

# Wellsprings

## An Anthology

mainly concerning matters philosophical,  
religious and spiritual



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Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

*Philippians 4.8*

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What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in winter time. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.

*Crowfoot of the Blackfeet*

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Every day is a good day; if you don't believe me try missing one.

*Tom Hafey*

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What a strange machine man is! You fill him with bread, wine, fish and radishes, and out come sighs, laughter and dreams.

*Nikos Kazantzakis*

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Brevity is the charm of eloquence.

*Cicero*

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# THE HUMAN CONDITION

Our lives are wrapped in mystery, and a lifetime is hardly sufficient to begin to fathom it.

*Huston Smith*

The decisive question for man is: Is he related to something Infinite or not? That is the telling question of his life.

*Carl Jung*

I will give thanks unto thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.

*Psalms 139.13*

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.

*I Corinthians 3.16*

What is man, that thou are mindful of him?  
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?  
For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,  
And hast crowned him with glory and honour.

*Psalms 8.45*

Man is either the ark of God or a phantom of the earth and of the water.

*Blake*

...we are all ... children of the one and same creator, and as such the divine powers within us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being, but with him the whole world.

*Gandhi*

What a piece of work is a Man!  
How infinite in faculty!  
In form, in moving, how express and admirable!  
In action how like an angel!  
In apprehension how like a god!  
The beauty of the world!  
The paragon of animals!

*Shakespeare*

Life is a predicament which precedes death.

*Henry James*

Man is the only animal that blushes. Or needs to.

*Mark Twain*

Man's central position in the world is not due to his cleverness or inventive genius but because of the possibility of attaining sanctity and becoming a channel of grace for the world around him ... the very grandeur of the human condition is precisely that he has the possibility of reaching a state 'higher than the angels' and at the same time of denying God.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

Man is poised midway between the gods and the beasts.

*Plotinus*

In truth I say to you that within this fathom-high body ... lies the world and the rising of the world and the ceasing of the world.

*The Buddha*

At the back of our brains, so to speak, there was a forgotten blaze or burst of astonishment at our own existence. The object of the artistic and spiritual life was to dig for this submerged sunrise of wonder.

*GK Chesterton*

Life must be played by ear...

*Alan Watts*

To understand everything except oneself is very comical.

*Kierkegaard*

I don't believe in astrology; I'm a Sagittarian and we're sceptical.

*Arthur C Clarke*

Life is joy. Life is a conscious stream. Life is vibrant in every atom. There is life in everything. There is no such thing as inanimate matter. Matter is vibrant with life. Life is God in expression. Life is service and sacrifice. Life is love. Life is relationship. Life is poetry but not prose. Life is art and imagination but not science. Life is worship.

*Shivananda*

To say that man is the measure of all things is meaningless unless one starts from the idea that God is the measure of man ... Nothing is fully human that is not determined by the Divine, and therefore centered on it. Once man makes of himself a measure, while refusing to be measured in turn ... all human landmarks disappear.

*Frithjof Schuon*



I am free and that is why I am lost. *Kafka*

Not believing in the glory of our own soul is what the Vedanta calls atheism. *Vivekananda*

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience. *Teilhard de Chardin*

Our life in historical or chronological time, measuring and minding, cautious and comparing, forms the horizontal arm of the cross. Our experience of the unqualified, of inner, immeasurable time (or timelessness), is the cross's vertical pole. We live in two kinds of time or perspective simultaneously. The horizontal and the vertical are at once quite distinct and entirely overlapping, and to experience their incongruity and confluence is what it means to be human. *Huston Smith*

We are all in the same boat in a stormy sea, and we owe each other a terrible loyalty. *GK Chesterton*

Human nature is not black and white but black and grey. *Graham Greene*

You ask me what life is? It is like asking what a carrot is. A carrot is a carrot, and nothing more is known. *Chekhov*

The more I learn about people the more I like my dog. *Mark Twain*

The separate creaturely life, as opposed to life in union with God, is only a life of various appetites, hungers and wants, and cannot possibly be anything else. *William Law*

A man who denies the existence of Spirit is forever imprisoned in the unenviable contingency of himself. *James Cowan*

The Perfect Man was the cause of the Universe, being the epiphany of God's desire to be known. *Ibn Arabi*

The true profession of a man is to find his way to himself. *Herman Hesse*

Should I kill myself, or have a cup of coffee? *Albert Camus*

Man's condition: inconstancy, boredom, anxiety.

*Pascal*

Cheer up! The worst is yet to come.

*Mark Twain*

We are all special cases.

*Albert Camus*

I have striven hard not to laugh at human actions, not to weep at them, nor to hate them, but to understand them. *Spinoza*

Man is made for the contemplation of heaven, and is in truth, a heavenly plant, intended to come to the knowledge of God.

*Clement*

By a lie man throws away and, as it were, annihilates his dignity as a man.

*Kant*

Man is man because something divine is at stake in his existence. He is not an innocent bystander in the cosmic drama. There is more kinship with the divine than we are able to believe.

*Abraham Herschel*

In a certain sense, every single human soul has more meaning and value than the whole of history with its empires, its wars and revolutions, its blossoming and fading civilizations.

*Berdyayev*

Man is spirit incarnate; if he were only matter, he would be identified with the feet; if he were only spirit, he would be the head, that is, the Sky; he would be the Great Spirit. But the object of his existence is to be in the middle: it is to transcend matter while being situated there, and to realize the light, the Sky, starting from this intermediary level. It is true that the other creatures also participate in life, but man synthesizes them: he carries all life within himself and thus becomes the spokesman for all life, the vertical axis where life opens onto the spirit and where it becomes spirit. In all terrestrial creatures the cold inertia of matter becomes heat, but in man alone does heat become light.

*Frithjof Schuon*

What is man? An angel, an animal, a void, a world, a nothing surrounded by God, indigent of God, capable of God, filled with God, if it so desires.

*Pierre de Bérulle*

One impulse from the vernal wood  
Will tell you more of man,  
Of moral evil and good,  
Than all the sages can.

*Wordsworth*

We are made for the Absolute, which embraces all things and from which none can escape; this truth is marvelously well presented in the monotheistic religions in the alternative between the two 'eternities' beyond the grave ... The alternative may be insufficient from the point of view of total Truth, but it is psychologically realistic and mystically efficacious; many lives have been squandered away and lost for the single reason that a belief in hell and in paradise is missing.

*Frithjof Schuon*

In the life of a man, these four certainties are all; the present moment, death, the encounter with God, eternity. Death is an exit, a world which closes down; the meeting with God is like an opening towards a flashing and immutable infinitude; eternity is a fullness of being in pure light; and the present moment is, in our duration, an almost unseizable 'place' where we are already eternal — a drop of eternity amid the ceaseless shifting of forms and melodies. Prayer gives to the terrestrial instant its full weight of the eternal and its divine value; it is the sacred ship bearing its load, through life and death, towards the further shore, towards the silence of light — but at bottom it is not prayer which traverse time as it repeats itself, it is time which, so to speak, halts before this oneness of prayer which belongs already to heaven.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Quotations in my works are like wayside robbers who leap out armed and relieve the stroller of his conviction.

*Walter Benjamin*

# TRUTH

## **The Nature of Truth**

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make ye free.

