Renan, "is the focal point of the unhappy consciousness of Israel." God is One, and he is infinitely good. He is just, infinitely just. A day will come when Yahweh establishes his Kingdom, and the virtues of the just will be recognized. (In Christianity, it is thanks to the mediation of Jesus, God turned man, that redemption is possible.) If history

were not *moralized*, it would become *morally incomprehensible*.

The eternal question still remains. "Why do the wicked prosper?" (Jeremiah 12:1). Why does virtue sometimes appear to be punished and vice sometimes rewarded? This question forms the framework of the Book of Job; "temptation" is what emerges from this question. Job vainly protests against the "excess of adversity" that strikes him; it is the impossibility of understanding his guilt that forms the foundation of his lamentations. Man can never be right and God wrong, even when appearances are in man's favor (Job 9:2). Job knows he is not in the wrong and proclaims his innocence but at the same time declares that Jehovah cannot deceive himself. Although creator of all, Yahweh cannot accept being attributed with the paternity of evil. Job performs an act of submission, regrets his earlier claims of innocence, takes back his words, and repents. Only then does Yahweh restore him to his previous condition. The lesson of the story is that man should renounce any attempts to grasp the profound reasons behind the mystery. Logic should not inspire him with any doubt because this logic is a minor thing in comparison to Yahweh's "logic." "The suffering of the just and the triumph of the wicked are only temporary. A time of retribution must surely come when each receives his just desserts."¹¹ By refusing to condemn God's silence, whose "demonic" dimension he has seen though—Renan labeled the book of Job as "sublime blasphemy"—Job is the declared *exemplary figure* as opposed to Cain. He accepts his fate without understanding, whereas Cain, who was equally non-comprehending, revolted against Yahweh's "apparent" injustice. A characteristic apology for servitude and yet another condemnation of human "pride."¹²

Christianity has taken up the same theme by transfiguring it. This transfiguration is not only motivated by the Christian theology of original sin, according to which all humans born in this world must pay for the "sin" of Adam, although their sole crime is to have been born. It is also based on the belief that Jesus, innocent by nature, did not hesitate to incarnate and suffer for the sins of the world, which he obviously did not commit—so that, as Joseph de Maistre writes, "Christianity rests entirely on this dogma ... of innocents paying for the guilty."¹³

The situation is obviously completely different in pre-Christian European Antiquity. The god here is not a Completely Other. He is a partner, whom man has the right to expect to keep

his commitments. In any case, his failings do not necessarily echo man's imperfection or guilt. In paganism, man had *confidence* in his gods, but this confidence could be shaken. Among the Greeks as well as the Germans, a god who did not fulfill the protector role that was rightfully expected of him could be repudiated. (A conception that was extended into the political domain as follows: the sovereign should be respected, but if he does not behave as expected of a sovereign, he can be legitimately overthrown.) With regard to the gods honored by the ancient Icelanders, Sigurdur Nordal writes, "One debated and argued with them if they had failed in some way. Justice was demanded of them as if they were like other men, in the form of gifts and compensations."¹⁴ One can even read these proud words in a saga: "If Thor does not protect me anymore, then I will part from him and choose another protector. And perhaps I won't choose any!"

Heraclitus also repeated the question posed by Jeremiah, but came up with a different answer. Let's hear what Nietzsche has to say about it: "Do guilt, injustice, contradiction, and suffering exist in this world? They do, proclaims Heraclitus, but only for the limited human mind which sees things apart but not connected, not for the all-seeing god. For him all contradictions run into harmony, invisible to the common human eye, yet understandable to one who, like Heraclitus, is related to the contemplative god."¹⁵

In Christian theology, no evil exists naturally. Evil is neither a being nor a substance. Nor is it a non-created principle coeternal with God, as the Manicheans believed. Evil is only the destruction of being. It comes exclusively from man and the poor application of his freedom. Subsequently, evil is everything that works in opposition to the finalist perspective of creation, everything that opposes the "direction of history" intended by Yahweh. "In Hebraic then Christian thought the cause of evil is to be found in human history; it is a created freedom that is the cause of evil and responsible for its existence."¹⁶ In other words, man makes a "deficient" use of his freedom when he utilizes it differently from the way desired by Yahweh. ("I offer you life or death, a blessing or a curse. So choose life, so that you and your descendants shall live, loving Yahweh your God, hearing his voice, bonding to him," Deuteronomy 30:19–20.) But then what value is a freedom that one should use in only one way? More importantly, what is the value of a freedom that, if used, produces evil? Furthermore, it is not even by using his freedom that man can ensure his salvation.

Salvation is a gift from God; only God is the cause of salvation. Man can only make a negative choice; he is only free *to go astray*. "The ontological action of man is to choose death."¹⁷ In addition, if it is man's poor use of his freedom that is the cause of evil, then the first cause of evil clearly resides in God for granting man such freedom. From whichever angle it is approached, the problem remains unintelligible. In the final analysis, the Babylonian myth concerning the existence of evil is much more convincing. It blames man's ability to commit evil acts on the fact that, at the time of his creation, the gods blended the blood of an evil god who had been executed with the matter from which the first men were created. In Judeo-Christianity, and particularly in Christianity, it is uniquely man to whom responsibility for evil is attributed. Man is the *guilty* party. The abject, to speak like Julia Kristeva,¹⁸ is radically internalized. And this is taken to the point of neurosis. Addressing God, Saint Augustine says, "What is good in me is by your work and your grace; what is evil in me is by my fault and your judgment."¹⁹

In paganism there is no objective definition of evil. Evil is not inscribed within matter as is claimed by, among others, the neo-Platonists, nor is it rooted in human nature, as in the Pauline conception. Evil does not pose a particular problem because it is not viewed as an absolute value. It does not spring from being, but from beings. It varies according to the values and ethical rules that individuals and peoples give themselves. More precisely, from the perspective I am taking, evil is what prevents us from being equal to the idea we have of ourselves—what makes us fall short rather than exceeding our limitations and is ultimately degrading. "What is good?" Nietzsche asks. "All that *heightens* the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man. What is bad? All that proceeds from weakness. What is happiness? The feeling that power *increases*, that a resistance is overcome."²⁰

Taking human diversity into consideration, individual as well as collective, how could evil be the same thing for everyone? There are no absolutes; there are only relative truths from given times and places. This by no means implies that "all is permitted"; as Husserl shows, an essence grasped in appearances is not contradicted from one person to the next within the same culture, which is the basis of intersubjectivity. Nor does it mean that ethics should be utilitarian, but simply that it is inevitably connected to a conception of the world that carries and roots it within a collec-

tive substratum. Evil is not a matter of "sin" or *a priori* guilt. Its determination is dependent on what we belong to and on the choices we make. Ethics is a fundamental given in paganism, but there is no universal moralization. This amounts to saying that there are no values in the world other than those resulting from our initiatives and interpretations. "There are no moral phenomena; there are only moral interpretations of phenomena."²¹

Just as life and death transform each other incessantly and are necessary to each other, the same holds true for good and evil—and only dimwits will find this an excuse to believe that what is good is no better than what is bad, or that both are indifferent in worth. "Good and evil are one and a same thing," said Heraclitus,²² and yet they are not "equivalent." Good and evil are *a* same thing, but they are not *the* same thing. They are a same thing because they arise from the same source. "One is born from the other," asserts Jacob Böheme. "What we call evil is only another aspect of good," writes Goethe. Good may become evil and vice versa, just as "what was cold becomes hot, and heat turns cool, the moisture dries and what is dry becomes wet."²³ There is yet a difference between hot and cold—but one constitutes the *becoming* of the other. It is because evil exists that there can be good. Every notion in fact requires its opposite. "Darkness is the greatest enemy of light, and this is the reason why light is visible," observes Böheme. "For if there was no black, white would not appear; if there was no suffering, joy would not appear."²⁴ Good as well as evil are necessary for man to experience himself and construct himself. "This is why," Paracelsus says, "God has ordained a limit to good and evil so that neither ascends too high." "If evil were to disappear," writes Sigrid Hunke, "the good would grow beyond all measure and become worse than evil in its rightful proportions. It would overthrow order and annihilate being! The one cannot exist without the other ... this is why there is nothing in nature that is totally good or evil."²⁵ Paracelsus would even go so far to say that evil could be found in the highest echelon of creation. It existed before the fall of the angels, which only made it manifest. Since the beginning, good and evil have met in heaven, and even God himself has been affected.

This is also the reason why agonistic practices forbid one from going to extremes. "Goethe and Attila," writes Henry de Montherlant, "emanate from the same single source of universal energy. As natural phenomena they are interdependent. The

beauty of the universe and its greatness are made as much of what you call evil as it is of what you call good, and Attila would agree with this as much as Goethe. Let's fight Attila, but fight knowing his higher utility; let's fight him with a profound kindness, and to be honest, fight him while loving him."²⁶

By presenting good and evil as absolutes, that is, by replacing the real world with a "theoretical" world, Christianity, like Plato and Socrates, presented itself as an antagonist of the Dionysian vitality that compels the human soul to assert itself as a "*yea sayer*" to life. Now morals are neither the grammar nor the truth of a life, which would be external and subjugated; at best, morality is the description and *qualification* of life. In paganism, the gods do not represent absolute good. They are both good and evil insofar as they represent sublimated forms of the good and evil that coexist, as antagonists, within life itself. They are simultaneously *great* within each other. They are what inspired Pericles to exclaim, "Our audacity has carved us a path by force over land and over sea, raising imperishable monuments to itself for good as well as evil!"

Paganism never stopped tasting what the Bible calls the fruits of the tree of good and evil. It has never ceased to assert the conjunction of opposites, which Judeo-Christian monotheism with horror describes as confusion and chaotic *helter skelter*. And the worst "confusion" concerns absolute good and evil, which lead to their own surpassing. "Woe to those who call good evil and evil good!" declares Isaiah (5:20). The non-distinction of absolutes, the human "claim" to establish itself as the *founder of values*, is what the Bible condemns most fundamentally. It is the affirmation of this "neutral zone" that Heidegger, himself condemned by Lévinas,²⁷ makes one of the characteristics of being. "I see and I know the totality of being in good and evil, and how one gives birth to the other," writes Jacob Böheme. The "revelation," if there is one, would be the non-existence of the opposites engendered by dualistic thought, the non-existence of the irreducible opposites born of the affirmation of the Completely Other. This is what Europe has been directly or indirectly repeating ceaselessly for millennia. This is what it has been compelled to constantly cast into the faceless face of Yahweh.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Tolerance and Inner Freedom

“One of the most scandalous charms of pagan Rome,” Gabriel Matzneff notes ironically, “is this tolerance, this respect for others...”¹ I have already mentioned this issue of pagan tolerance, by showing that it was born, as a principle, from both recognition of human diversity and a denial of dualism, which entails the acknowledgement of the variety of faces of God within one unitarian affirmation of the divine. But tolerance, as we have clearly seen, is also born of the lucid awareness of the coincidence of opposites in God. If there is no irreducible alterity between concepts, no impossible reconciliation, then nothing and no one could embody absolute evil, which is why tolerance is called for. We know the words of Symmachus, “What does it matter which ways each follows in pursuit of the truth? One does not always reach the solution to this great mystery by one path.” This means that one summit can be attained by various ways, that the Deity speaks to each people according to the “tongue” it understands—that the language of this being that is the world is spoken in a multitude of inner worlds, forever inspiring new forms of fulfillment and going beyond the self.

It is not by chance the majority of representatives of the “religion of Europe” also made themselves the defenders of freedom and a positive tolerance that is not to be confused with either “liberalism” or the absence of opinions, nor with indifference with respect to values. Nicolas of Cusa, although a cardinal, defended the merits of paganism. Erasmus protested forcefully against religious intolerance. Pico della Mirandola developed the idea of a *pax philosophica*. Marguerite de Navarre argued for the same thing, as did Sebastian Franck. Luther himself reestablished the right of interpretation and free examination.

Paganism can only react against the Christian theme of “man’s corruption by original sin,” and against the idea of man’s *a priori* guilt, that certain modern ideologues have not failed to borrow and exploit for their own needs in the sense of an intentional amnesia, self-negation, or auto-racism. We know how Christianity revealed itself to be more radical in this domain than Judaism, mainly under the influence of Pauline theology, then

Augustinian theology and Protestantism increased its radical nature. In Judaism, Adam’s failing is not properly speaking a hereditary fault, but rather a “blemish.” It is a defect stuck in time and does not necessarily flow out onto all men, as the gift of the Ten Commandments through the revelation from Sinai has essentially eliminated it. Catholic theology is more willingly based on the commentary of Saint Paul (Romans 5:12–21) than on the text of Genesis (3:1–24). “By one man sin has entered the world, and death through sin. And so death has passed upon all men, because all have sinned.” Original sin however did not ontologically alter human nature substantially; it merely polluted the relationship between man and God. Man retains the ability to do good and refrain from doing evil. Luther, to the contrary, adopted a theology which was not only inspired by Saint Augustine but also betrays a certain Gnostic contamination. This led him to declare that, since the sin committed by Adam and Eve, man’s nature and essence were entirely corrupted and “disfigured.” Human nature is “subject to the prowess of the devil and delivered into his power.” Man is intrinsically evil. “The truth is that man, having become a bad tree can only wish and do evil.” In 1516, Luther made the negation of man’s fundamental freedom the starting point of his doctrine of justification. In 1525, in his response to Erasmus, he again declared that fallen human nature was incapable of any good.