*John 8.32*

Truth is the ultimate goal of the whole universe and the contemplation of truth is the essential activity of wisdom. *Aquinas*

All that is true, by whomsoever said, comes from the Spirit.

*Ambrose*

The truth belongs to all equally, in proportion to each person's power and willingness to assimilate it. *René Guénon*

There is no room for claims of human originality in respect of the truth itself. *Marco Pallis*

There cannot be an authorship of ideas, but only an entertainment, whether by one or many intellects is immaterial.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

A true idea cannot be 'new', since truth is not a product of the human mind; the truth exists independently of ourselves, and it is for us simply to apprehend it; outside of this knowledge there can be nothing but error. *René Guénon*

Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon, the truth.

*The Buddha*

Truth is a divine thing, a friend more excellent than any human friend. *Aquinas*

Plato is dear to me, but dearer still is truth. *Aristotle*

The fact that a fundamental rejection of truth, and of what it implies for man, is possible, is one of the great mysteries of the Infinite which we must accept as we accept our own existence, and which we may understand or not understand. *Frithjof Schuon*

The opposite of a fact is falsehood, but the opposite of one profound truth may be another profound truth.  
*Niels Bohr*

We know the truth, not only by the reason, but by the heart.  
*Pascal*

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty',  
— that is all ye know on earth,  
and all ye need to know.  
*Keats*

It's no wonder that truth is stranger than fiction: fiction has to make sense.  
*Mark Twain*

Seeking truth is more like a hunt — except that the quarry metamorphoses from fox to amphibian on the bank to escape with a splash...  
*Clive Faust*

Truth is one, the sages speak of it by many names.  
*The Vedas*

### **The Demands of Truth**

Any human being can penetrate to the kingdom of truth, if only he longs for truth and perpetually concentrates all his attention upon its attainment.  
*Simone Weil*

Truth is not to be defended, it defends. It does not need you, but you need it.  
*Guigo the Carthusian*

We owe an allegiance to religious truth which is quite different from the admiration we feel for a beautiful poem; it is something far more categorical.  
*Simone Weil*

If we want truth to live in us we must live in it ... Truth lived: incorruptibility and generosity.  
*Frithjof Schuon*

The requirement for us to recognize the Absolute is itself an absolute one; it concerns man as such and not man under such and such conditions. It is a fundamental aspect of human dignity, and especially of that intelligence which denoted 'the state of man hard to obtain', that we accept Truth because it is true and for no other reason.  
*Frithjof Schuon*

Go to the truth beyond the mind; love is the bridge.

*Stephen Levine*

Truth is neither pious nor impious ... truth in itself does not need virtue, but man needs virtue in order to assimilate truth. Virtue for its part does not enjoy such independence.

*Frithjof Schuon*

There are men who believe themselves to be without passions because they have transferred their whole passionate life on to the mental plane, which becomes 'egotistic' ... It is thinking which goes with a hardened heart.

*Frithjof Schuon*

All of the philosophers put together are not worth a single saint.

*EM Cioran*

The moral exigency of metaphysical discernment means that virtue is part of wisdom; a wisdom without virtue is in fact imposture and hypocrisy ... [P]lenary knowledge of Divine Reality presupposes or demands moral conformity to this Reality, as the eye necessarily conforms to light; since the object to be known is the sovereign Good, the knowing subject must correspond to it analogically.

*Frithjof Schuon*

### **Intelligence, Doubt and Certitude**

The capacity for objectivity and absoluteness is an anticipated and existential refutation of all ideologies of doubt: if man is able to doubt, this is because certitude exists; likewise the very notion of illusion proves that man has access to reality ... If doubt conformed to the real, human intelligence would be deprived of its sufficient reason and man would be less than an animal since the intelligence of animals does not experience doubt concerning that reality to which it is proportioned.

*Frithjof Schuon*

The special function of the intelligence requires total liberty, implying the right to deny everything, and allowing of no domination. Wherever it usurps control there is an excess of individualism. Wherever it is hampered or uneasy there is an oppressive collectivism.

*Simone Weil*

A monstrous expenditure of mental ability is incurred in setting out opinions that have no relation to intelligence; people who are not

well endowed intellectually by nature learn how to play at thinking and cannot even get on without some such imposture, while people who are well endowed are in danger of losing their power of thinking by falling in with the trend. What looks like an ascent is really a descent; ignorance and lack of intelligence are at ease in a wholly superficial refinement, and the result is a climate in which wisdom takes on the appearance of naivety, of uncouthness and of reverie ... In our days everyone wants to appear intelligent ... but since intelligence cannot be extracted from the void, subterfuges are resorted to, of which one of the most prevalent is debunking, which enables an impression of intelligence to be conveyed at small cost, for all one need do is assert that the normal reaction to a particular phenomenon is 'prejudiced' and that it is high time it was cleared of the 'legends' that surround it; if the ocean could be made out to be a pond or the Himalayas a hill, it would be done ... This strategy is followed especially in dealing with evident and universally known things...

*Frithjof Schuon*

The intelligent man who is proud of his intelligence is like the condemned man who is proud of his large cell.

*Simone Weil*

The intellect does, in fact, harm the soul when it dares to possess itself of the heritage of the Spirit.

*Carl Jung*

Intelligence is the noblest part of the soul.

*Catherine of Siena*

## **Knowledge**

Seek knowledge, even if it be in China.

*The Prophet*

The possession of all the sciences, if unaccompanied by the knowledge of the best, will more often than not injure the possessor.

*Plato*

Knowing demands the organ fitted to the object.

*Plotinus*

The slenderest knowledge of the highest things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge of lower things.

*Aquinas*

Our ignorance of the few things that matter is as prodigious as knowledge of trivialities.  
*Gai Eaton*

It is a sin against intelligence to want to proceed in an identical manner in the typically different domains — physical, mathematical, metaphysical — of speculative knowledge. *Aquinas*

A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.  
*Edward R Murrow*

Knowledge comes about insofar as the object known is within the knower.  
*Aquinas*

If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite.  
*Blake*

People no longer sense the fact that the quantitative richness of a knowledge — of any kind of knowledge — necessarily entails an interior impoverishment unless accompanied by a spiritual science able to maintain unity and re-establish balance.

*Frithjof Schuon*

If one becomes a learned man, there is danger of his losing the disposition to practice the *Nembutsu*.  
*Hōnen*

Of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.  
*Ecclesiastes*

Najrani said: ‘If you say that you “nearly understand”, you are talking nonsense.’ A theologian asked: ‘Can you give us an equivalent of this in ordinary life?’ ‘Certainly,’ said Najrani; ‘it is equivalent to saying that something is “almost an apple”.’  
per *Idries Shah*

Strike a match, and the light disperses all at once the darkness of a room, even though accumulated for centuries. Similarly, a single gracious glance of the Lord disperses the accumulated sins of innumerable births.  
*Ramakrishna*

Knowledge saves only on condition that it engages all that we are: only when it constitutes a path which works and transforms, and which wounds our nature as the plough wounds the soil.

*Frithjof Schuon*



Traditional learning is basically qualitative and synthetic, concerned with essences, principles and realities behind phenomena: its fruits are integration, composition, unity. Profane academic learning — whether in the arts or sciences — is quantitative and analytical by tendency, concerned with appearances, forces and material properties; its nature is to criticize and decompose; it works by fragmentation.

*Whitall Perry*

A science which does not bring us nearer to God is worthless.

*Simone Weil*

## **Consciousness**

...our normal waking consciousness ... is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness ... No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. How to regard them is the question ... At any rate, they forbid our premature closing of accounts with reality. *William James*

Reality is not a fixed condition but a magnitude capable of various degrees of intensification. It is the glorious paradox of our existence that all conceivability of the world is only the footstool of its inconceivability.

*Martin Buber*

If ... we take the view that consciousness is not the product of the world, but that the world is a product of consciousness ... it becomes obvious that we live in exactly the type of world we have created ... the remedy cannot be an 'escape' from the world but only a change of 'mind'. Such a change, however, can only take place if we know the innermost nature of this mind and its power.

*Lama Govinda*

There is no place to seek the mind;  
It is like the footprints of the birds in the sky.

*The Zenrin*

The longing for light is the longing for consciousness.

*Carl Jung*

As we are, so we see.

*Blake*

The soul becomes dyed with the colour of its thoughts.

*Marcus Aurelius*

We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are.

*Anais Nin*

Nothing could be more miraculous than the fact that we have a consciousness that makes the world intelligible to us and are moved by what is beautiful.

*Marilynne Robinson*

If the structure of our consciousness did not correspond to that of the universe and its laws, we should not be aware either of the universe or the laws that govern it.

*Lama Govinda*

This morning I *thought*, hence lost my bearings, for a good quarter of an hour.

*EM Cioran*

## **Metaphysics**

'Metaphysical': concerning metacosmic realities considered objectively. 'Mystical': concerning the same realities considered subjectively, that is, in relation to the contemplative soul, insofar as they enter operatively into contact with it. *Frithjof Schuon*

Metaphysic affirms the fundamental identity of knowing and being.

*René Guénon*

Metaphysic cannot be taught to everyone but, if it could be, there would be no atheists.

*Frithjof Schuon*

There can be no effective metaphysics without heaven's help.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Metaphysics is the science of the Real, of the origin and end of things, of the Absolute, and in its light, the relative. It is a science as strict and as exact as mathematics and with the same clarity and certitude but one which can only be attained through intellectual intuition and not through ratiocination. ... [I]t is a *theoria* of reality whose realization means sanctity and spiritual perfection, and therefore can only be achieved within the cadre of a revealed tradition. Metaphysical

intuition can occur anywhere — ‘for the spirit bloweth where it listeth’ — but the effective realization of metaphysical truth and its application to human life can only be achieved within a revealed tradition which gives efficacy to certain symbols and rites upon which metaphysics must rely for its realization. *Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

Metaphysical truths are by no means accepted because they are merely logically clear, but because they are ontologically clear, and their logical clarity is only a trace of this imprinted on the mind. The ontological assurance is something of our very existence, something of the universe, something from God. *Frithjof Schuon*

The criterion of metaphysical truth or of its depth lies, not in the complexity or difficulty of its expression, but in the quality and effectiveness of its symbolism... *Frithjof Schuon*

The pure truth of *Atman*, which is buried under *Maya*, can be reached by meditation, contemplation and other such spiritual disciplines such as a knower of *Brahman* may prescribe — but never by subtle argument. *Shankara*

There is no science of the soul without a metaphysical basis and without spiritual remedies at its disposal. *Frithjof Schuon*

Those who are qualified to speak in the name of a traditional doctrine are not required to enter into discussion with the ‘profane’ or to engage in polemics: it is for them simply to expound the doctrine such as it is, for the sake of those capable of understanding it, and at the same time to denounce error wherever it arises ... Their function is not to engage in strife and in doing so to compromise the doctrine, but to pronounce the judgement which they have the right to pronounce if they are in effective possession of the principles which should inspire them infallibly. *René Guénon*

## **Reason**

Reason may be compared to a convex lens which directs the light of the Intellect or Spirit in a particular direction and on a limited field. *Titus Burckhardt*

Reason is formal by its nature and formalistic in its operations; it proceeds by ‘coagulations’, by alternatives and by exclusions — or, it can be said, by partial truths. *Frithjof Schuon*

In the intellectual order logical proof is only a quite provisional crystallization of intuition, the modes of which, when expressed in terms of the complexity of the real, are incalculable.

*Frithjof Schuon*

For metaphysical wisdom, reason only possesses a dialectical, not an illuminative usefulness; reason is not capable of grasping in a concrete way that which lies beyond the world of forms, though reason is able to reach further than imagination. All ratiocination condemns itself to ignorance from the moment it claims to deal with the roots of our existence and of our spirit.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Reason may discuss, but experience knows. *Abhishiktananda*

...if one subjects everything to reason our religion will lose its mystery and its supernatural character. If one offends the principles of reason our religion will be absurd and ridiculous ... These are two equally dangerous extremes, to shut reason out and to let nothing else in.

*Rudolf Otto*

Rationalism ... a leap of unfaith into a world stripped bare of resonance.

*Clive Faust*

Mere dry reasoning — I spit on it!

*Ramakrishna*

## **Science and Scientism**

It can never be said often enough that 'phenomena' by themselves prove absolutely nothing where the truth of a doctrine is concerned, and that 'phenomena' are the special domain of the 'great illusion'.

*René Guénon*

The world of *maya* is not inexplicable; it is only not self-explanatory.

*Shankara*

The knowledge of the whole universe does not lie within the competence of science but of metaphysics. Moreover, the principles of metaphysics remain independent of the sciences and cannot in any way be disproved [or proved] by them.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

The profane sciences of which the modern world is so proud are really and truly only degenerate 'residues' of the ancient traditional sciences

...the profane sciences ... are something like a caricature or parody of them.

*René Guénon*

Modern science is not a wisdom but an accumulation of physical experiments with many unwarrantable conclusions; it can neither add nor subtract anything in respect of total truth or of mythological or other symbolism or in respect of the principles and experiences of spiritual life ... The spirit escapes the hold of profane science in an absolute fashion.

*Frithjof Schuon*

For modern science 'truths' (or general laws) — without which experience would be no more than shifting sand — are only simplifying descriptions of appearances, useful but always provisional 'abstractions'. For traditional science, on the other hand, truth is the expression or 'congelation' (in a form accessible to the reason) of a possibility contained in the Universal Intellect.

*Titus Burckhardt*

The object of wisdom is such, that by reason of its intelligibility alone, no evil use can be made of it; the object of science is such that it is in constant danger of falling into the clutches of cupidity, owing to its very materiality.

*Etienne Gilson*

Modern science is a totalitarian rationalism, which eliminates both Revelation and Intellect, and at the same time a totalitarian materialism which ignores the metaphysical relativity — and hence the impermanence — of matter and the world.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Scientism, in short, is that belief system whereby 'science' is elevated to the position of a cosmological explanation — a theory of everything, including religious belief itself. It is, itself, a religion for those atheists who require a cosmological explanation as a salve for existential angst and a sort of immunisation against the horror of pure contingency.

*Brian Coman*

An agnostic and materialistic science of nature is a contradiction in terms ... its findings will necessarily correspond to the living reality of nature as little as a corpse corresponds to the living reality of a human being.