In opposition to this theology of original sin, paganism asserted that man, by constructing himself and leading a life in conformity with the principles he gives it, can confer a meaning on life. Paganism declares that there is no need for man to be cleansed of a hereditary “original sin” by the intermediary of a “redeemer,” nor any need for him to work toward the advent of “messianic” times. In short, he was in his thoughts and deeds, his choices and his works, sufficient unto himself. Augustine’s great adversary, Pelagius, arguing in favor of the prerogatives of free will, declared that man could live without sin and this was what God desired. To the Augustinian conception of grace—a grace due to biblical *election* through the intermediary of a “redeemer”—he opposed a grace of *creation*, a grace of the perpetual immanence of divine nature in human nature, which allows man to act entirely according to his will. For Augustine there is a contradiction between grace and liberty; for Pelagius, it is a fusion of both qualities in the same reality. For Meister Eckhart as well,

the union of human will and divine will can only be a completely consensual act. It is not "original sin" that separates man from God, but his self-indulgence, his inability to become sovereign over himself, to attain an active impersonality, an Olympian detachment (*Gelassenheit*) that would be the equivalent of full self-mastery. Through the voice of his Prometheus, Goethe exclaims: "You, my ardent and sacred heart, have you not completely fulfilled yourself?"—whereas Doctor Faustus, after defying Mephistopheles, eventually triumphs, thus justifying all the confidence God has placed in him. For Kant, the foundation of morals does not reside in any law exterior to man, but clearly within man, "in the depths of his heart," in the categorical imperative—this "moral imperative in the form of morality" which Spengler will describe in *The Decline of the West* as "Faustian and uniquely Faustian"—in the very roots of inner consciousness, and that it is the respect for this imperative that reveals to man the dignity of his own being and allows him to take part in the "eternal order." Religion is therefore the "recognition of all our duties as a divine command"—which no longer amounts to deducing ethical regulations from the existence of God. Later, in the extreme case, it is the deduction of God's existence from the presence of a morality inherent to the human spirit. Nikolai Berdiaev, finally, also provided an apology for the human creative act, in which he saw the "essential theme" of life. Speaking only of Christ as a symbol of the encounter between man and the divine that takes place inside each of us, he wrote, "God sets no limits on human freedom ... God expects of man that he takes part in the work of creation, in the pursuit of the creation of this world."²

Man, according to pagan thought, must also recognize the possibility of a perfectly consubstantial relationship with the divine. This union with the divine signifies nothing other than man's appropriation of his own inner freedom. On final appeal, man is fundamentally free in his inner core, free to grow or to shrink, free to gain or lose self-esteem (and the self-esteem of those who share his values). Freedom in paganism is neither "the destruction of all the disciplines,"³ nor the "free" acceptance of submission to Yahweh's desires. It is reintegration of the inner man, a freely desired reintegration, for it alone is capable of *getting us in the desired shape* of our own specific nature free of the constraint that Judeo-Christian monotheism places on a being who is radically distinguished from the world. Pico della

Mirandola has God address man in these terms, "You can lower yourselves to the level of the beast, but you can also be reborn as a divine creature by the free will of your spirit. Man can become what he likes—subhuman or superman, as he wishes."

Chapter Twenty-Six

The Return of the Gods

It is quite remarkable that although a comparison of the histories of Indo-European religions reveals so many functional similarities and “ideologies” among them, the titular gods of one same function almost never bear the same name. In Greece, with the sole definite exception of Zeus—who is not the name of a god, but the name of God: *dyeus* or *deios* (Father Zeus, the God-Father)—the names of the Olympians do not even appear to be Hellenic. (The cases of Poseidon, Hera, and Dionysius are still debatable.) The *a priori* probability that the name of a major god would be “forgotten” seems quite weak. Everything transpires as if, starting from the structure of an inherited common base, the widest variety of names could be given. In the *Gylfaginning*, Hår declares, “It could be said that the majority of names arise from the fact that there are so many languages in the world and that all peoples should be able to adapt his name to their own language to invoke him and to pray to him.”¹ The main thing is less the name itself than the fact that man can *call a god into existence by naming him*.

“God only appears when all creatures name him,” declares Meister Eckhart.² He also says, “when he becomes aware of himself”—and this phrase is somewhat reminiscent of the old Odin “himself by himself suspended.” Hölderlin maintained the idea that the gods remained imperfect to some extent so long as men have not *re-presented* them. It is only in and by man that the gods can become truly aware and fulfill themselves. The role—innocent and terrible—of the poet therefore consists of sensing the aspiration of gods who are as yet not awakened to awareness, calling them into existence, and engaging in a foundational dialogue with them upon which all future dialogues will be created.

“What made the oracle of Delphi mute,” notes Jean-Luc Marion, “was not the eventual discovery of some sort of trick (Fontenelle), but the disappearance of the Greeks.”³ The creation of new values, the re-appropriation of certain values, is tied to the creation or re-appropriation of a point of view. Didn’t Heidegger define value as a “center of perspective for a view with an aim in mind”? To rediscover the spirit of Delphi—in order for the Oracle to start “speaking” again—it is therefore completely natu-

ral to turn toward the sources of Greek thought, to the very origin of this Greek people, whom Hölderlin, in an elegy to the Archipelago, called the *inniges Volk*. It is necessary for the Greeks to be “reborn” in order for new gods to appear—these gods who represent “another beginning.” Because it clearly involves making the gods *re-appear*. When asked by the magazine *Der Spiegel*, Heidegger declared, in a text published in 1977, “Only a god can save us now [*nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten*]. The sole possibility remaining to us is the preparation within thought and poetry of an availability for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god in our decline.”⁴ This idea that “the gods are close” is also mentioned by Ernst Jünger, whose connections to Heideggerian thought are well known. “Man’s solitude increases, the desert extends around us, but perhaps it is in the desert that the gods will come.”⁵

In his autobiography, Carl Jung tells of a “moment of unusual clarity” during which he had a strange dialogue with something inside him: “In what myth does man live nowadays?” asked the voice. “In the Christian myth,” Jung answered. “Do you live in it?” the voice resumed. “To be honest, the answer is no! It is not the myth in which I live.” “Then do we no longer have any myth?” “No, evidently we no longer have any myth.” “But what is your myth, the myth which you do live?” “At this point the dialogue with myself became uncomfortable, and I stopped thinking,” writes Jung. “I had reached a dead end.”⁶

This is precisely the dead end we, too, have reached. How are we to get beyond it?

Nietzsche wrote in *The Will to Power*, “Could it be that with morality the pantheist affirmation of a yes to all things has also become impossible? Fundamentally and in fact only the moral God has been refuted and surpassed. Wouldn’t it be wise to think of a God *beyond good and evil*?”⁷ The answer to this question appears more clearly every day. The death of the “moral God” now leaves—at the end of “European nihilism”—a place free for the arrival of “new gods” whose “affirmative role supports this world, which is the only one.”⁸ The dead God of whom Nietzsche speaks is but one corpse among others, and there is nothing divine about this cadaver. This “God” was transformed a little too quickly into the God of the philosophers! When someone says that paganism was already dead when Christianity imposed itself, one is speaking a half truth. It is clear that without a relative decline of

the ancestral faith, no new religion would have been able to establish itself. But one forgets to say that with the same stroke, Christianity masked from Europe the gaping abyss left by the departure of the old gods and concealed the possibility of their return. It so happens that today this abyss is being unmasked; as Michel Maffesoli writes, to speak of the "death of God," is to also "leave their chances to the gods."⁹ It is unmasked and, by being exposed, creates the hour of the greatest distress. A distress that itself is necessary, for it is required by "European nihilism." "The myth is always present and rises back to the surface," writes Ernst Jünger, "when its hour has come, like a treasure."¹⁰ But this heterogeneous principle will only emerge at the perfect moment, when it has reached its highest potency. Now, the mechanism is only movement in this sense, a birthing cry. One does not travel back in time to reconquer myth; one meets it again when the time trembles to its very foundations, beneath the empire of extreme danger."¹¹ What we are facing is really a date of expiration: to know whether the gods will again link their destiny with ours—as they did before.

Being (*Sein*) for Heidegger is inseparable from man as being-in-the-world (*Dasein*). This being, which "is found in history," to the extent of being "temporal to the depths of its being," the sole "way of being" not to be confused with the sum or succession of other beings, the sole "being" to be truly in itself, possesses a determined character marked out by four terms. It is *permanence* with respect to becoming, the *always identical* with respect to appearance, the *persisting* with respect to thinking, the *unrealized as of yet (or already)* with respect to the project. "Permanence, identicalness, continuance, projection, in short all these words are saying the same thing: *constant presence*." But Heideggerian being is no more God—who would then be the supreme "being"—than it is a simple sum of beings. It is that being which cannot do without man, just as man cannot do without it. In fact, let me repeat, only man can question himself about being; he alone is the subject of lived experience that attains its truth by understanding the truth of being. This is why the question of being is truly the fundamental question, the necessary question for "the reawakening of the spirit," a spirit that is threatened ceaselessly by "nervous anxiety" and "incomprehension." The thought of being is born from its own questioning—from the question "why is there something rather than nothing?"—whereas such a question is

"unthinkable" from the standpoint of Christian faith because God precisely forms the *a priori* response, the "response" that, retrospectively, prevents the question from even being raised. To question oneself about what the nature of being consists of is also to ask what our being in history at that point consists of. Therefore, it is also to question man's nature and identity. Ontology, metaphysics, and anthropology are linked. Hence this remark by Heidegger: "Only from the truth of being can the essence of the holy be thought. Only from the essence of the holy can the essence of divinity be thought. Only in the light of the essence of divinity can it be thought or said what the word 'God' is to signify."¹²

God was not assassinated by surprise. He deliberately put himself in a position to be killed. Christianity is by itself his own failing; far from being the antithesis of nihilism, nihilism is on the contrary its logical end result. The death of God, as Nietzsche has shown perfectly, is the inevitable consequence of the *death of the real* for which the Judeo-Christian discourse is responsible. ("To no longer speak the real, but repeat conditioned concepts mutilates the interrogation of being, removes being from the place where *power* solicits the *will*," declares Pierre Boudot.) Nihilism results from the gradual unveiling of a doctrine that places the center of life's gravity outside of *real* life, and which is gradually and precisely unmasked as such. "If one shifts the center of gravity of life out of life into the 'Beyond'—into *nothingness*—one has deprived life as such of its center of gravity"¹³ Just as the logical analysis of language, pushed to the final extreme, leads to the abandonment of all forms of language, so too "the belief," as said by Nietzsche again, "in the categories of reason is the cause of nihilism." This is a two step process. In the first, Judeo-Christian monotheism undertakes to "demythologize" and *desacralize* the world; and in the second, by virtue of this very undertaking, it becomes the victim of the very desacralization process it unleashed. A world from which the notion of the sacred has been voided can no longer be the support of any kind of faith. The collapse of Christianity as a collective, real-life faith is an auto-collapse made inevitable by a reversal of values that today appears fully out in the open. The history of Western metaphysics is only the history of the slow unmasking of a Christian aspiration to nothingness.

We can hence better understand that contemporary deca-

dence is not the effect of its distance from the Christian religion, but its profanation in the strict sense of the word, i.e., its generalized diffusion in profane forms—its generalized infection. And it is in this sense that one can say, without cultivating paradox, that the world has never been as Judeo-Christian as it is today. The moral God is dead, but the values he has bequeathed are more present than ever, even though their impotence is a generally noted fact, and even though they constitute merely the decor of the impasse in which our contemporaries crash into time and time again like a fly on a windowpane. God is dead, but the modern world continues to claim him as its authority, precisely because it cannot and does not *want* to rid itself of his carcass. All Western “humanism,” according to Lévinas’ phrase, is passing through a “secularization of Judeo-Christianity”—nor is it by chance that we are witnessing the resurgence today of a fundamental criticism of Heidegger accompanied with the adulation of a Judeo-Christian monotheism in which nobody believes anymore but which everybody claims. This is also accompanied by the exaltation of Freud against Jung, the accusations against “mastery” and all forms of authority, the depiction of power as an “evil,” the indictment of the State, the *vengeance* against the world based on a recourse to the Law, hypercritical pessimism and individualist immediateness, the apologia for *exile* and *rupture*, the “rhizome” against the “root,” and so on. Our era is ceaselessly marked by the very thing it thinks it has broken with, and for which it only restores the flattest transpositions.

To break with this secularization of Judeo-Christian discourse is to assert once and for all man as creator of himself. Of course, as I said earlier, man cannot be put in the place of God. He will never attain the fullness and finitude of his being. Every horizon he manages to reach will only reveal another. Man only surpasses himself to find other means of surpassing himself again. He is, according to the beautiful phrase of Meister Eckhart, similar to “a vase that grows larger as one fills it and which will never be full.” What is man’s role? To master forces in order to create forms from them and to master forms to create forces. To resort to what within allows the individual to attain what is greater and other than him: the “transcendent ego” that Husserl opposes to the “everyday me,” synonymous with the impersonal “one” (*das Man*) of the inauthentic, whose heavy dictatorship over the contemporary world is denounced by Heidegger. This is what Nietzsche is

saying when he writes, “To create or be superior to what we are ourselves, is *our* essence. To create above ourselves! This is the tendency to procreation, the tendency toward action and work. Just as all willing presupposes an aim, *man presupposes a being*, which is not there, but provides the objective of his existence. This is the freedom of all will!”¹⁴

This is an assertion that is neither purely “vital” nor flatly “Promethean.” The superman is neither a super-species, a super-brain, nor a man stripped of all *humanitas*. He is “the one who rises above the man of yesterday and today, uniquely to bring this man, in the very first instance, to his being, which is always suffering, and establish him there.”¹⁵ He is the “third stage” of man mentioned by Paracelsus, he who will master the visible human animal as well as the man of invisible consciousness, which will be attained by a second birth. He is the one who accepts and desires the Eternal Return of the Same, that is to say, the infinite duration of the being of beings; he is the “name given to the being of man that corresponds to the being of beings” (Heidegger). He is, finally, he whose essence is “desired based on the will to power,” that is to say, the desire to live, the will to *grow*, the will of the will issued from the being of the being, which is also will in and of itself. For there is a mandatory connection—a “circle,” says Heidegger—between the notions of the will to power, super-humanity, and the Eternal Return, as well as taking mastery over the earth.