*Philip Sherrard*

Science rushes headlong, without selectivity, without 'taste,' at whatever is knowable, in the blind desire to know all at any cost. Philosophical thinking, on the other hand, is ever on the scent of those things which are most worth knowing, the great and the important insights.

*Nietzsche*

No scientific theory touches on the mysteries that the religious tradition addresses. A man asking why his days are short and full of suffering is not disposed to turn to algebraic quantum field theory for the answer. The answers that prominent scientific figures have offered are remarkable in their shallowness.

*David Berlinski*

According to the observations of experimental science, the blue sky which stretches above us is not a world of bliss, but an optical illusion due to the refraction of light by the atmosphere and from this point of view it is obviously right to maintain that the home of the blessed does not lie up there. Nevertheless it would be a great mistake to assert that the association of ideas between the visible heavens and the celestial Paradise does not arise from the nature of things, but rather from ignorance and ingenuousness mixed with imagination and sentimentality; for the blue sky is a direct and therefore adequate symbol of the higher and supersensory degrees of Existence; it is indeed a distant reverberation of those degrees and it is necessarily so since it is truly a symbol consecrated by the Sacred Scriptures and by the unanimous intuition of peoples ... The fact that the symbol itself may be no more than an optical illusion in no way impairs its precision or efficacy, for all appearances, including those of space and of the galaxies, are strictly speaking only illusions created by relativity.

*Frithjof Schuon*

The evolutionary leap from matter to intelligence is the most arbitrary, the most inconceivable and the most foolish hypothesis possible, in comparison with which 'simple faith' seems like a mathematical formula. People accept transformist evolution as a useful and provisional postulate just as they are ready to accept no matter what on condition that they do not have to accept the primacy of Spirit. And yet, starting from this immediately tangible mystery which is subjectivity or intelligence, it is easy to understand that the origin of the Universe is not inert and unconscious matter, but a spiritual Substance which, from coagulation to coagulation and from segmentation to segmentation ... finally produces matter by causing it to emerge from a more subtle substance, but one that is already

distant from principial Substance ... Our knowledge must be either symbolically accurate or physically adequate; in the second case it must retain for us a symbolic intelligibility, for without this all science is vain and harmful.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Those who reproach our ancestors with having been stupidly credulous forget in the first place that one can also be stupidly incredulous, and in the second place that the self-styled destroyers of illusion live on illusions that exemplify a credulity second to none; for a simple credulity can be replaced by a complicated one, adorned with the arabesques of a studied doubt that forms part of the style, but it is still credulity; complication does not make error any less false, nor stupidity less stupid.

*Frithjof Schuon*

# THE COSMOS

## Time and Space

Out in the street, suddenly overcome by the 'mystery' of Time, I told myself that Saint Augustine was quite right to deal with such a theme by addressing himself directly to God: with whom else to discuss it?

*EM Cioran*

Time is only an idea.

*Ramana Maharshi*

The thing that hath been, is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

*Ecclesiastes 1.9*

The present moment is the only aperture through which the soul can pass out of time into eternity, and through which grace can pass out of eternity into the soul, and through which charity can pass from one soul to another soul in time.

*Aldous Huxley*

Time is what keeps the light from reaching us. There is no greater obstacle to God than time. And not only time but temporalities, not only temporal things but temporal affections, not only temporal affections but the very taint and smell of time.

*Meister Eckhart*

Time is an unwholesome physician, for it deceives the patient daily with the expectation of the future, and before expelling the old pains, it adds new ones to the old and accumulates daily so many evils that through the fallacious hope of life it leads to death. We must live today; he who lives tomorrow never lives. If you want to live today, live for God, in whom yesterday and tomorrow are naught but today.

*Marsilio Ficino*

The wind of mutability comes with its ruthless blast, dissolving all created things.

*Hönen*

It is eternity now, I am in the midst of it. It is about me in the sunshine.

*Richard Jefferies*



For 'primitives' past and future are in the present. For 'moderns', the present is either in the future or the past. They have no present, only a permanently self-repeating state of confusion.

*Thomas Merton*

We do things one after another. That is all. There is no such thing as 'this afternoon' or 'one o'clock' ... At one o'clock you will eat your lunch. To eat lunch is itself one o'clock. You will be somewhere at one o'clock but that place cannot be separated from one o'clock. For someone who actually appreciates our life, they are the same.

*Shunryu Suzuki*

Let each of us examine his thoughts. He will find them entirely occupied with the past and the future. The present is never our purpose. The past and the present are our means; only the future is our purpose. And so we never live, but rather *hope* to live...

*Pascal*

...the great cosmic illusion is a hierophany ... One is devoured by Time, not because one lives in Time, but because one believes in its *reality*, and therefore forgets or despises eternity. *Mircea Eliade*

Sometimes I feel the past and the future pressing so hard on either side that there's no room for the present at all.

*Evelyn Waugh*

Eternity. It is the sea mingled with the sun. *Rimbaud*

Sometimes I think we are alone in the universe, and sometimes I think we're not. In either case, the idea is quite staggering.

*Arthur C Clarke*

That which is oldest is most young and most new. There is nothing so ancient and so dead as human novelty. The 'latest' is always stillborn. What is really *new* was there all the time. *Thomas Merton*

The thief  
left it behind —  
the moon at the window.

*Haiku*

Every moment is a sacrament of eternity.     *Abhishiktananda*

To see the infinite in the finite is to see that this flower before us is eternal, because an eternal spring is declared through its fragile smile; to see relativity is to grasp that this instant that we are living is not 'now', that it 'is past' even before it has arrived, and that, if time could be stopped, with all beings fixed as in a river of ice, the human masquerade would appear in all its sinister reality; all would seem absurd, save only the 'remembrance of God' which is situated in the immutable.     *Frithjof Schuon*

### **The Cosmic Theophany**

There is the music of Heaven in all things.     *Hildegard of Bingen*

The seven heavens, and the earth, and all that is therein, magnify Him, and there is naught but magnifieth his praise, only ye understand not their worship.     *The Quran*

The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament sheweth his handiwork.     *Psalms 19.1*

The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead...     *Romans 1.20*

To see a world in a grain of sand,  
And Heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour.     *Blake*

Better than any argument is to rise at dawn and pick dew-wet red berries in a cup.     *Wendell Berry*

I've read all the books but one  
Only remains sacred: this  
Volume of wonders, open  
Always before my eyes.     *Kathleen Raine*

A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the metaphysics of books. *Walt Whitman*

For religious man, nature is never only 'natural'; it is always fraught with religious value. This is easy to understand for the cosmos is a divine creation ... [the gods] manifested the different modalities of the sacred in the very structure of the world and of cosmic phenomena ... This divine work always preserves its quality of transparency, that is, it spontaneously reveals the many aspects of the sacred ... The cosmos as a whole is an organism at once real, living, and sacred; it simultaneously reveals the modalities of being and of sacrality. Ontophany and hierophany meet. *Mircea Eliade*

The Lakota loved the sun and earth, but he worshipped only *Wakan-Tanka*, or Big Holy, who was the Maker of all things of earth, sky, and water. *Wakan-Tanka* breathed life and motion into all things, both visible and invisible. He was over all, through all, and in all, and great as was the sun, and good as was the earth, the greatness and goodness of the Big Holy were not surpassed. The Lakota could look at nothing without at the same time looking at *Wakan-Tanka*, and he could not, if he wished, evade His presence, for it pervaded all things and filled all space. All the mysteries of birth, life, and death; all the wonders of lightning, thunder, wind, and rain were but the evidence of His everlasting and encompassing power. *Luther Standing Bear*

The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw, and I knew I saw, all things in God and God in all things. *Mechthild of Magdeburg*

Unless all existence is a medium of revelation, no particular revelation is possible. *William Temple*

Miracles surround us at every turn if we but sharpen our perceptions. *Willa Cather*

Revelation is continual and everything is fit to become a sign of revelation. *Martin Buber*

God is an angel in an angel, and a stone in a stone, and a straw in a straw. *John Donne*

The outward world is but a glass, or representation of the inward... *William Law*

But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze  
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags  
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,  
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores  
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear  
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible  
Of that eternal language, which thy God  
Utters, who from eternity doth teach  
Himself in all, and all things in himself.

*Coleridge*

For the sage each flower is metaphysically a proof of the Infinite.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Always it has been understood that our life in this world, as Keats said, is a 'perpetual allegory': everything has meaning only in reference to something beyond. We are, as Plato saw it, like men in a cave who see reality reflected on the walls of the cave ... We only begin to awake to reality when we realize that the material world, the world of space and time, as it appears to our senses, is nothing but a sign and a symbol of a mystery which infinitely transcends it. *Bede Griffiths*

The Word is living, being, spirit, all verdant greenening, all creativity. This Word manifests itself in every creature.

*Hildegard of Bingen*

Nature is the living visible garment of God. *Goethe*

Flowers in bloom. Nothing to add.

*Robert Aitken*

Spring has returned. The earth is like a child that knows poems.

*Rilke*

What I know of the divine sciences and Holy Scripture, I learnt in woods and fields. I have had no other masters than the beeches and the oaks.

*Bernard of Clairvaux*

The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship.

*Emerson*

The sun must every evening prostrate itself before the throne  
of Allah. *The Prophet*

There is no way in which a man could earn a star or deserve a  
sunset. *GK Chesterton*

The astrolabe of the mysteries of God is love.  
*Rumi*

At the core of the universe, the face of God wears a smile.  
*Loren Eiseley*

God reveals himself to the plant in the form of the light of the sun. The  
plant irresistibly turns itself towards the sun; it could not be atheistical  
or impious. *Frithjof Schuon*

The earth laughs in flowers. *Emerson*

Colours are the actions and sufferings of light.  
*Erich Heller*

In future times men will be poor because they will not have a love of  
trees... *Nicepheros of Chios*

Nature is the first ground and constant test of the authentically  
religious temper — the temper which does not sacralize things in  
themselves nor desecrate them in soul-less using and consuming.  
Between the pagan and the secular, with their contrasted bondage and  
arrogance, lies the reverent ground of a right hallowing where things  
are well seen as being for men under God, seen for their poetry,  
mystery, order and serviceability in the cognizance of man, and for  
their quality in the glory of God. *Kenneth Cragg*

We should understand well that all things are the works of the Great  
Spirit. We should know that He is within all things: the trees, the  
grasses, the rivers, the mountains and all the four-legged animals, and  
the winged peoples; and even more importantly, we should  
understand that He is also above all these things and peoples.  
*Black Elk*

Delight is the innocent joy arising  
with the perception and realization of  
the wonderful, empty, intricate,  
inter-penetrating,  
mutually-embracing, shining  
single world beyond all discriminations  
or opposites.

*Gary Snyder*

I am the supreme fiery force  
That kindles every spark of life;  
What I have breathed on will never die,  
I order the cycle of things in being;  
Hovering round in sublime flight,  
Wisdom lends it rhythmic beauty.

I am divine fiery life  
Blazing over the full-ripened grain;  
I gleam in the reflection of the waters,  
I burn in the sun and moon and stars.  
In the breeze I have secret life  
Animating all things and lending them cohesion.

I am life in all its abundance,  
For I was not released from the rock of ages  
Nor did I bud from a branch  
Nor spring from man's begetting:  
In me is the root of life.  
Spirit is the root which buds in the word  
And God is the intelligible spirit.

*Hildegard of Bingen*

## **The Creatures**

The creatures are, as it were, traces of God's passing, wherein he reveals his might, power, wisdom and other divine qualities.

*John of the Cross*

Anyone who truly knows creatures may be excused from listening to sermons for every creature is full of God and is a book.

*Meister Eckhart*

Until one has loved an animal a part of one's soul remains unawakened. *Anatole France*

Every creature under heaven serves and acknowledges and obeys its Creator in its own way. *Francis of Assisi*

We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals. *Kant*

Every creature is a word of God. *Meister Eckhart*

The central fact of Hinduism is 'Cow Protection'. *Gandhi*

Time spent with cats is never wasted. *Freud*

If you want a friend in Washington, get a dog. *Harry Truman*

There is something about the outside of a horse which is good for the inside of a man. *Johnny Tapp*

The lion will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

*Isaiah 11.6-7*

Everything that lives is holy. *Blake*

## **Mountains**

For the man of the golden age the mountain was in very truth an approach to the Principle. *Abhishiktananda*

The great, gashed, half-naked mountain is another of God's saints ... nothing else in the world ever did or ever will imitate God in quite the same way. That is his sanctity. *Thomas Merton*

To the religious man the mountain is a divine symbol, and as little as he would put his foot upon a sacred image, so little would he dare to put his foot on the summit of a sacred mountain.

*Lama Govinda*

Great things are done when men and mountains meet.

*Blake*

The color of the mountains is the Buddha's body; the sound of running water is his great speech.

*Dōgen*

Mountains are the beginning and end of all natural scenery.

*Ruskin*

There is no prospect in nature that can't be improved by a tavern in the foreground.

*Dr Johnson*

I don't mind admitting that mountains make me pray.

*John Hunt*

### **Humankind in the Natural Order**

Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.

*Job 5.23*

Nature is not a place to visit. It is home.

*Gary Snyder*

...peace ... comes within the souls of men when they realize their relationship, their oneness, with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the Universe dwells *Wakan-Tanka* [the Great Spirit] and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us.

*Black Elk*

Because of the true man's totality and centrality he has the almost divine function of guardianship over the world of nature. Once this role is ignored or misused he is in danger of being shown ultimately by nature who is in reality the conqueror and who the conquered.

*Joseph Epes Brown*

The temple bell stops but I still hear the sound coming out of the flowers.

*Basho*

The state of the outer world does not merely correspond to the general state of men's souls; it also in some sense depends on that state, since man himself is the pontiff of the outer world. Thus the corruption of man must necessarily affect the whole.

*Abu Bakr Siraj Ed-Din*



If I would preserve my relation to nature I must make my life more moral, more pure and innocent ... I must not live loosely but more and more continently.

*HD Thoreau*

Wild Nature is at one with holy poverty and also with spiritual childlikeness; she is an open book containing an inexhaustible teaching of truth and beauty. It is in the midst of his own contrivances that man most easily becomes corrupted, it is they that make him covetous and impious; close to virgin Nature, who knows neither agitation nor falsehood, he had the hope of remaining contemplative like Nature itself. And it is Nature, quasi-divine in her totality, who will have the final word.