It is difficult, but for future thinking unavoidable, to attain the high responsibility out of which Nietzsche reflected on the essence of that humanity destined (in the destiny of being as the will to power) to undertake mastery over the earth. The essence of the overman is not a warrant for a fit of capricious frenzy. It is the law, grounded in being itself, of a long chain of the highest self-overcomings, which alone will make man ripe for beings which as beings, are part of being. This being as the will to power brings to light its essence as the will to power and through this disclosure is epoch making, that is, it makes the last epoch of metaphysics.¹⁶

The world is consubstantial, co-extensive to man, and this is primarily why the desire for power displayed by man in his place is justifiable. The goal of this desire oriented toward power is not the puerile satisfaction of an aspiration toward “mastery” or the “domination” that would only be the stamp of a weak mind in

search of a compensation justifying its own weakness, but rather the *in-scription* into the world of a project conforming to our own referential values, a project that goes beyond our unavoidable finitude and at the same time forces us, within the space of this finitude, to go beyond ourselves. It is in this sense that the world is our property and *Materialarbeit* for our undertakings. But if it is fundamentally our property, it is also primarily not the property of an Other, a Completely Other. As Philippe Nemo writes—without subscribing to it—“the world is will to power because man himself is will to power. Man and world resonate in the will to power.”¹⁷

Wisdom in the Bible is withdrawal, humility, clear perception of the limits beyond which “pride” begins. “It appears to me,” said Nietzsche, to the contrary, “that wisdom and pride are closely associated. Their common point is the cold, sure gaze, which in both cases knows how to assess.” (Pride and wisdom are symbolized in the Nietzschean discourse by the two animals of Zarathustra: the eagle and the serpent—the same serpent assimilated by Genesis to the Evil Tendency.) It is through the association of wisdom and pride that man can rediscover the world and break the screen that is interposed between him and the world, the screen which objectifies the matter of his freedom and imposes upon him the ability to recognize only objects.

Rediscovering the world is again to have done with the spirit of vengeance. To have done with a system in which pain calls for punishment, guilt, and resentment. To have done with this “resentment against time” that Heidegger says consists of positing *supra-temporal ideals* as absolutes “so that, when measured against them, the temporal can only lower itself to being strictly a non-being.” “Freeing oneself from vengeance is to pass from resentment against time to the will that represents being in the Eternal Return of the Same and becomes itself an advocate of the Circle.”¹⁸ Zarathustra himself exclaims, “That man would be freed of vengeance is for me the bridge toward his highest hopes and a rainbow after a long period of stormy weather!” So there is no other recourse than the jubilant approval of existence in its entirety—and primarily as the very condition for its transformation—an approach that intersects with that proposed by Clément Rosset,¹⁹ an approval to which he gives the name “elation,” consisting of the secret “grace” represented by love of the real. A love of the real that is neither love of life alone or love of others, nor self-

love, nor the love of God himself, but, above all, the love of existence in its entirety insofar as it holds all antagonistic opposites, all potentialities—love of the real without any corrective for subjugating it, adding to it, or duplicating it. Love, says Rosset, of a “world where nothing is foreseen and nothing is acted, where nothing is necessary, but where everything is possible. An approach, finally, that proclaims that one can do nothing in the world and in life unless one first declares oneself for them.”

With the establishment of Christianity in Europe began a slow process of disassociation and shattering of the orders of sociality. This process eventually crystallized in the form of a veritable neurosis, for which the one-dimensional society denounced by Marcuse is only the reverse and relative contradiction, at the same time it is its derisory corrective. The essential cause of this movement, approaching its end today, has been the coexistence in the European mentality of two antagonistic spiritualities. The death of the “moral God” indicates the failure of this coexistence. It also tolls the bell for a European history determined by traditional metaphysics; “Nietzsche’s word gives the destiny of two millennia of Western history.”²⁰ What matters now is pushing this process to its conclusion, reaching its dialectical reversal and going beyond it. The realization of *all* the consequences of the death of the “moral God” is nothing other than this “nihilism” spoken of by Nietzsche as the task he assigns us of emerging from after having assumed and crossed through it. “European nihilism” is thus in no way the “rule of *nothing*.” It is the obligatory transition to another beginning. It is, says Heidegger, an “*historical movement*,” the “fundamental movement of the history of the West.”²¹ It is both end and beginning, closing and opening, the destruction of values and the creation of values.

It involves the abandonment of a metaphysics in which God has created the world *ex nihilo*—in which God is the *primus* from which heaven and earth, and men and gods arise—for a metaphysics in which man can bring into existence at any time a God who awaits his call in order to attain full self-awareness—a metaphysics that subordinates God to a being within a unified fourfold (*das Geivert*, the Heideggerian Fourfold), that similarly consists of earth, sky, man, and God, without any one of these four elements absent from the center, but on the contrary, in such a way that it is only from this entirety that it is possible for each to exist. It involves no longer seeking an objective “truth” outside the world,

but intentionally creating one out of a new system of values. It involves the founding of a neo-paganism that allows the realization of "an authentic lifestyle," in other words the responsible commitment of the "resolved decision that anticipates" and creates in man, the being "made to die," the condition of a "powerful spiritual system" that permanently encourages excelling and exceeding oneself. Finally, it involves giving birth again to a metaphysics that excludes all critical approaches that have not first posited the approval of the world, excludes all mental approaches based on exile or negativity, excludes the eternal *no* of dualistic monotheism—in other words a metaphysics in which setting down roots, staying in one place, dwelling there and thinking there, go hand in hand and are perceived to be the same.

Man is preeminently a *giver of meaning*. In paganism, meaning is not non-existent; it is tied to man's will and therefore necessarily equivocal. Man does not "discover" what was there before him. He founds and creates the world by the meaning he gives to things, by the ever-plural significance he attributes to the entire ensemble of beings. And as this *foundation* results from constantly renewed actions and choices, the world *is* not; it *becomes*—it is not created once and for all; it is constantly founded by new provisions of meaning (*Sinnverleihungen*). As the pre-Socratics felt, long before Schopenhauer, the world is only *will* and *representation*. Man, alone, organizes an external reality that, without him, is only a kind of chaos—in the extreme case, a kind of non-being. All human life is inseparable from the meaning man gives it. Everything even takes on meaning by the way man regards it, even before his action transforms it thereby forcing it to attain its true status of existence. Going even further than Kant, Schopenhauer declares, "Time, space, and causality can be drawn and deduced entirely from the subject itself, abstraction made of the object."²²

Today, the greatest provision of meaning possibly imaginable is that which announces and foresees the *renaissance of the gods*. But nothing, of course, is written in advance. Nietzsche was the first to "physiognomically" feel this historic moment when man prepares to ascend to total domination of the earth, and it is from this perspective that he demands, as its necessary condition, the transition to a new state of humanity. (Which amounts to saying that man can only fully dominate the earth provided he can fully dominate himself.) But Nietzsche also clearly felt that that this

moment was the one in which Judeo-Christian discourse would attain its maximum *diffusion* and *dilution*, and that never before had the negative evaluations of man's autonomy, his ability to establish himself as more than himself, been as present as in this time that demanded its overcoming. But what else to do at night if not assert the possibility of light? And to begin striving to break the *language* of twenty centuries of Judeo-Christian egalitarianism, this language which is only the *site* of a "universal incarceration" (Pierre Boudot). What do we want? We want, through a new beginning, to realize the "appropriation" (*Ereignis*) which is the reciprocal implication of being and time. We wish to realize the triumphal synthesis announced by Joachim of Fiore. We wish to oppose Faith to Law, *mythos* to *logos*, the innocence of becoming to the guilt of the created being, the legitimacy of the will that leans toward power to the exaltation of servitude and humility, and man's autonomy to his dependency. We value desire over pure reason, life above its problematic, the image over the concept, the place over exile, the desire for history over the end of history and the will that transforms and "*says yes*" to the world over negativity and refusal. "People of this time," writes Robert Sabatier, "you must relearn the language of the sun—you must decimate the night's demons."²³ And for that, project into the world the essential questioning. "That which remains," Hölderlin said, "the poets have founded."

Cannes, May 1980—Avoriaz, January 1981.

Notes

Chapter One: Never Dying, Always Reviving

1. In an article entitled "Le malentendu du nouveau paganisme" ["The Misunderstanding of the New Paganism"] (reprinted in *La Torre*, March 1979; French translation, Centro Studi Evoliani, Brussels, 1979), Julius Evola contests the validity of the word "pagan," which he himself employed in his book *Imperialismo pagano [Pagan Imperialism]* (Todi-Roma: Atanor, 1928). He uses as his pretext the fact that the word *paganus* was originally "a pejorative, sometimes even insulting term used in the polemics of the early Christian apologias." This opinion seems hardly convincing to me, not only because the term has been consecrated by usage and has gained over time another resonance, but also because movements that have transformed the scornful labels given them into titles of glory are hardly a historical anomaly (for example the Dutch Gueux). On the other hand, Nietzsche imagines a time when words like "Messiah," "Redeemer," or "Saint" could be used "as insults and for designating criminals." Be that as it may, we are fully in agreement with many other passages in this text by Evola.
2. See Herbert Bloch, "La rinascita pagana in Occidente alla fine del secolo IV" ["The Pagan Renaissance in the West at the End of the Fourth Century"], in *Il conflitto tra paganesimo e cristianesimo nel secolo IV [The Conflict Between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century]*, ed. Arnoldo Momigliano (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1968 and 1975), 199–224.
3. For more on the properly pagan aspects of the Renaissance see especially Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968), and Jean Seznec, *La survivance des dieux antiques* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980) [*The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, trans. Barbara F. Sessions (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961)]. For more on the same evolution in Germany see Jacques Ridé, *L'image de Germain dans la pensée et la littératures allemandes, de la redécouverte de Tacite à la fin du XVIe siècle. Contribution à l'étude de la genèse d'un mythe [The Image of Germania in German Thought and Literature, since the Rediscovery of Tacitus at the End of the Sixteenth Century. Contribution to the Study of the Genesis of a Myth]*, 3 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1977).
4. Catulle Mendès, *L'homme tout nu [Man Completely Naked]* (Paris: Libres Halier, 1980).
5. J. Gaume, *Lettres à Monseigneur Dupanloup, évêque d'Orléans, sur le paganisme dans l'éducation [Letters to Monsignor Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, on Paganism in Education]* (Gaume frères, 1852).
6. Ernst Renan, *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse [Memories of Childhood and Youth]* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983).

7. Gustave Thibon, "Maurras poète," ["Maurras, Poet"] in *Itinéraires*, April, 1968, p. 145.
8. For more on the paganism of the younger Maurras, see Patrice Sicard, *Maurras ou Maurras [Maurras on Maurras]* (Paris: GRECE, 1974).
9. Robert Brasillach, *Le procès de Jeanne d'Arc [The Trial of Joan of Arc]* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951).
10. D.H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse* (New York: Viking Press, 1966).
11. Henry de Montherlant, *Va jouer avec cette poussière [Go play with this dust]* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). For more on the place held by Antiquity in the work and thought of Montherlant, see Pierre Duroisin, *Montherlant et l'Antiquité*, doctoral thesis, Liège University, 1979.
12. Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Le testament de Dieu* (Paris: Grasset, 1979) [*The Testament of God*, trans. George Holoch (New York: Harper and Row, 1980).]
13. Talmud, Baba-Kamma treatise, folio 82–83; Sota treatise, folio 49.
14. Louis Pauwells, Interview with Jean Biès, *J'ai dialogué avec des chercheurs de vérité [Dialogues with Seekers of truth]* (Paris: Retz, 1979).
15. Octavio Paz, *Les Nouvelles littéraires*, 14 June 1979.
16. Bernard Oudin, *La foi qui tue [The Faith That Kills]* (Paris: Laffont, 1980).
17. Raymond Ruyer, *Le sceptique résolu [The Resolute Sceptic]* (Paris: Laffont, 1979).
18. Alain Daniélou, *Gods of Love and Ecstasy* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1984).
19. Philippe Sollers, "Pasolini, Sade, saint Matthieu," in *Pasolini*, ed. Maria Antonietta Macciocchi (Paris: Grasset, 1980).
20. Carlo Ginzburg, *Les batailles nocturnes* (Verdier: Lagrasse, 1980) [*Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Anne and John Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992)].
21. Odo Marquard, "Lob des Polytheismus, Über Monomythis und Polymythis" ["Praise of Polytheism, on Monomyth and Polymythis"] in *Philosophie und Mythos. Ein Kolloquium [Philosophy and Myth. A Colloquium]*, ed. Hans Poser (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), pp. 40–58.
22. David Levy Miller, *The New Polytheism* (New York: Harper Collins, 1974).
23. James Hillman, *Pan and the Nightmare* (London: Spring Publications, 2000).
24. Gilbert Durand, "La cité et les divisions du royaume" ["The City and Divisions of the Kingdom"] in *Eranos*. See also his *Science de l'homme et tradition. Le nouvel esprit anthropologique [Social science and tradition. The new anthropological spirit]* (Paris: Berg International, 1979) and *Figures mythiques et visages de l'oeuvre [Mythical Figures and Faces of Work]* (Berg International, 1979).
25. Max Weber, *Le savant et le politique [Science and Politics]*, UGE-10/18 (1971).
26. Michel Maffesoli, *La violence totalitaire [Totalitarian Violence]* (Paris: PUF,

1979), p. 68.

27. Julius Evola, *Ride the Tiger*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin and Constance Fontana (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2003).

Chapter Two: Time and History

1. *Lire*, April, 1980.

2. *Les nouveaux cahiers*, Summer, 1979.

3. To employ John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson's translation of "Geschehen." See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 427—Ed.

4. Jean-Pierre Vernant, interview in *Le Nouvel Observateur*; 5 May 1980.

5. Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. Martin Heidegger, Rectoral Address, "The Self-Assertion of the German University" (1933). See the translation by William S. Lewis in Richard Wolin, ed., *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1993), p. 32.

10. *Le Matin*, 10 September 1980.

11. *Ibid.*

12. My citations are taken from *The Jerusalem Bible* (Paris: Cerf-Desclée de Brouwer, 1973) that is generally regarded as possessing the greatest authority. I have also consulted the *TOB* [*Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible, The Ecumenical Translation of the Bible*] (Paris: Cerf-Les Bergers et les Mages, 1971), André Chouraqui's translation (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1974), and the Bible of the Rabbinate.