*Frithjof Schuon*

You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea  
itself floweth in your veins, till you are  
clothed with the heavens, and crowned with  
the stars: and perceive yourself to be the sole  
heir of the whole world, and more than so,  
because men are in it who are every one sole  
heirs as well as you.

*Thomas Traherne*

They passed eons living alone in the mountains and forests; only then did they unite with the Way and use mountains and rivers for words, raise the wind and rain for a tongue, and explain the great void.

*Dōgen*

The contemplation of nature abates the fever of the soul, and banishes all insincerity and presumption.

*Basil the Great*

### **Archetypes, Symbolism and Idolatry**

Crazy Horse dreamed and went out into the world where there is nothing but the spirits of all things. That is the real world that is behind this one, and everything we see here is like a shadow from that world.

*Black Elk*

Nor is there anything which is more than a shadow. Indeed, if a world did not cast down shadows from above, the worlds below it would at once vanish altogether, since each world in creation is no more than a tissue of shadows entirely dependent on the archetypes in the world

above. Thus the foremost and truest fact about any form is that it is a symbol, so that when contemplating something in order to be reminded of its higher realities the traveller is considering that thing in its universal aspect which alone explains its existence.

*Abu Bakr Siraj Ed-Din*

A form is made in the resigned will according to the platform or model of eternity, as it was known in the glass of God's eternal wisdom before the times of this world.

*Boehme*

I looked about me and could see that what we then were doing was like a shadow cast upon the earth from yonder vision in the heavens, so bright it was and clear. I knew the real was yonder and the darkened dream of it was here.

*Black Elk*

A symbol is characterised above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part of the Unity of which it is representative.

*Coleridge*

Everything that we see is a shadow cast by that which we do not see.

*Black Elk*

Form is revelation of essence.

*Meister Eckhart*

The symbol [in traditional art] is not based on man-made conventions. It is an aspect of the ontological reality of things and as such is independent of man's perception of it. The symbol is a revelation of a higher order of reality in a lower order through which man can be led back to the higher realm. To understand symbols is to accept the hierarchic structure of the Universe and the multiple states of being.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

If we look at the world with the eyes of the spirit we shall discover that the simplest material object, nay anything that is formed, be it by man or by nature, is a symbol, a glyph of a higher reality and a deeper relationship of universal and individual forces.

*Lama Govinda*

For us the symbol is an image that invests physical reality with poetic meaning. For medieval man, the physical world as we understand it has no reality except as a symbol. But even the term 'symbol' is misleading. For us the symbol is the subjective creation of poetic fancy; for medieval man what we could call a symbol is the only objectively valid definition of reality. Maximus the Confessor ... actually defines what he calls 'symbolic vision' as the ability to apprehend within the objects of sense perception the invisible reality of the intelligible that lays beyond them.

*Otto von Simson*

Symbols not only disclose a structure of the real or even a dimension of existence, at the same time they carry a significance for human existence. This is why even symbols bearing on ultimate reality conjointly constitute some existential revelations for the man who deciphers their message.

*Mircea Eliade*

Idolatry consists essentially in a reduction of the content of a symbol to the image itself in isolation from any metaphysical background.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Idolatry is the misuse of symbols, a definition needing no further qualification.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

Pantheism only conceives of the relationship between the Divine Principle and things from the one point of view of substantial or existential continuity, and this is an error rejected by every traditional doctrine.

*Titus Burckhardt*

Symbolism, within its human confines and apart from its most universal sense, is best described as a traditional Algebra serving for the expression of ideas of the universal order.

*Marco Pallis*

People who like quotes like meaningless generalisations.

*Graham Greene*

# THE ABSOLUTE AND THE RELATIVE

## God

To whom then will ye liken God? Or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?  
*Isaiah 40.18*

Why does thou prate of God? Whatever thou sayest of Him is untrue.  
*Meister Eckhart*

...every doctrine is but error in the face of the Divine Reality Itself; a provisional, indispensable, salutary 'error', which, however, contains and communicates the virtuality of the Truth.

*Frithjof Schuon*

The nature of God is of a circle, of which the centre is everywhere and the circumference nowhere.

*Empedocles*

He is the First and the Last and the Outwardly Manifested and the Inwardly Hidden.

*Mal-Arabi al Darqawi*

...the divine attributes are predicated as such only in respect of the world ... in themselves they are indistinct and ineffable...

*Frithjof Schuon*

Even as the eye could not perceive the sun unless it were itself sunlike, so neither could the soul behold the soul if it were not Godlike.

*Plotinus*

The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

*I Corinthians 2.11*

God cannot be understood except by Himself.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Thou knowest Myself in thyself, and from this knowledge thou wilt derive all that is necessary.

*Catherine of Siena*

That we are conformed to God — 'made in His image' — this is certain; otherwise we would not exist. That we are contrary to God, this is also certain; otherwise we should not be different from God.

Apart from analogy with God, we would be nothing. Apart from opposition to God, we would be God. The separation between man and God is at the same time absolute and relative ... The separation is absolute because God alone is real and no continuity is possible between nothingness and Reality, but the separation is relative — or rather ‘non-absolute’ — because nothing is outside God. In a sense it might be said that the separation is absolute as from man to God and relative as from God to man.

*Frithjof Schuon*

If God doesn't exist, then everything is dust and ashes. If there is no absolute to give meaning and value to our existence, then that means that existence has no meaning. I know there are philosophers who do think precisely that; but for me, that would be not just pure despair but also a kind of betrayal. Because it isn't true, and I know that it isn't true.

*Mircea Eliade*

As truly as God is our Father, so truly God is our Mother.

*Mother Julian*

The soul is by nature made for heaven and God is her lawful heritage.

*Meister Eckhart*

It is much more possible for the Sun to give forth Darkness, than for God to do, or be, or give forth anything but Blessing and Goodness.

*William Law*

...the only decisive criterion of human worth is man's attitude to the Absolute...

*Frithjof Schuon*

In a ‘world’ composed of billions of galaxies ... all the classical arguments for or against the existence of God seem to me naive and even childish. I do not think that, for the moment, we have the right to argue philosophically. The problem itself should be left in suspension as it is. We must content ourselves with personal certitudes, with wagers based on dreams, with divinations, ecstasies, aesthetic emotion. That also is a mode of knowing, but without arguments.

*Mircea Eliade*

To stand on one leg and prove God's existence is a very different thing from going on one's knees and thanking Him.

*Kierkegaard*

God can stand being told by Professor Ayer and Marghanita Laski that he doesn't exist.

*JB Priestly*

When men cease to believe in God, they will not believe in nothing, they will believe in anything.

*GK Chesterton*

Without ceasing [Divine Being] strives to manifest itself in and through man as a threefold purpose: as plenitude bringing joy, as order bringing meaning, as oneness manifesting itself through love — all three being invulnerable to the world.

*Karlfried Durckheim*

This is the amiable nature of God, He is the Good, the unchangeable, overflowing fountain of good that sends forth nothing but good to all eternity. He is the Love itself...

*William Law*

### **The Absolute and the Relative**

The Imperishable is the Real. As sparks fly upward from a blazing fire, so from the depths of the Imperishable arise all things. To the depths of the Imperishable they again descend. Self-luminous is that Being, and formless. He dwells within all and without all ... From him are born breath, mind, the organs of sense, ether, air, fire, water and the earth, and he binds all these together.

*The Upanishads*

*Brahman* is real; the world is an illusory appearance;  
the so-called soul is *Brahman* itself, and no other.

*Shankara*

There is something obscure which is complete  
before heaven and earth arose;  
tranquil, quiet, standing alone without change,  
moving around without peril.  
It could be the Mother of everything.  
I don't know its name,  
and call it *Tao*.

*Tao Te Ching*

The 'unreality' of material things is only relative to the greater reality of spiritual things.

*Thomas Merton*

I beheld these others beneath Thee, and saw that they neither altogether are, nor altogether are not. An existence they have because

they are from Thee; and yet no existence, because they are not what Thou art. *For only that really is that remains unchangeably...*

*Augustine*

...there is a hierarchy of the real. The manifold world of our everyday experience is real with a relative reality that is, on its own reality, unquestionable; but this relative reality has its being within and because of the absolute Reality...

*Aldous Huxley*

Everything hath two faces, a face of its own and a face of its Lord; in respect of its own face it is nothingness, and in respect of the face of God it is Being.

*Ghazzali*

Whoever disclaims all worldly things in their futility and accidental existence will find them again in their true and eternal value.

*Meister Eckhart*

Our neighbour, our friends, religious ceremonies, and the beauty of the world do not fall to the level of unrealities after the soul has direct contact with God. On the contrary, it is only then that these things become real. Previously they were half dreams.

*Simone Weil*

He who has seen the whole world hanging on a hair of the mercy of God has seen the truth; we might almost say the cold truth.

*GK Chesterton*

## **The Sense of the Sacred**

That is sacred which in the first place is attached to the transcendent order, secondly possesses the character of absolute certainty, and thirdly, eludes the comprehension of the ordinary human mind ... The sacred is the presence of the center in the periphery ... The sacred introduces a quality of the absolute into relativities and confers on perishable things a texture of eternity.

*Frithjof Schuon*

The sense of the sacred, which is none other than the quasi-natural predisposition to the love of God and the sensitivity to theophanic manifestations or to celestial perfumes — this sense of the sacred implies essentially the sense of beauty and the tendency toward virtue; virtue as it were, and virtue, inward beauty. It also implies the sense of the metaphysical transparency of phenomena, that is, the capacity

of grasping the principal within the manifested, the uncreated within  
the created... *Frithjof Schuon*

A sense of the sacred is fundamental for every civilization because  
fundamental for man; the sacred — that which is immutable,  
inviolable and thus infinitely majestic — is in the very substance of  
our spirit and our existence. *Frithjof Schuon*

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with joy  
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear, — both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise  
In nature and the language of sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

*Wordsworth*



# PRIMORDIAL WISDOM

## Myths

Myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation.

*Joseph Campbell*

The very essence of myth ... is that haunting awareness of transcendental forces peering through the cracks of the visible universe.

*P Wheelwright*

No science will ever replace myth, and a myth cannot be made out of any science. For it is not that 'God' is a myth, but that myth is the revelation of a divine life in man. It is not we who invent myth, rather it speaks to us as a Word of God.

*Carl Jung*

Myth is the foundation of life; it is the timeless schema, the pious formula into which time flows.

*Thomas Mann*

Mytho-poetry is one of the supreme talents of humankind. We must make sure that its flame never dies out.

*James Cowan*

There is nothing truer than myth. History, in its attempt to 'realize' myth, distorts it, stops halfway; when history claims to have succeeded, this is nothing but humbug and mystification.

*Eugene Ionesco*

India has been nourished from the beginning by the truth of the imagination, the primordial truth, which is not abstract but concrete, not logical but symbolic, not rational but intuitive.

*Bede Griffiths*

Myth is the supreme metaphysical language.

*James Cowan*

Myth is an attempt to relate a whole human experience, of which the purpose is too deep, going too deep in the blood and the soul, for mental explanation or description.

*DH Lawrence*

To have lost the art of thinking in images is precisely to have lost the proper linguistic of metaphysics and to have descended to the logic of 'philosophy'.  
*AK Coomaraswamy*

The myth is the penultimate truth, of which all experience is the temporal reflection. The mythical narrative is of timeless and placeless validity, true nowhere and everywhere ... Myth embodies the nearest approach to absolute truth that can be stated in words...

*AK Coomaraswamy*

Myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred or supernatural into the natural world.

*Mircea Eliade*

Religious philosophy is always bound up with myths and cannot break from them without destroying itself...

*Berdyayev*

### **The Lessons of the Nomads**

It is only when we realize that the arts and philosophies of our remote ancestors were 'fully developed', and that we are dealing with the relics of an ancient wisdom, as valid now as it ever was, that the thought of the earliest thinkers will become intelligible to us. We shall only be able to understand the astounding uniformity of folkloric motifs all over the world, and the devoted care that has everywhere been taken to ensure their correct transmission, if we approach these mysteries (for they are nothing less) in the spirit in which they have been transmitted...

*AK Coomaraswamy*

The man of the archaic societies tends to live as much *in* the sacred or in close proximity to consecrated objects ... [F]or the man of all pre-modern societies, the *sacred* is equivalent to a *power*, and, in the last analysis, to *reality*. The sacred is saturated with *being*. Sacred power means reality and at the same time enduringness and efficacy ... religious man deeply desires to *be*, to participate in *reality*, to be saturated with power.

*Mircea Eliade*

The Australian Aborigines represent the conscience of us all as they recognize and acknowledge at all times the metaphysical origins of the human spirit ... In truth, the Aboriginal people of Australia offer us a parable for survival.

*James Cowan*

It could be said in a general way that the works of sedentary peoples are works of time: these people are fixed in space within a strictly limited domain, and develop their activities in a temporal continuity which appears to them to be indefinite. On the other hand, nomadic and pastoral peoples build nothing durable, and do not work for a future which escapes them; but they have space in front of them, not facing them with any limitation, but on the contrary always offering them new possibilities.

*René Guénon*

...this invention [of letters] will produce forgetfulness in the minds of those who learn to use it, because they will not exercise their memory. Their trust in writing, produced by external characters which are no part of themselves, will discourage the use of their own memory within them. You have invented an elixir not of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the *appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom*, for they will read many things without teaching, and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise but only wiseacres.

*Plato*

The disorientation in our whole psychic life and in our whole apperception of the external realities produced by the invention of the alphabet, the whole tendency of which has been to elevate thought and thinking to the rank of the exclusive proof of verities, never occurred among [primal] peoples.

*Paul Radin*

From the Indian [i.e., Hindu] point of view a man can only be said to know what he knows by heart: what he must go to a book to be reminded of, he merely knows of ... From the earliest times, Indians have thought of the learned man, not as one who has read much, but as one who has been profoundly taught. It is much rather from a master than from any book that wisdom can be learned.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

There must have been a time when the religious, aesthetic and moral perceptions were one.