13. See François Fountaine, "Le complot contre Rome" ["The plot against Rome"], *Le Figaro-Magazine*, 12 April 1980.

14. Gabriel Matzneff, *Le Monde*, 26 April 1980.

Chapter Three: The Sacred

1. "The Self-Assertion of the German University," *The Heidegger Controversy*, p. 32.

2. Jean Markale, "Aujourd'hui, l'esprit païen?" ["The Pagan Spirit Today?"] in *L'Europe païenne* [*Pagan Europe*], ed. Marc de Smedt (Paris: Seghers, 1980), p. 16.

3. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 vols., trans. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969).

4. Mircea Eliade, interview in *Le Monde-Dimanche*, 14 September 1980.

5. Régis Debray, *Le scribe* [*The Scribe*] (Paris: Grasset, 1980).

6. *Ibid.*

7. Georges Bataille, *Théorie de la religion* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) [*Theory of Religion*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1992)].

8. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae Divi Augustae*, XXVIII, 4, 6.

9. Claude Tresmontant, *Problèmes du christianisme* [*Problems of Christianity*] (Paris: Seuil, 1980), p. 55.

10. This does not make it a theocracy. The sovereign political function retains its autonomy. On the other hand, it is not the city of men that is governed according to the principles that supposedly govern the city of God, but rather the world of the gods that is imagined as the ideal projection of man's world.

11. Bernard-Henri Lévy, *L'Express*, 21 April 1979.

Chapter Four: False Contrasts

1. For more on what has been dubbed the "Church of circumcision," see P. Gaultier Briand, *Nazareth judéo-chrétienne* [*Judeo-Christian Nazareth*] (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1971).

2. Claude Tresmontant, *Les problèmes de l'athéisme* [*The Problems of Atheism*] (Paris: Seuil, 1972), p. 439.

3. Jean Daniélou, *La théologie du judéo-christianisme* [*The Theology of Judeo-Christianity*] (Paris: Desclée, 1958). [*The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, ed. and trans. John A. Baker (Chicago: Regnery, 1964).]

4. James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

5. "Election" in Christianity is purely individual. It is within each people (and not primarily between peoples) that Christian faith has established a fundamental *caesura* separating the most orthodox believers from the heretics or pagans. Marxism transposed this *caesura* onto the profane plane with the notion of "class."

6. See also Celsus, *Discours vrai contre les chrétiens* [*True Discourse against the Christians*] (Paris: J.J. Pauvert, 1965) and Louis Rougier, *Celse contre les chrétiens, La réaction païenne sous l'empire romain* [*Celsus against the Christians, the Pagan Reaction under the Roman Empire*] (Paris: Copernic, 1977). It should be noted that this distinction is not only diachronic. The two aspects have always coexisted, in obviously varying proportions, throughout the history of Christianity. To a certain extent they correspond to the dual face of Jesus in Pauline Christianity: suffering and humiliated, glorious and triumphant. See Louis Rougier, *La genèse des dogmes chrétiens* [*The Genesis of Christian Dogmas*] (Paris: Albin Michel, 1972), pp. 281–86.

7. Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 164.
8. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
9. Tresmontant, *Les problèmes de l'athéisme*, p. 218.

Chapter Five: Dualism: For and Against

1. For more on this subject see Giorgio Locchi, "Histoire et sociétés: critique de Lévi-Strauss" ["History and Societies: Critique of Lévi-Strauss"] in *Nouvelle-école*, March-April, 1972, 81–93; and François-Xavier Dillmann, *Un fait de civilisation: la magie dans le haut Moyen Age scandinave* [*A Fact of Civilization: Magic in Scandinavia in the High Middle Ages*] Doctoral Thesis (to be published).
2. Session 3, ch. 1 and canons 3–4.
3. A fairly clear tendency can be seen in contemporary Christian theology to no longer take into account these secondary antinomies so strictly. But this in no way discharges its past experience.
4. It is significant, for example, that the question of whether or not a trace of a belief in the afterlife can be found in the Hebrew Bible is still fuel for debate. In this regard, compare the article "Eschatology" that appeared in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), Vol. 6, pp. 859–86; and Abraham Cohen, *Les routes divergentes* [*Divergent Roads*] (Paris: Minuit, 1956), pp. 34–39. In Judaism these facts work hand in hand with a very positive judgment toward life. Life is viewed as the supreme value so highly that it is generally not viewed as meritorious to sacrifice it in an act of heroism. Suicide is practically absent from the pages of the Bible. The closest allusion may be when Job was tempted to take this action through the intermediary of his wife ("So curse God and Die!" Job 2:9), who then immediately takes it back. Asceticism is also viewed ambiguously. The call for penitence is interpreted as a proof of Yahweh's love, but Orthodox Judaism generally testifies to a certain distrust of violent mortification practices. The positive nature of life also circumscribes the limits of forgiveness and justifies self-defense (eventually even preventive measures). Life is worth what it is, not what its sublimation might make it—a sublimation that can lead to losing it. We find this non-duality of the body and soul in the belief specific to Judaism according to which after death, life only gradually withdraws from the body. In Christianity, to the contrary, where terrestrial existence is more easily perceived as an "accident," there is an entirely different attitude toward life.
5. Claude Tresmontant, *Essai sur la pensée hébraïque* [*Essay on Hebrew Thought*] (Paris: Cerf, 1962).
6. See Z'ev ben Shimon Halevi, *La Cabbale: tradition de la connaissance cachée* [*Kabbalah: Tradition of Hidden Knowledge*] (Paris: Seuil, 1980), pp. 9–10.
7. Josy Eisenberg and Armand Abecassis, *A Bible ouverte* [*With Open Bible*] (Paris:

- Albin Michel, 1978), p. 32. Note that the Hebrew verb *barn*, whose root can be found in *berechit*, "beginning," is related to the adverb *bar*, "outside of."
8. See Robert Guedluy, *La création* [*Creation*] (Tournai: Desclée, 1963), p. 51.
9. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1990), pp. 50–51.
10. Gilbert Durand, *L'âme tigrée* [*The Striped Heart*] (Paris: Denoël-Gonthier, 1980), p. 179.
11. A declaration that corresponds to canon 3 of the anathema issued by Vatican I.
12. Heraclitus, Fragment 30.
13. Louis Rougier, *La Scolastique et la thomisme* [*Scholasticism and Thomism*] (Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1925), p. 44.
14. Alain Daniélou, *Virtue, Success, Pleasure, and Liberation: The Four Aims of Life in the Tradition of Ancient India* (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1993), pp. 63–64.
15. Mark Patick Hederman, "De l'interdiction à l'écoute" ["On the Prohibition of Listening"] in *Heidegger et la question de Dieu* [*Heidegger and the Question of God*], ed. Richard Kearney and Joseph Stephen O'Leary (Paris: Grasset, 1980), p. 288.
16. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Difficile liberté* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1963), p. 257. [*Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).]
17. Jewish tradition dates events "based on a starting date of the creation of the world." This dating goes back to the Middle Ages and the figure obtained—the year 5741 corresponds to 1980–1981—results from a study of biblical chronology. Today this dating is generally given a symbolic value. It testifies in any case to a desire to ensure that "the beginning of time" does not coincide with any specifically human event.
18. The thesis of Catholic exegesis, mainly developed by Tresmontant (see *Problèmes du christianisme*, pp. 47–49), is to consider as proven that the world was begun and as rational that it was created. The first thesis, which comes out of the hard sciences, today fuels speculations on the "Big Bang" origin of the universe some twelve or thirteen billion years ago. "Everything in the universe and in nature is on the genesis system," writes Tresmontant elsewhere (*France catholique-Ecclesia*, 21 March 1980). Such an opinion is highly debatable, as is any theory that forces faith to depend on reason or intends to "prove" eternal beliefs by scientific facts, which by definition are contingent and subject to revision. As Niels Bohr wrote, "the purpose of physics is not to say what nature is, but what we are able to say about nature." The "Big Bang" theory will no doubt go the way of all the rest and be replaced or supplemented by another. (It is precisely the virtue of its statutory state of incompleteness that makes it scientific.)

Furthermore, it has already been challenged on the basis of new interpretations of the Hubble equation, at the 1976 Congress of the International Union of Astronomy in Paris. Presuming that such a "beginning" could actually have occurred, there is nothing that allows the assertion that it was an absolute beginning and not the start of a new cycle. A constantly changing universe is not necessarily a universe that had an absolute first cause. Furthermore, if we accept the "Big Bang" theory, which was first presented by the canon Georges Lemaître in *L'hypothèse de l'atome primitif* [*The Hypothesis of the Primitive Atom*] (Neuchâtel: Le Griffon and Dunod, 1946), ought we to consider the universe to be in a state of ceaseless expansion (the open model) or the opposite view point, that it will stop? Current trends favor the open model. See "The Fate of the Universe" in *New Scientist*, 27 November 1980, 582–84. Tresmontant's opinion, according to which "the multiple as such cannot provide itself information which it does not possess," is a sophistry, whose implicit postulates are based on an obligatorily incomplete knowledge. Science, by its very nature, will always remain mute on the question of ultimate causes.

19. Clément Rosset, *Le réel et son double. Essai sur l'illusion* [*The Real and its Double. Essay on Illusion*] (Paris: Gallimard, 1976). See also his *Le réel. Traité de l'idiotie* [*The Real. Treatise on Idiocy*] (Paris: Minuit, 1977) and *L'objet singulier* [*The Singular Object*] (Paris: Minuit, 1980).

20. Ilya Prigogine and Isabella Stengers, *La nouvelle alliance* [*The New Alliance*] (Paris: Gallimard, 1979).

21. Marc Beigbeder, *La Bouteille à la mer* [*The Bottle in the Ocean*], December 1980.

22. Tresmontant, remember, finds it convenient to call paganism "atheism"—all the while acknowledging that the term is here at least "ill-suited" (p. 15). It will be noted that Judaism makes no practical distinction between someone who denies the existence of God and someone who denies that God plays any real role in this world, although accepting the possibility of his existence. See Hayim Halevy Donin, *To Be a Jew: A Guide to Jewish Observance in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1972), pp. 24 ff.

23. Tresmontant, *Les problèmes de l'athéisme*, p. 437.

24. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, §18, 140.

Chapter Six: God: Creator and Father

1. Tresmontant, *Essai sur la pensée hébraïque*.

2. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* §56, p. 187.

3. Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* [*On the Proscription of Heretics*].

4. Origen, *Contre Celsus* [*Against Celsus*] 1:27.

5. Origen, *Homily on Leviticus* 8, 3.

6. Origen, *On First Principles*, 2, 8, 3.

7. A.H. Armstrong, *An Introduction to Ancient Philosophy* (London: Methuen, 1947), p. 173.

8. St. Augustine, *Enarrations on the Psalms*, 127.

9. Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Le testament de Dieu*, p. 238.

10. In addition to the studies mentioned above, see the hypotheses of the contemporary "neo-Gnostics," Raymond Ruyer, *La gnose de Princeton. Des savants à la recherche d'une religion* [*The Gnosticism of Princeton. Scientists in Search of a Religion*] (Paris: Fayard, 1974); those of Jean Charron on "psycho-matter" or "sentient matter," that corresponds with electrons in *Le monde éternel des éons* [*The Eternal World of Aeons*] (Paris: Stock, 1980) as well as the Cordoue colloquia, *Science et conscience* [*Science and Consciousness*] (Paris: Seuil, 1980).

11. Heraclitus, Fragment 62.

12. Erich Fromm, *To Have or to Be?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), p. 141.

13. Mircea Eliade, *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Payot, 1976), p. 194. [*A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. 1: *From the Stone Age to the Eleusinian Mysteries*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).]

14. For more on this notion of indescribability, see Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and Gods* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 342 ff.

15. Ernest Renan, *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques* [*General history and Comparative System of the Semitic Languages*] (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères 1863).

16. "Moïse et la question de l'extériorité" ["Moses and the Question of Exteriority"], in *Cahiers Confrontation*, Spring 1980.

17. Armando Verdiglione, *La dissidence freudienne* [*Freudian Dissidence*] (Paris: Grasset, 1978).

18. Gérard Huber.

19. Marie Balmary *L'homme aux statues. Freud et la faute cachée du père* (Paris: Grasset, 1979).

20. Clément Rosset, "La faute originaire" ["The Original Fault"], *La Nouvelle revue française*, January 1, 1981, 85–94.

21. See Franklin Rausky, "L'homme et l'autre dans la tradition hébraïque" ["Man and the Other in the Hebraic Tradition"] in Léon Poliakov's *Ni Juif ni Grec. Entretiens sur le racisme* [*Neither Jew nor Greek. Talks on Racism*] (La Haye: Mouton, 1978), pp. 35–46.

22. Gérard Mendel, *La révolte contre le père* [*The Revolt Against the Father*] (Paris: Payot, 1968), p. 255.

23. See Edgar Morin, *La Méthode. 2: La vie de la vie* [*Method 2: The Life of Life*] (Paris, Seuil, 1980), pp. 439 ff.

24. Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods* (NY: Fawcett, 1966), p. 59.

25. Josy Eisenberg and Armand Abecassis, *Et Dieu créa Eve. A Bible ouverte II [And God Created Eve. With Open Bible, vol. 2]* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1979), p. 161.
26. Eliade, *Histoires des croyances et idées religieuses [A History of Religious Ideas]*, vol. 1, p. 361.

Chapter Seven: Human Nature and Freedom

1. This plural ("Let us make man...") has intrigued many. It does not seem to be the royal we. Some commentators believe that Yahweh was addressing celestial beings here, primarily angels.
2. Paul Humbert, *Etudes sur le récit du paradis et la chute dans la Genèse [Studies on the Story of Paradise and the Fall in Genesis]* (Neuchâtel: Université de Neuchâtel, 1940).
3. General audience of 6 December 1978.
4. Louis Althusser, *Positions, 1964-1975* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1976), pp. 119-20.
5. Morin, *La Méthode*, pp. 418-19.
6. Compare, for example Pierre P. Grassé, *L'homme en accusation [Indictment of Man]* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1980) and Ashley Montagu, *The Nature of Human Aggression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).
7. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *A Bible ouverte*, p. 227
8. *La Nouvel Observateur*, 25 September 1980.
9. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *A Bible ouverte*, p. 128.
10. René Coste, *Le devenir de l'homme. Projet marxiste, projet chrétien [The Creation of Man: Marxist Project, Christian Project]* (Paris: Editions Ouvrières, 1979), p. 152.

Chapter Eight: Fall or Rise?

1. See Eisenberg and Abecassis, *Et Dieu créa Eve*, p. 134.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 315.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 355.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
6. The modalities of the murder committed by Cain have given rise to numerous speculations, which we will not go into here. See, in particular, Eisenberg and Abecassis, *Moi, le gardien de mon frère? A Bible ouverte III [Am I My Brother's Keeper? With Open Bible, vol. 3]* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1980), pp. 133-75.
7. Jacques Ellul, *Sans feu ni lieu, Signification biblique de la grande ville [Without Fire or Place: Biblical Significance of the Large City]* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976). [*The Meaning of the City*, trans. Dennis Pardee (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans,

- 1970).]
8. *Ibid.*
 9. *Ibid.* In modern times it would fall upon Karl Marx to declare that the urban space was the preeminent site of "social alienation" and for that reason, the most favorable location for the liberation of humanity. This was in fact the place, Engels would specifically state in 1845, "that the opposition between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat first manifested."
 10. André Neher, *L'exil et la parole [Exile and Speech]* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), p. 116.
 11. Ernst Bloch, *L'athéisme dans le christianisme [Atheism in Christianity]* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. 109.
 12. Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), p. 68.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
 14. Ernest Renan, *Histoire du peuple d'Israël [History of the People of Israel]*, vol. 1 (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1886).
 15. Neher, *L'exil et la parole*, p. 117.
 16. G.W.F. Hegel, *L'esprit du christianisme et son destin [The Spirit of Christianity and its Destiny]* (Paris: Vrin, 1948).
 17. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1968).
 18. Yves Leduire, "Nietzsche contre l'humilité" ["Nietzsche against Humility"], *Christus*, October 1979.
 19. *Havamal*.
 20. Leduire, "Nietzsche contre l'humilité."
 21. Quoted by Eisenberg and Abecassis, *A Bible ouverte*, p. 97.
 22. Lévy, *Le testament de Dieu*, p. 206.
 23. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, p. 140.

Chapter Nine: The Primacy of Mankind

1. Louis Rougier, *La Scolastique et le thomisme [Scholasticism and Thomism]*, p. 45.
2. *Gylfaginning*. 4. The quotations from the *Edda* are from Régis Boyer's translation, *Les religions de l'Europe du Nord [The Religions of Northern Europe]* (Paris: Fayard-Denoël, 1974).
3. *Grímnismál*.
4. For more on this see Giorgio Locchi, "Le mythe cosmogonique indo-européen" ["The Indo-European Cosmogonic Myth"], in *Nouvelle école*, July-August 1972, 87-95.
5. *Gylfaginning*, 5.
6. Boyer, *Les religions de l'Europe du Nord*, p. 370.
7. This tree is the great tree Yggdrasil, axis and support of the world, which sinks

its roots into the domains of the gods, the giants, and men. It is in the "ash Yggdrasil (where) the gods must sit in judgment each day" (*Gylfaginning*, 14). The well of Mimir, which reveals wisdom and knowledge, is beneath one of these roots.

8. *Havamal*, 5.

9. *Célébration de la grande déesse* [Celebration of the Great Goddess], vol. 1, (Paris: Belles-Lettres, 1975), p. 10.

Chapter Ten: Beneath and Beyond Good and Evil

1. Arnold Gehlen, *Moral und Hypermoral. Eine pluralistische Ethik* [Moral and Hypermoral: A Pluralistic Ethic] (Frankfurt/Bonn: Athenaüm, 1969).

2. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *Moi le gardien de mon frère?*, p. 130.

3. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), p. 23.

4. Leduire, "Nietzsche contre l'humilité."

5. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 23.

6. Homer, *Illiad*, chapter 15, 360–66.

7. Montherlant, *Paysages des Olympiques* [Olympian Landscapes] (Paris: Grasset, 1940); see also *Va jouer avec cette poussière*, p. 193.

8. Talmud, Kiddouchim 30b.

9. The first five books of the Bible, the so-called Mosaic books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) make up the Pentateuch or Torah. They would have been compiled in their present form around 400 BC—around the time of Ezra. See Pierre-Marie Beaude, *Tendances nouvelles de l'exégèse* [New Trends in Exegesis] (Paris: Centurion, 1979). In Judaism, the Written Torah (*Torah SheBiktav*) indicates the books themselves, whereas their content, which Yahweh allegedly delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, forms the oral Torah (*Torah She-B'al Peh*). In a larger sense the term Torah refers to the entire set of traditional Jewish teachings and literature. In addition to the Pentateuch, the Hebrew Bible includes the Prophets (*Neviim*) and the sacred Texts (*Ketuvim*), known also as Scriptures or Hagiographies. The Christians added the New Testament, meaning the Four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse. The term *halakha*, properly meaning "walk" or "step," refers to the juridical sections of the Talmud and concerns the specific application of the commandments (*mitzvot*) of biblical or rabbinical origin to a given situation, in opposition to the *aggadab*, the name given the sections especially concerning anecdotes, maxims, or homiletic accounts. We should recall that in Judaism, the text of the Bible is not separable from the commentary given by the rabbis, and that its reading can be literal, symbolic, allusive, or numerological.

10. The *midrash* in Judaism is a method of interpreting the Scriptures that most

often seeks support from legends or homilies.

11. Lévinas, *Difficile liberté*, p. 137.

12. Rabbi Simeon Bar-Yochai, Tanhouma, Commentary on Genesis 46:26.

13. Fromm, *Man For Himself* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), ch. 4.

14. See mainly Jacques Goldstain's book, *Les valeurs de la Loi. La Thora, lumière sur la route* [Values of the Law: The Torah, Light of the Way] (Paris: Beauchesne, 1980), which examines the way in which contemporary Christianity may be inspired by the Law. See also the *Orientations pastorales* [Pastoral Guidelines] that were promulgated during Easter 1973 by the French Episcopal Committee for Relations with Judaism, "The first Covenant was not rendered invalid by the new one. It is its root and its source, the foundation and the promise."

Chapter Eleven: The Shapes of History

1. Emmanuel Mounier, *La petite peur du XXème siècle* [The Little Fear of the Twentieth Century] (Paris: Seuil, 1948).

2. Emmanuel Mounier, "Une rencontre possible/impossible de la pensée de Nietzsche et la pensée mystique" ["A Possible/Impossible Meeting of the thought of Nietzsche and Mystical Thought"], paper from the 5th Colloquium of the International Association of Studies and Research on Nietzsche, Palermo, December 19, 1980.

3. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *A Bible ouverte*, p. 23.

4. Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Mind* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1977), p. 29.

5. We will not devote any further study here to the fashion in which the liberal bourgeois ideologies, followed by the ideologies born from socialism and Marxism, have transposed the Judeo-Christian conception of history, substituting *this side* (the future) for the *beyond*. This subject will be examined in a forthcoming book: *Le péril suisse. Essai sur/contre la fin de l'histoire* [The Swiss Peril: Essay on/against the End of History].

6. In Jewish tradition, there is a distinction made between the "Garden of Eden" and Eden properly speaking. Man would have been placed in the garden with an eye to leading him to Eden, but was prevented by his transgression of the deity's prohibition.

7. It is only following the Flood, when Noah offers a sacrifice to Yahweh (Genesis 8:20) that the Bible makes any mention of meat as food. In the Garden of Eden, Adam seems to have been a vegetarian. At the end of time "the lion and the bull will eat hay" (Isaiah 11:7). "When the Messiah comes," add Eisenberg and Abecassis, animal and man alike will only eat plant products: violence will vanish from the world, even on the plane of food requirements" (*A Bible ouverte*, p. 135). According to these same authors, the kosher food prohibitions given by the Torah to the people of Israel, represented, as consumption limits (mainly

concerning meat), the recollection of this ideal.

8. The gematria (numerological) value of the Hebrew name for "serpent" is identical to that of the word "Messiah."

9. Talmud, Chabbath, 151b.

10. Every six days we circumcise time by cutting it into two pieces (Eisenberg and Abecassis, *Moi le gardien de mon frère?*, p. 291).

11. Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*, p. 157.

12. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *A Bible ouverte*, p. 188.

13. Fromm, *To Have or to Be?*, p. 71.

14. Pierre Chaunu, *Histoire et foi [History and Faith]* (Paris: France-Empire, 1980).

15. This word itself was only written twice in the Bible in its full form: to evoke the creation ("Such was the history of heaven and earth when they were created," Genesis 2:4) and when the Book of Ruth brings up the ancestry of David, the ancestor of the Messiah.

Chapter Twelve: Messianism and Utopianism

1. Charles-Harold Dodd, *Les fondateurs du christianisme [Founders of Christianity]* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), p. 106.

2. It is known that historical data concerning Moses as well as the captivity in Egypt and the Exodus are largely absent, even—which is most surprising—in the Egyptian annals. See Roland Guérin de Vaux, O.P., *Histoire ancienne d'Israël [Ancient History of Israel]*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gabalda, 1971-1973). The tale of Moses abandoned as a child on the Nile then miraculously "saved from the waters," is itself even more suspect as it seems fabricated on a mythological outline for which we have other examples (the legend of the Chaldean king Sargon, notably). There is also the well-known—and often criticized—theory Freud upholds in *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: Random House, 1967). In this later work, in which he applies the principles of *Totem and Taboo* to the history of Israel, the father of psychoanalysis depicts Moses as a noble Egyptian from the entourage of Akhnaton, the "monotheist" pharaoh of the eighteenth dynasty, who would have been assassinated by Jews in Shittim. By challenging Moses' identity, Freud seems to have been chiefly contesting his own, while emphasizing the guilt-inducing nature of his approach, which, for all that, does not carry conviction and remains a *failed act*. With this Freud admits just what kind of psychoanalysis he comes under. Arnold Mandel saw *Moses and Monotheism* as "one of the most anti-Jewish spiritual works that ever existed" ("Autour d'un fratricide" ["Author of a Fratricide"], in *L'Arche*, August 1980). For more on this matter, one may also consult the interesting work by Emile Gillibert, *Moïse et le monothéisme judéo-chrétien [Moses and Judeo-Christian Monotheism]* (Montelimar:

Métanoïa, 1976).

3. Alexandre Safran, *Israël dans le temps and dans l'espace [Israel in Time and in Space]* (Paris: Payot, 1980)

4. Eisenberg and Abecassis. *Moi le gardien de mon frère?*, p. 255.

5. Jacques Ellul, "Messie et messianisme" ["Messiah and Messianism"], in *Sens*, January 1979.

6. Max Weber, "Die Entstehung des jüdischen Pariavolkes" ["The Development of the Jewish Pariah Nation"] in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie [Collected Essays in Sociology of Religion]*, Vol. 3, pp. 370-400; and *Le judaïsme antique [Ancient Judaism]*, ed. Don Martindale, trans. Hans H. Gerth (New York: Free Press, 1962) (Paris: Plon, 1970).

7. Léon Rosen, *Les Nouveaux Cahiers*, Spring 1979.

8. Valentin Nikiprowetzky, "Le monothéisme éthique et la spécificité d'Israël" ["Ethical Monotheism and the Particularity of Israel"] in Valentin Nikiprowetzky, ed., *De l'antijudaïsme antique à l'antisémitisme contemporain [On Ancient Anti-Judaism and Contemporary Anti-Semitism]* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1979), p. 45.

9. *Jewish Telegraph Agency Bulletin*, December 9-10, 1978.

10. This, however, concerns a far off perspective and one not necessarily good to rush. A researcher like Gershom Scholem, who has written a number of important works on Jewish mysticism, feels that the messianic infatuation has almost always proven itself "fatal" for the Jewish people. "Every time messianism has been introduced into politics, it has become a very dangerous matter. It can only end in disaster (interview with David Biale, *The New York Review of Books*, August 14, 1980). Scholem gives as an example of contemporary messianism the ideology of the Israeli group Gush Ennuim, which he compares to the Sabbatai Zevi movement of the seventeenth century.

11. Fromm, *To Have or to Be?*, p. 155.

12. Bloch, *L'athéisme dans le christianisme*, p. 299.

13. Certain authors, like P. Dognin (*Initiation à Karl Marx [Initiation with Karl Marx]* [Paris: Cerf, 1970], pp. 44-46), instead interpret the role bestowed by Marx upon the proletariat as an instance of the Promethean myth. Although the evidence may show that Marx was influenced by the figure of Prometheus, I cannot share this opinion. Furthermore this myth remains quite ambiguous to a large extent. With his opposition to the world of Olympus, the sublimated depiction of Hellenic society, Prometheus embodies the "social" unrest of a non-Greek segment of the population (probably the artisan class). We should also heed his declaration of faith: "I hate all the gods." It is only with Goethe's Prometheus that "man, rising to Titanic stature, gains culture by his own efforts and forces the gods to enter into alliance with him because in his very own wisdom he holds their existence and their limitations in his hands."

14. Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*, p. 33.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
16. Francine Kaufmann, "Les Juifs et le Royaume" ["The Jews and Kingship"], in *Sillages*, Jerusalem, September 1979.
17. It should also be clearly noted that it was also this relative indifference that allowed Christianity to spread, by gradually combining with the specifically European conception of political sovereignty and the social structure.
18. Paul Valadier, *Jésus Christ ou Dionysos. La foi chrétienne en confrontation avec Nietzsche* [*Jesus Christ or Dionysos. Christian Faith in Confrontation with Nietzsche*] (Paris: Desclée, 1979), p. 162.
19. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *Et Dieu créa Eve*, p. 80.
20. Philippe Nemo, *Job et l'excès de mal* (Paris: Grasset, 1978), p. 218 [*Job and the Excess of Evil*, trans. Michael Kigel (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998)].
21. Vincent Cosmao, *Changer le monde* [*To Change the World*] (Paris: Cerf, 1979).

Chapter Thirteen: Space and Time

1. Interview in *Question de*, November-December 1980.
2. See Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1889). [*Time and Free Will: Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F.L. Pogson (New York: Harper and Row, 1960)].
3. Gilbert Durand, *Science de l'homme et tradition. Le nouvel esprit anthropologique* [*Social Science and Tradition: The New Anthropological Spirit*] (Paris: Berg International, 1979), p. 179.
4. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, §58 p. 192.
5. Interview in *Sillages*, Jerusalem, October 1980.
6. Jacques Goldstein also asserts that, in a certain way, circumcision makes the child the fiancée of Yahweh. "The original communality of the Arab words *batana*, "circumcize," and *bitan*, "circumcision," and the Hebrew terms *haten*, "father-in-law," and *batan*, "offspring," he writes, "is sufficient indication of a relationship between circumcision and marriage" (*Les valeurs de la Loi. La Thora, lumière sur la route*, Beauchesne, 1980, p. 135).
7. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Noms propres* (Fata Morgana, 1976), p. 64. [*Proper Names*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996)].
8. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *Moi, le gardien de mon frère?*, p. 303.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
10. Lévinas, *Difficile liberté*, p. 40.
11. André Nehar, *L'essence du prophétisme* [*The Essence of Prophecy*] (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1972).
12. Lévinas, *Difficile liberté*, p. 301.

13. Thorlief Boman, *Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechischen* [*Hebrew Thinking in Comparison with Greek Thinking*] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck u. Ruprecht, 1954).

Chapter Fourteen: Iconoclasm and Beauty

1. Moses Maimonides, *Le guide des égarés* [*The Guide of the Perplexed*] (Paris: G.P. Maisonneuve & Larose, 1856-1866), vol. 1, p. 242.
2. Schulchan Aruch, Rosh Hashanah, 24 a-b; Yoreh Deah 141, 7.
3. *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 September 1977.
4. Ernest Renan, *Marc-Aurèle et la fin du monde antique* [*Marcus Aurelius and the End of the Ancient World*] (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1882).
5. See Louis Rougier, "Le culte des images et les premiers chrétiens" ["The Worship of Images and the First Christians"], in *Le conflit du christianisme primitif et de la civilisation antique* [*The Conflict of Early Christianity and Ancient Civilization*] (Paris: Copernic, 1977), pp. 90-102.
6. Mohamed Aziza, *L'Islam et l'image* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1978).
7. Jean-Paul Charnay, *Sociologie religieuse de l'Islam* [*Religious Sociology of Islam*] (Paris: Sindbad, 1977-1978), p. 19.
8. Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Mind* (NY: Charles Scribner, 1977), p. 358.
9. Interview with Yoacov Agam in *L'Arche*, September-October 1978.
10. Chaim Potok, *My Name is Asher Lev* (New York: Knopf, 1972).
11. Jean-Joseph Goux, *Les iconoclastes* [*The Iconoclasts*] (Paris: Seuil, 1978).
12. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
13. *Le Monde*, 9 December 1978.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Goux, *Les iconoclastes*, p. 15.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
18. The German word for "ugly" is *bässlich*, a word that is derived from the same radical as *Hass*, "hate." It can be concluded from this that the ugly deserves to be hated. The French word "*laid*" is itself derived from the Germanic root *leid*, "disagreeable, odious" (modern German *Leid*, "evil," *Leiden*, "suffering").
19. Karl Kerényi, *La Religion Antiqua* [*Ancient Religion*] (Herder and Herder, 1999).
20. G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 2 vols., trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).
21. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 187.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
24. Gilbert Durant, *Figures mythiques et visages de l'oeuvre* [*Mythical Figures and*

Faces of Work] (Berg International, 1979), p. 31.

25. Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man: An Interpretation of Jewish Religion* (NY: Atheneum, 1977), p. 82.

Chapter Fifteen: The Universal and the Particular

1. Boman, *Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechischen*.

2. Weber, *Le savant et le politique* [*Science and Politics*] UGE/10-18, 1971, p. 83.

3. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*.

4. Boman, *Das hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechischen*.

5. Jean-Louis Tristani, *Le stade du respir* [*The Stage of Rest*] (Paris: Minuit, 1978), p. 119.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

7. François Georges, *Souvenirs de la maison Marx* [*Memories of the House of Marx*] (Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1980), p. 343.

8. Boyer, *Les sagas islandaises* [*The Icelandic Sagas*] (Paris: Payot, 1978), p. 216.

Chapter Sixteen: Monotheism and Polytheism

1. The idea of an earlier monotheism continues to receive support today from certain adepts of the "Tradition." For more on this, see Occhiali, "Monotheisme et 'paganisme,'" in *Totalité*, November-December 1979, pp. 12-19.

2. Alfred Loisy, *La religion d'Israël* [*The Religion of Israel*] (Ceffonds: Alfred Loisy, 1908), p. 49.

3. Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kauffmann (NY: Vintage, 1967), section 2.

4. Patai, *The Jewish Mind*, p. 39.

5. Valentin Nikiprowetzky, "Le monothéisme ethnique et la spécificité d'Israël" ["Ethnic Monotheism and the Specificity of Israel"], in V. Nikiprowetzky, ed. *De l'antijudaïsme antique à l'antisémitisme contemporain* [*From Ancient Anti-Judaism to Contemporary Anti-Semitism*] (Villeneuve-d'Asq: Presses universitaire de Lille, 1979), p. 31.

6. Loisy, *La religion d'Israël*.

7. Tristani, *Le stade du respire*, p. 101.

8. See Daniel Goldstein, *Jewish Folklore and Legend* (London: Hamlyn, 1980).

9. Numerous texts can be found in Jewish literature devoted to the ways one can distinguish what springs from the religion and what belongs to magic (see José Faur, "Magic and Monotheism," in *Midstream*, August-September 1980, 54-57). We also know that certain texts in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 43b) contest the messianic role of Jesus by turning him into a "magician." This theory has been given further development recently with arguments—not lacking in interest, by the

way—by Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

10. Lévinas, *Difficile liberté*, pp. 302-03.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

12. Jean-Pierre Sironneau, "Retour du mythe et imaginaire sociopolitique" ["Return of Myth and the Socio-Political Imaginary"] in J. P. Sironneau, F. Bonardel, P. G. Sansonetti, et al., *Le retour du mythe* [*The Return of Myth*] (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1980), p. 28.

13. Theodor W. Adorno, "Sur la logique des sciences sociales" ["On the Logic of the Social Sciences"] in T.W. Adorno, Karl R. Popper, Rolf Dahrendorf, et al., *De Vienne à Francfort. La querelle allemande des sciences sociales* [*From Vienna to Frankfurt: The German Quarrel of the Social Sciences*] (Brussels: Complexe, 1979), p. 105.

14. Jean Brun, "Les nouveaux paganismes" ["The New Paganisms"], *Communio*, July-August 1980.

15. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1979), p. 186.

16. Blandine Barret-Kriegel, *L'Etat et les esclaves. Reflexions pour l'histoire des Etats* [*The State and the Slaves: Reflections on the History of the State*] (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1979), p. 85.

17. Léon Poliakov, "De la Bible à l'éthologie" ["From the Bible to Ethnology"], *Critique*, August-September 1978.

18. See also H.A. Wolfson, *Philo*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 16.

19. In some ultra orthodox Jewish milieus, a non-Jewish guest does not have the right to open a bottle of wine at a get together. This custom (for which there is no corresponding ritual prohibition) is explained by the fact that, in Antiquity, it was pagan custom to offer the gods libations of wine. Because of this and to avoid any hint of "impurity," the ingestion of wine handled by a pagan was proscribed (see *Jewish Chronicle*, August 15, 1980).

20. Talmud, Sanhedrin 56a.

21. Talmud, Hullin 5a.

22. Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*, p. 43.

23. *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 20 October 1980.

24. Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*, p. 37.

Chapter Seventeen: Tolerance and Intolerance

1. *Le Monde*, 15 June 1980.

2. This opinion oddly matches, through the detour of a poorly evaded idealism, one expressed by the younger Marx: "What I represent to myself is a real representation to me, that acts upon me, and in this sense all the gods, both Christian

- and pagan, possessed a real existence" (*Werke, Schriften Briefe*, [Stuttgart: J.J. Lieber & P. Furth, 1962], p. 75). It is true that similar observations can be found in Renan's writings.
3. Louis Rougier, *Le génie de l'Occident [The Genius of the West]* (Laffont-Bourgine, 1969), p. 60.
 4. Heraclitus, Fragment 62.
 5. Eliade, *Histories des croyances et des idées religieuses*, Vol. 1, p. 194.
 6. Goldstain, *Les valeurs de la Loi*, p. 123.
 7. We know how in more modern times, namely in the United States, Noah's curse against Canaan, the heir of Ham, who was the representative of the black race, was used: "Cursed be Canaan! May he be for his brothers the least of slaves. Blessed by Yahweh, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave! May God set Japheth free to wander as he will and dwell in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave!" (Genesis 9:25-27). For more on this topic see also what I wrote earlier: "Contre le racisme" ["Against Racism"], in *Les idées à l'endroit* (Paris: Editions Libres-Hallier, 1979), pp. 145-56; and "Le totalitarisme raciste" ["Racist Totalitarianism"], in *Elements*, February-March 1980, 13-20.
 8. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kauffman (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 191-92.
 9. Emile Gilibert, *Moïse et le phénomène judéo-chrétien [Moses and the Judaic-Christian Phenomenon]* (Montelimar: Metanoia, 1976), p. 59.
 10. Renan, *Histoire générale et système composé des langues sémitiques*.
 11. See also my preface to Louis Rougier's book, *Le conflit du christianisme primitif et de la civilisation antique [The Conflict of Primitive Christianity and Ancient Civilization]* (Paris: Copernic, 1977), pp. 7-35. See also Bouché-Leclercq, *L'intolérance religieuse et la politique [Religious Intolerance and Politics]* (Paris: Flammarion, 1911); Henri F. Secrétan, *La propagande chrétienne et les persécutions [Christian Propaganda and Persecutions]* (Payot, 1915); and Charles Guignebert, *Le christianisme antique [Ancient Christianity]* (Paris: Flammarion, 1921).
 12. Georges Nataf, *Encyclopédie de la mystique juive [Encyclopedia of Jewish Mysticism]* (Paris: Berg International, 1978).
 13. Tristani, *Le stade du respire*, pp. 152-53.
 14. Jean Baudrillard, "La fin de la modernité ou l'ère de la simulation" ["The End of Modernity or the Age of the Simulacrum"], in *Encyclopedia Universalis*, Supplement/organum, 1980, pp. 11-12.
 15. See mainly Jules Isaac, *Genèse de l'antisémitisme [Genesis of Anti-Semitism]* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1956); Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark, *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); F. Losvky, ed., *L'antisémitisme chrétien [Christian Anti-Semitism]* (Paris: Cerf, 1970); and Rosemary Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide. The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

16. Chouraqui.
17. Jacques Solé, *Les mythes chrétiens, de la Renaissance aux Lumières [Christian Myths, from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment]* (Paris: Albin Michel), p. 35.
18. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 3 §2.
19. Shmuel Trigano *La nouvelle question juive. L'avenir d'un espoir [The New Jewish Question. Future of a Hope]* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), p. 63.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-71.
22. One will note however, already, an increasingly widespread tendency for writers of Bible commentary to refuse to systematically orient their views "in the direction of the convergence of the famous 'permanent values' of Judaism with a universal morality of Western humanism, with the exception of several obsolete spiritual advisors from an Israel diluted in the nineteenth century" (Arnold Mandel, "Autour d'un fratricide" *L'Arche*, August 1980).
23. *L'Arche*, December 1979.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Trigano, *La nouvelle question juive*.
26. Durand, *L'âme tigrée*, p. 180. See also the book by Lucien Sfez, *L'enfer et le paradis [Hell and Paradise]* (Paris: PUF, 1978), which is an indictment, often excessive and naïve, of "political theology," in other words the "armoring" of politics by a theological Manichaeism, and which focuses primarily upon the way in which the metaphysical opposition between good and evil can be secularized.
27. Leszek Kolakowski, *L'esprit révolutionnaire [The Revolutionary Spirit]* followed by *Utopie et anti-utopie [Utopia and Anti-Utopia]* (Brussels: Complexe, 1978). Kolakowski responds in this book to those who, on the heels of Martin Buber, believe it possible to rally to a "socialism of the will," which would be free of the defects of the "socialism of necessity." For more on the relationship between religion and utopia see also Henri Desroches, *Les dieux rêvés. Théisme et athéisme en utopie [Dreamed Gods: Theism and Atheism in Utopia]* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1972); Thomas Molnar, *L'utopie, éternelle hérésie* (Beauchesne, 1973) [*Utopia, the Perennial Heresy* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967)]; Jean Lyn, *Les utopies et le Royaume [Utopias and the Kingdom]* (Paris: Centurion, 1973); and Gabriel Vahanian, *Dieu et l'utopie [God and Utopia]* (Paris: Cerf, 1977).
28. Michel Maffesoli, *La violence totalitaire [Totalitarian Violence]* (Paris: PUF, 1979).
29. Michel Maffesoli, *La conquête du présent. Pour une sociologie de la vie quotidienne [The Conquest of the Present: For a Sociology of Ordinary Life]* (Paris: PUF, 1979), p. 29.
30. Maffesoli, *La violence totalitaire*, p. 252.

Chapter Eighteen: Universalism and Particularism

1. Blandine Barret-Kriegel, *L'Etat et les esclaves*, p. 52.
2. Until relatively recently, the Church, clinging to "fundamentalism," refused to interpret the story of Adam allegorically or symbolically (see Abbé Male, "Les prophéties messianiques de l'Ancien Testament" ["Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament"] in *Annales de philosophie chrétienne*, 1857, 292–308. Such an interpretation also ruins Saint Paul's notion when he compares Adam to Jesus Christ, "Just as sin entered the world because of a single man, the world will be saved by the grace of a single man: Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:12–15). The Talmud more realistically writes, "God created Adam alone, to show us that when someone saves a single human being they are saving the whole world" (Sanhedrin 4, 5).
3. See Solé, "Le mythe de l'unité de l'humanité" ["The Myth of the Unity of Humanity"] in *Les mythes chrétiens, de la Renaissance aux Lumières*, pp. 115–73.
4. Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France* [*Considerations on France*] (1791), ch. 6.
5. Edmund Leach, *L'unité de l'homme et autres essais* [*The Unity of Man and Other Essays*] (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 364.
6. For a critique of the presuppositions and fundamentals of this ideology, see Alain de Benoist and Guillaume Faye, "La religion des droits de l'homme" ["The Religion of Human Rights"], in *Éléments*, January–March 1981, 5–22.
7. André Rezler, "Marx et la pensée prospective" ["Marx and Prospective Thought"] in *Karl Marx devant le tribunal révolutionnaire* [*Karl Marx before the Revolutionary Tribunal*], special issue of *Cahiers du fédéralisme*, September 1978.
8. *Le Matin*, 10 September 1980.
9. Goldstain, *Les valeurs de la Loi*, p. 80.
10. Paul Valadier, *Jésus-Christ ou Dionysos. La foi chrétienne en confrontation avec Nietzsche* [*Jesus Christ or Dionysos: Christian Faith in Confrontation with Nietzsche*] (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1979), p. 137.

Chapter Nineteen: Politics and Anti-Politics

1. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *A Bible ouverte*, p. 110.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 112–13.
3. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *Et Dieu Créa Eve*, p. 108.
4. *Le Monde*, July 4, 1979. For more on this subject see the important essay by Milton R. Konvitz, *Judaism and the American Idea* (New York: Schocken, 1980), in particular chapter 2: "The Rule of Law: Torah and Constitution," pp 53–68.
5. See Francine Kaufmann, "Les Juifs et le Royaume" ["The Jews and the Kingdom"], *Sillages*, Jerusalem, September 1979.

6. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *Et Dieu créa Eve*, pp. 205–07.
7. Alex Egète, "Contre la raison d'Etat" ["Against the Reason of State"], in *Tribune Juive*, December 12, 1980.
8. Trigano, *La nouvelle question juive*, p. 19. We know that for some ultra-orthodox Jews, the creation of an Israeli state in a non-messianic time is already "idolâtrous." "Idolatry pure and simple" is how Yishayahn Leibowitz describes it ("The World and the Jews," in *Forum*, Spring 1959, 83–90). See also Dan V. Segre, *A Crisis of Identity: Israel and Zionism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 51–73.
9. Will Herberg, *Judaism and Modern Man. An Interpretation of Modern Religion* (New York, Atheneum, 1977), p. 65.
10. Talmud, Baba Kama, 116b.
11. Fromm, *You Shall Be as Gods*, p. 62.
12. Barret-Kriegel, *L'Etat et les esclaves*, p. 100.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Ernst Bloch, *L'athéisme dans le christianisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), p. 13. [*Atheism In Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*, trans. J. T. Swann (New York: Herder and Herder 1972).]
15. Gerard Walter, *Les origines du communisme* [*The Origins of Communism*] (Paris: Payot, 1931).
16. Lévinas, *Difficile liberté*, p. 36.
17. *Le Monde* 3 April 1979.
18. The name Edom was subsequently symbolically attributed to the Roman Empire, then to the Christian Church following the Constantinian compromise (see Goldstein, *Jewish Folklore and Legend*, pp. 72–73).
19. Hadar Zenikim on Genesis 25:25.
20. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 34.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
22. E.R. Dodds, *Paiens et chrétiens dans un âge d'angoisse* (Clair: Pensée sauvage, 1979), p. 151. [*Pagan and Christian in an age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).]
23. *Ibid.*
24. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, §51 p. 181.
25. Claude Tresmontant, *Saint Paul et le mystère du Christ* [*Saint Paul and the Mystery of Christ*] (Paris: Seuil, 1956), p. 166.
26. Julius Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*, trans. Guido Stucco (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 1995), p. 287.
27. Julius Evola, *Men Among the Ruins*, trans. Guido Stucco (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2002), p. 213.

28. Jacques Ellul, *La foi aux prix du doute* [*Faith at the price of Doubt*] (Paris: Hachette, 1980), p. 279.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 289.
30. Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Barbarism with a Human Face* (New York: Harper Collins, 1979).
31. Lévy, *Le testament de Dieu*, p. 49. Out of pure convention, I am forcing myself to take seriously here an author for whom “radical cosmopolitanism” is to be “reinvented against all communitarian illusions” (p. 162); who insistently calls for “the fundamental right of everyone ... to betray,” by unjustifiably assimilating resistance, refusal to belong, and treason; who attributes to the “genius of Judaism” the idea of God “doing Evil” (p. 237), a failed God, a God who has botched his work, and botched it for all time” (p. 247); who has no hesitation at turning Exile, which all of Jewish tradition viewed as a punishment, a trial in the strict sense of the word, into the most exemplary model of every condition, and so on. It is true, paper can withstand anything.
32. Trigano, *La nouvelle question juive*, p. 77.
33. “In very systematic fashion,” writes Carl Schmitt, “liberal thought eludes or overlooks the State and politics to move in the characteristic and constantly renewed polarity of two heterogeneous spheres: morality and economy, the spirit and business... All these operations of substitution aim precisely at subjugating the State and politics to an individualist morality and thus private law on the one hand, and economic categories on the other, and to strip them of the specific meaning” (*La notion de politique* [Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1972], pp. 117–19). [*The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).]
34. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, §62, p. 198.
35. Julien Freund, *L'essence du politique* [*The Essence of Politics*] (Paris: Sirey, 1965), pp. 44–45.
36. Freund, *L'essence du politique*, p. 751.
37. If the State is prevented from insuring (or does not wish to insure) its normal political role of authority, other sources of authority will be found. It could be said, if need be, that politics “has invaded everything.” To a large extent this is what is happening today.
38. See Freund, *L'essence du politique*, ch. 10, “Le moyen spécifique du politique,” pp. 704–51.
39. Freund, *L'essence du politique*.
40. Julien Freund, *Le droit d'aujourd'hui* [*Law Today*] (Paris: PUF, 1972), p. 9.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
42. Georges Dumézil, *Mitra-Varuna. Essai sur deux représentations indo-européennes de la souveraineté* (Paris: PUF, 1940 and Gallimard, 1948) [*Mitra-Varuna: An Essay on Two Indo-European Representations of Sovereignty* (New York:

- Zone Books, 1988)]; *Les dieux souverains des Indo-Européens* [*Sovereign Gods of the Indo-Europeans*] (Paris: Gallimard, 1948).
43. Schmitt, *La notion de politique*, p. 97.
44. Saint Augustine says that “*audacia* separates the soul from God” (*De moribus* 1, 20). This word *audacia* here translates the Greek *tolma*, the name the Pythagorians gave to the Dyad, that is, the principle of conflict as opposed to the One.
45. François Georges, *Souvenirs de la maison Marx*, p. 303.
46. Heraclitus, Fragment 80.
47. Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. Marianne Cowan (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 1998), p. 55.
48. Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* [*History of the Danes*], 2, 65.
49. “The Struggle in Nature”—Ed.
50. On the notions of “tripartite structure” and the “war of foundation” I refer the reader to the various works of Georges Dumézil. See also, for a synthesis of these works, Jean-Claude Rivière, ed. *Georges Dumézil, A la découverte des Indo-Européens* [*George Dumézil: The Discovery of the Indo-Europeans*] (Paris: Copernic, 1979).
51. Maffesoli, *La violence totalitaire*, p. 184.
52. Weber, *Le savant et le politique*.
53. It is this typically agonistic practice that Goliath, the Philistine, proposes in the Bible: “Choose a man and send him down to me. If he prevails in a fight with me, and bests me, then we will be your servants; if I prevail over him and best him, then you will become our servants, you would be enslaved by us ... I have issued a challenge today to the lines of Israel. Give me a man and we will take our measure in single combat!” (1 Samuel 17:8–10). This proposal, as we know, was rejected. David killed Goliath by treachery, without approaching him in the conditions required by the duel: “In this way David triumphed over the Philistine with his sling and stone; he downed the Philistine and caused his death, there was no sword in the hands of David” (1 Samuel 17:50).
54. Maffesoli, *La violence totalitaire*, pp. 61–62.
55. Among Indo-Europeans, twins, as a symbol of redundancy, whether it involves the Ashvins of Vedic India, Castor and Pollux (the Dioscuri) in Greece, probably Njörd and Frey for the Germans, spring from the third function, in other words the productive caste. For more on this theme see Donald Ward, “The Divine Twins. An Indo-European Mythological Theme in Germanic Tradition,” in *Indo-European and Indo-Europeans*, George Cardona, Henry M. Hoenigswald, and Alfred Senn, eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970), pp. 405–20.
56. Reconciliation of contradictions—Ed.
57. Freund, *L'essence du politique*, p. 499.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 506.
59. Bernard Henri Lévy does not escape this rule. For Christianity, he writes, "the other man is amicable *simply* because he is a man; for Judaism, because he is *truly* a man and ceaselessly proves it by repeating his allegiance to the Law" (*Le Testament de Dieu*, 253). This amounts to saying that someone who does not pledge allegiance to the law of the Bible cannot "demonstrate" he is a man, that he is not *truly* a human being, but a subhuman. I am given to understand that in his book *L'idéologie française* [*The French Ideology*] (Paris: Grasset, 1981), the same author called for a "rehabilitation of sectarianism" (pp. 252–53).
60. Freund, *L'essence du politique*, p. 478.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 478.
62. Carl Schmitt, *La notion de la politique*, p. 97.
63. Martin Heidegger, *Essais et conférences* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), p. 103.

Chapter Twenty: Man's Place in Nature

1. Renan, *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues sémitiques*.
2. Fromm, *To Have or to Be*, pp. 48–49.
3. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *Moi, le gardien de mon frère?*, p. 75.
4. See Theodore Dreyfus, *Dieu parle aux hommes* [*God Speaks to Men*] (Paris: Klincksieck, 1969), pp. 138–41.
5. Eliade, *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, Vol. 1, p. 368.
6. Renan, *Études d'histoire religieuse* (Paris: Lévy, 1857).
7. Homer, *Illiad*, ch. XVI.
8. Jean Varenne, "Les Indo-Européens," in *Dictionnaire des mythologies* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), p. 45.
9. Boyer, *Les religions de l'Europe du Nord*, pp. 43–45.
10. Boyer, *Les religions de l'Europe du Nord*, p. 32.
11. Françoise Le Roux and Christian J. Guyonvarc'h, *La civilisation celtique* [*Celtic Civilization*] (Rennes: Ogam, 1979), p. 122.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 123. Belief in reincarnation, attested mainly among the Indians, seems to also correspond with the idea that immortality does not imply a radical break with tangible reality. Caesar, for his part, wrote: "What (the druids) mainly strive to persuade us to believe, is that souls do not die, but pass after the death of one body into another" (*De bello gallico* [*The Gallic Wars*], 6, 14). Lucan, Strabo, and Diodorus Siculus made similar observations. Contemporary research however shows that belief in metempsychosis in the strict sense is practically absent from the Celtic world. See Françoise Le Roux and Christian J. Guyonvarc'h, *Les druides* [*The Druids*] (Rennes: Ogam, 1978).
13. Stig Wikander, "Histoire des Ouranides" ["History of the Uranians"], *Cahiers du Sud*, 36, 1952, 8–17.

14. Evola, "Le malentendu du 'nouveau paganisme.'"
15. Lévinas, *Difficile liberté*, p. 2.
16. Boyer, *Les religions de l'Europe du Nord*, p. 19. In Germanic Antiquity, the notion of destiny was either rendered by the old Nordic *orlog*, which through the intermediary of the prefix *or* (*ur* in German) echoes the "original laws," or by the old English *wyrd*, a feminine noun formed from the past tense form of the verb *weordhan*, "to become" (see the German *werden*).
17. Peter Hallberg, *The Icelandic Saga* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), p. 96.
18. Régis Boyer, *La vie religieuse en Islande, 1116–1124* [*Religious Life in Iceland, 1116–1124*] (Paris: Singer-Polignac Foundation, 1979), p. 336.
19. Varenne, *Les Indo-Européens*, p. 45. Destiny, for pagans, is a life principle.
20. Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p. 168.

Chapter Twenty-One: Sex and the Body

1. See Tinto Brass' film *Caligula*, 1977.
2. It seems this may be a Latin phenomenon of encouraging the genetic aspect of naturalism, where Anglo-Saxons have instead favored the utilitarian aspect and continental Germans the ecological aspect. By taking advantage of the ethno-cultural division of historic Christian Europe, at the level of the ancient *limes*, one could also oppose a "southern ex-Catholic paganism," with a more "Gallic" tonality to a "Nordic ex-Protestant paganism of a more mystical inspiration."
3. Paul Veyne, *Roman Erotic Elegy: Love, Poetry, and the West*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).—Ed.
4. Georges Sorel, *The Illusions of Progress* (1908), trans. J. & C. Stanley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).
5. "Distrust of sexuality, does not form part of the Judeo-Christian tradition," writes Pierre Chaunu. "While it may have eventually introduced it, it was an addition. It stemmed, in part, from contact with the Hellenic world and Hellenic tradition" (*Histoire et foi* [*History and Faith*] [Paris: France-Empire, 1980], p. 141). See also, Claude Tresmontant, *Les idées maîtresses de la métaphysique chrétienne* [*Chief Ideas of Christian Metaphysics*] (Paris: Seuil, 1962), pp. 64–65, and *Les problèmes d'athéisme*, pp. 333 ff. These assertions need to be qualified by taking into account the general background of Christian attacks against pagan "debauchery."
6. See Pope John Paul II's pronouncement of 4 June 1980, in *L'Osservatore romano*, French edition, 10 June 1980.
7. Pagan asceticism displays a different character during that same time. E.R. Dodds notes in this regard, "The asceticism expressed in pagan aphorisms is

moderate, if not outright banal; self-mastery is the foundation of piety ... The Christian writer has much harsher ideas: if one takes the risk of getting married, the marriage should be 'a competition of continence,' and 'self-castration is better than impurity'" (*Païens et chrétiens dans un âge d'angoisse*, p. 47).

8. Quoted by Havelock Ellis, *Sexual Selection in Man* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1905).

9. Eisenberg and Abecassis, *Et Dieu créa Eve*, pp. 227-35. The fact remains that the serpent made his appearance immediately after the creation of Eve—this serpent is sometimes identified as the Evil Tendency, and was explicitly said by Rachi to desire the company of Adam (commentary on Genesis 3:1). On the other hand, from the reading of the Bible itself, woman's situation in the ancient Middle East appears hardly enviable, especially when compared to that of women in Greco-Roman or Celto-Germanic Antiquity. Women are most often relegated among the incompetent; they can neither go to court nor assume any liturgical capacity. "Women, children, and slaves do not figure in the number of people whom one blesses" (Berakhot 7:2). Without being condemned in principle, sexuality is challenged when brought down to an exclusively profane practice (see the limitations the Torah imposes on sexual activity, Leviticus 15:16-28). Even fifteen and twenty years ago, it was still considered unthinkable to teach the Torah to girls in orthodox communities. One cited the expression *nachim daatan kala*, "women are weak-minded," and this passage from the Torah: "He who teaches the Torah to his daughter teaches her lust" (Sotah 20a; Rabbi Eliezer). This prohibition, which was mainly upheld by Maimonides, tends to be reinterpreted today in the sense of a non-obligation to teach. The subject continues to be debated. See the file "Peut-on enseigner aux femmes la Bible, la Michna et le Talmud?" ["Can one Teach the Women the Bible, Mishna, and Talmud?"], *Hamoré*, July 1980. At the end of a rapid assessment, Lilly Scherr concluded that in Judaism, "alterity most often translates into separation and being pushed aside" ("La femme juive comme 'autre'" ["The Jewish Woman as 'Other'"] in Léon Poliakov, ed., *Ni Juif ni Grec. Entretiens sur le racisme*, pp. 149-60). For an overall take on this issue, see also Jean-Claude Bardet, "La condition féminine dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Age" ["The Condition of Women in Antiquity and the Middle Ages"], *Nouvelle école*, 11, January-February 1970, 17-49; and "Le judaïsme est-il antiféministe?" ["Judaism: Is it Antifeminist?"] in *Information juive*, November 1979.

10. J. Kid 4.

11. Guit. 68.

12. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*.

13. For more on this matter, see Valadier, *Jésus-Christ ou Dionysos*, pp. 229-36.

14. "Giving worship to stones, trees, and springs, lighting candles at crossroads, what could this be if not the devil's religion? ... Whether it is women invoking

Minerva while they sew, choosing to wed on a day consecrated to Venus, paying special heed to the day a journey is embarked upon, consecrating by means of spells or herbs for casting lots, evoking by magic the names of demons, and yet many other things that need to be enumerated, all of this is only the devil's religion" (*De la conversion des ruraux [On the Conversion of the Pagans]*, 15-16).

Chapter Twenty-Two: Early Christianity and Late Paganism

1. See Jean Magne, *Origines chrétiennes [Christian Origins]*, 2 vols. (Paris: Jean Magne, 1975).

2. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 138.

3. Loisy, *La religion d'Israël*, p. 284.

4. Interview with Mircea Eliade, *Le Monde-Dimanche*, 14 September 1980.

5. Maurice Bellet, "Le mouvement de l'universel" ["The movement of the Universal"], *Christus*, October 1980, p. 409.

6. Fromm, *To Have or to Be?* p. 113.

7. Louis Gernet and André Boulanger note, "No philosophical system has ever given greater place to religious matters. It could be said that the entire Stoic conception of the universe, of nature, and man's destinies depends on his theology, and that his ideal of wisdom and his moral practice, individual as well as social, have a theological foundation" (*Le génie grec dans la religion [The Greek Genius in Religion]* Albin Michel, 1970).

8. Dodds, *Païens et chrétiens dans un âge d'angoisse*, p. 133.

9. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, VIII, 12, 14.

10. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers*, VII, 134.

11. Maximus of Tyre, *The Philosophical Orations*, 17:5

12. Heraclitus, Fragment 33.

13. Heraclitus, Fragment 32. Let me note in passing that the attempt by Amenophis IV (Akhnaten) to combine the Egyptian gods into a "unique God," an attempt often presented, wrongly in my opinion, as being the origin of Hebrew monotheism, is much more akin to this non-dualistic conception of the "unique God."

14. The same tendency can be found in any event in different points of Indo-European territory. Françoise Le Roux and Christian J. Guyonvarc'h, for example, point out "the Celtic religion's monotheist tendency" (*La civilisation celtique*, p. 140).

15. Loisy, *La religion d'Israël*, p. 66.

Chapter Twenty-Three: Divine Immanence, Human Transcendence

1. See Giorgio Locchi, "La 'perspective wagnérienne' sur la musique

- européenne" ["The 'Wagnerian Perspective' on European Music"], *Nouvelle école*, 30, Fall-Winter, 1978, 12–28.
2. See *Europas andere Religion. Die Überwindung der religiösen Krise* [Europe's Other Religion. The Overcoming of the Religious Crisis] (Dusseldorf: Econ, 1969); and also *Glauben und wissen. Die Einheit europäischer Religion und Naturwissenschaft* [Faith and Knowledge: The Unity of European Religion and Natural Science] (Dusseldorf: Econ, 1979).
 3. Dante, *The Divine Comedy, Paradise*, Canto I, trans. Carlyle-Wicksteed (New York: Random House, 1950), pp. 406.
 4. Eduard Spranger, *Weltfrömmigkeit* [World Piety] (Leipzig: Leopold Klotz, 1942).
 5. F.W.J. Schelling, *Sur la nature de la science allemande* [On the Nature of German Science].
 6. Jean-Luc Marion, "La double idolâtrie. Remarques sur la différence ontologique et la pensée de Dieu" ["The Double Idolatry: Remarks on the Ontological Difference and Thinking of God"] in *Heidegger et la question de Dieu*, pp. 46–74.
 7. Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, pp. 44–45.
 8. Saint-Exupéry, *Citadelle*.
 9. Teilhard de Chardin, *Le milieu divin* (Paris: Seuil, 1958) [*The Divine Milieu: An Essay on the Interior Life*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Harper and Row, 1960)].
 10. Teilhard de Chardin, *L'énergie humaine* (Paris: Seuil, 1962) [*Human Energy*, trans. J.M. Cohen (New York: Harcourt, 1965)].
 11. Claude Tresmontant, *Les idées maîtresses de la métaphysique chrétienne*, p. 83.
 12. Meister Eckhart, *Treatises and Sermons*, 3.
 13. Meister Eckhart, *Spiritual Talks*, 6.
 14. See Luther's treatise *Se servo arbitrio* [On the Bondage of the Will], written in 1525 in response to Erasmus.
 15. In addition to Saint Augustine, Luther, as we know, was strongly influenced by William of Occam and his disciples (Jean Buridan, Pierre d'Ailly, Jean Gerson). At times he appears to adhere to that *via moderna* that reveals the inconsistency of the "universals," that is general concepts that abstractly represent the "absolute" common element of all the elements of a single category. The nominalist theory of the two "orders of truth" would also influence a number of German theologians, such as Gabriel Biel, who died in 1495.
 16. It is because of the importance it accords faith that the Reformation sometimes appears to me akin to Islam. Louis Massignon said, "Israel is hope, Christianity charity, and Islam faith."
 17. For more on this see Sigurdur Nordal's classic commentary on the *Völuspá* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1980), pp. 145–54: "Ihr werdet

sein wie Götter" ["You will become like Gods"].

18. Raymond Abellio, *La structure absolue. Essai de phénoménologie génétique* [The Absolute Structure: Essay in Genetic Phenomenology] (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p. 179.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

Chapter Twenty-Four: The Coincidence of Opposites and the Problem of Evil

1. Renan, *Cahiers de jeunesse*.
2. One of the basic principles of anti-reductionism is that a whole can never be merely broken down to the sum of its parts. This principle has been applied to political sociology by Gustave Le Bon (*Psychologie des foules* [Psychology of Crowds], 1895), to musicology by von Ehrenfels (*Über Gestaltqualitäten* [On Gestalt Qualities], 1890), to psychology by the *Gestalttheorie*, to biology by Ludvig von Bertalanffy, to physics by Ernest Mach, to history by Wilhelm Dilthey, and so on.
3. Hunke, *Europas andere Religion*.
4. Heraclitus, fragment 8. Montherlant, for whom contradiction is the "foundation of the life of the mind" (*Un voyageur solitaire est un diable* [A Solitary Traveler is a Devil] [Paris: Gallimard, 1961], p. 204), has spoken of the major influence of Heraclitus on him. "The first of my fathers," he wrote in *Tous feux éteints* [All Extinguished Fires] (Gallimard, 1975), p. 103. We can also quote Drieu La Rochelle, "If it is contradictory, so what? Contradiction is resolved in the unity of the real world" (*La comédie de Charleroi* [The Comedy of Charleroi] [Gallimard, 1934], p. 170).
5. See C.G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).
6. See the works of Gilbert Durans on the principle of logical non-duality, already foreshadowed by the notion of *tertium datum*, the "intermediary" matter allowing for the union within a single phenomenon of the antagonisms and contradictions revealed by analysis.
7. Saint Exupéry, *Citadelle*.
8. Midrash Tan'huma on Genesis 1:9.
9. Genesis 8:21. Louis Rougier, *Du paradis à l'utopie* [From Paradise to Utopia] (Paris: Copernic, 1979), pp. 41–48.
10. Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Léon Brunschvig (Paris: Nelson, 1934), 439, p. 555.
11. Abraham Cohen, *Les routes divergentes*, p. 30.
12. Philippe Nemo declares, in *Job et l'excès de mal* that the "excess of adversity" will be compensated by an "excess of gifts." He goes on to say that everything that exceeds the world is equal to God, an excess of adversity or an excess of

good, and that it is this adversity that "proves" God. This interpretation will only satisfy those who truly want it. One should rather reread the "Answer to Job" by Carl Jung in his *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), namely on the way in which God and Abrahamic monotheism, taken as "the highest and strongest" value, is pluralized and diversified to manifest in man.

13. De Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, ch. 3.
14. Sigurdur Nordal, *Istlenk menning I* (Reykjavik, 1942), p. 167.
15. Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, pp. 61–62.
16. Claude Tresmontant, *Problèmes du christianisme*, p. 163.
17. Pierre Chaunu, *Eglise, culture et société* [*Church, Culture, and Society*] (Paris: SEDES, 1981), p. 194.
18. Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur. Essai sur l'abjection* (Paris: Seuil, 1980) [*Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992)].
19. At least Judaism accepts that man can never totally destroy the Evil Tendency inside him. The just (*tsadik*) is not someone who does only good, but he who does more good than evil.
20. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, §2, p. 127.
21. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Random House, 1966). For more on the relationship between morality, culture, and value theory see Arnold Gehlen, *Moral und Hypermoral* and Helmut Kron, *Ethos und Ethik. Der Pluralismus der Kulturen und das Problem des ethischen Relativismus* [*Ethos and Ethic: The Pluralism of Cultures and the Problem of Ethical Relativism*] (Frankfurt/Bonn: Athenaüm, 1960).
22. Heraclitus, Fragment 58.
23. Heraclitus, Fragment 126.
24. Jacob Boehme, *On the Living Faith*.
25. Hunke, *Europas andere Religion*, p. 346.
26. Montherlant, *Aux fontaines du désir* [*From the Fountains of Desire*] (Paris: Grasset, 1927), p. 29.
27. Emanuel Lévinas, *Totalité et infini* (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff), p. 275 [*Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969)].

Chapter Twenty-Five: Tolerance and Inner Freedom

1. *Le Monde*, 26 April 1980.
2. Nikolai Berdiaev, *Essai d'autobiographie spirituelle* (Paris: Buchet-Castel, 1980) [*Dream and Reality: An Essay in Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Lampert (New York: Macmillan, 1951)].

3. Barret-Kriegel, *L'Etat et les esclaves*, p. 67.

Chapter Twenty-Six: The Return of the Gods

1. *Gylfaginning*, ch. 19.
2. Meister Eckhart, "Nolite timere eos qui corpus occidunt" ["Fear Not Them Who Kill the Body"].
3. Marion, "La double idolâtrie," p. 49.
4. Heidegger, "Only a God Can Save Us: *Der Spiegel's* Interview with Martin Heidegger," trans. Maria P. Alter and John D. Caputo, in *The Heidegger Controversy*, p. 91.
5. Interview with Gilles Lapouge, *La Quinzaine littéraire*, 16 February 1980.
6. C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Random House: 1965), p. 171.
7. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*. I retain the traditional translation here. Let's remember though that taken literally, the expression evokes a will that tends toward power (*Wille zur Macht*). This is not a negligible subtlety.
8. Marion, "La double idolâtrie."
9. Maffesoli, *La violence totalitaire*, p. 128.
10. Jünger resumes here an old mythological theme, according to which buried treasures periodically rise back to the surface, in those times of distress that are also those in which the dead emperors, who "sleep" with their armies inside mountains, reemerge to save their people. Treasures can then be collected, in the way Mephistopheles did in the first *Faust*.
11. Ernst Jünger, *Sur l'homme et le temps* [*On Man and Time*] (Monaco: Le Rocher, 1957), pp. 55–56.
12. Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," trans. Frank A. Capuzzi and J. Glenn Gray, in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 230.
13. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, §43, p. 167.
14. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, II, 4, 300.
15. Heidegger, *Essais et conférences*, p. 122.
16. Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p. 189.
17. Nemo, *Job et l'excès de mal*, p. 123.
18. Heidegger, *Essais et conférences*, p. 136.
19. Rosset, *Le réel et son double*.
20. Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, p. 160.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 163.
22. Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*.
23. Robert Sabatier, *Les fêtes solaires* [*Solar festivals*] (Paris: Albin Michel, 1955).

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