*Erich Heller*

With our own overemphasis on mental activity we are apt to think that the [American] Indian, without any written language, lacks something important or necessary in not possessing a scholastic or dialectic type of doctrinal presentation. However such a 'lack' may have prevented *us* from understanding the completeness and depth

of their wisdom, it represents for the Indians a very effective type of spiritual participation in which the essential ideas and values, reflected by the world of forms and symbols, are spontaneously and integrally *lived*.  
*Joseph Epes Brown*

When the modern world is contrasted with traditional civilizations, it is not simply a question of seeking the good things and the bad things on one side or the other; good and evil are everywhere, so that it is essentially a question of knowing on which side the more important good and on which side the lesser evil is to be found. If someone says that such and such a good exists outside tradition, the answer is: no doubt, but one must choose the most important good, and it is necessarily represented by tradition; and if someone says that in tradition there exists such and such an evil, the answer is: no doubt, but one must choose the lesser evil, and again it is tradition that embodies it. It is illogical to prefer an evil which involves some benefits to a good which involves some evils.  
*Frithjof Schuon*

It would be wrong to believe that the religious man of primitive and archaic societies refuses to assume the responsibility for a genuine existence. On the contrary ... he courageously assumes immense responsibilities — for example, that of collaborating in the creation of the cosmos, or of creating his own world, or of ensuring the life of plants and animals, and so on. But it is a different kind of responsibility from those that, to us moderns, appear to be the only genuine and valid responsibilities. It is a responsibility on the cosmic plane, in contradistinction to the moral, social, or historical responsibilities that are alone regarded as valid in modern civilisations. From the point of view of profane existence, man feels no responsibility except to himself and to society.  
*Mircea Eliade*

One of the principal differences which separates the man of archaic cultures from modern man resides primarily in the incapacity of the latter to live his organic life (in the first place his life of love and nutrition) as a sacrament.  
*Mircea Eliade*

How embarrassing it is for western society to have come so far in its rational, empirical study of nature, only to discover that the most basic principles of environmental intelligence have slipped through the mesh of science like water through a sieve. *Theodore Roszak*

This essence of this being [of the Bushmen], I believe, was his sense of belonging: belonging to nature, the universe, life and his own humanity. He had committed himself utterly to nature as a fish to the sea. He had no sense of property, owned no animals and cultivated no land. Life and nature owned all and he accepted without question that, provided he was obedient to the urge of the world within him, the world without, which was not separate in his spirit, would provide. How right he was is proved by the fact that nature was kinder to him by far than civilisation ever was. This feeling of belonging set him apart from us on the far side of the deepest divide in the human spirit.

*Laurens van der Post*

If you ever really enter this other world ... you may never again be contented with what you think of as 'progress' and 'civilisation'.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

In the desert I had found a freedom unattainable in civilisation; a life unhampered by possessions, since everything that was not a necessity was an encumbrance ... I tasted freedom and a way of life from which there could be no recall.

*Wilfred Thesiger*

## **Native Americans**

The Indian world represents on this earth a value that is irreplaceable; it possesses something unique and enchanting ... It is human greatness, and at the same time harbors within itself something mysterious and sacred, which it expresses with profound originality.

*Frithjof Schuon*

We were lawless people, but we were on pretty good terms with the Great Spirit, creator and ruler of all. You whites assumed we were savages. You didn't understand our prayers. You didn't try to understand. When we sang our praises to the sun or moon or wind, you said we were worshipping idols. Without understanding, you condemned us as lost souls just because our form of worship was different from yours. We saw the Great Spirit's work in almost everything: sun, moon, trees, wind, and mountains. Sometimes we approached him through these things ... I think we have a true belief in the supreme being, a stronger faith than that of most whites who called us pagans ... Indians living close to nature and nature's ruler are not living in darkness...

*Walking Buffalo*

The Indian is predisposed towards the suprasensible and strives to penetrate the hard wall of the sensible world, seeks openings where he can, and finds them chiefly in phenomena themselves, which indeed, in their contents, are nothing other than signposts to the suprasensible. Things are hard-frozen melodies from the Beyond.

*Frithjof Schuon*

The religion of the Indian is the last thing about him that a man of another race will ever understand.

*Ohiyesa*

The man who sat on the ground in his tipi meditating on life and its meaning, accepting the kinship of all creatures and acknowledging unity with the universe of things was infusing into his being the true essence of civilization. And when native man left off this form of development, his humanization was retarded.

*Luther Standing Bear*

The Indian world signifies first and foremost the reading of the primordial doctrine in the phenomena of Nature — each man reads what he can understand — and the experiencing of Nature as the holy, primordial Home that everywhere manifests the Great Spirit and everywhere is filled with Him; and this consciousness gives the Red Man his dignity, composed of reverence for Nature and of self-dominion ... The Indian like all the yellow race ... stays in Nature and is never detached from it; psychologically he is like a samurai become hunter or nomad; his contemplativeness, where it is most intimate and exalted, is without doubt not unrelated to that intuitive and inarticulate method which is Zen, or in other respects, to the spiritualized Nature in Shinto.

*Frithjof Schuon*

The world of nature was their temple, and within this sanctuary they showed great respect to every form, function and power. That the Indians held as sacred all the natural forms around them is not unique ... But what is almost unique in the Indians' attitude is that their reverence for life and nature is central to their religion: each form in the world around them bears such a host of precise values and meanings that taken altogether they constitute what one would call their 'doctrine'.

*Joseph Epes Brown*

There were no temples or shrines among us save those of nature. Being a natural man, the Indian was intensely poetical. He would deem it sacrilege to build a house for Him who may be met face to face in the mysterious, shadowy aisles of the primeval forest, or in the sunlit

bosom of virgin prairies, upon dizzy spires and pinnacles of naked rock, and yonder in the jeweled vault of the night sky!

*Ohiyesa*

In the life of the Indian there was only one inevitable duty — the duty of prayer — the daily recognition of the Unseen and Eternal. His daily devotions were more necessary to him than daily food.

*Ohiyesa*

The Indian tends towards independence and so towards indifference with regard to the outward world: he surrounds himself with silence as with a magic circle, and this silence is sacred as being the vehicle of the heavenly influences. It is from this silence — of which the natural support is solitude — that the Indian draws his spiritual strength; his ordinary prayer is unvoiced: what is required is not thought but consciousness of the Spirit, and this consciousness is immediate and formless like the vault of heaven.

*Frithjof Schuon*

It is a curious fact that many people love the Indians, but that hardly anyone dares admit it; unless they admit it with certain reservations, which all too ostentatiously allow them to disidentify themselves from Rousseau's 'good savage' as well as from Cooper's 'noble savage'; no one wishes to be taken for a child. Doubtless there is nothing worth retaining in the unrealistic sentimentalities of a Rousseau, and the least that can be said is that the Indians have no need of them; but as for the 'noble savage,' this idea is not drawn entirely 'out of thin air,' if only for the simple reason that warlike peoples, by the very fact that they regularly and vocationally court suffering and death and have a cult of self-mastery, possess nobility and grandeur by the nature of things.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Behind every sensible phenomenon there lies in fact a reality of animic order that is independent of the limitations of space and time; it is by getting in touch with these realities, or these subtle and suprasensorial roots of things, that a shaman is able to influence natural phenomena or to foretell the future. All this may sound strange, to say the least of it, to the modern reader whose imagination now bears different imprints and responds to different reflexes than did that of medieval or archaic man; his subconscious, it must be avowed, is warped by a mass of prejudices having intellectual or scientific pretensions. Without going into details, one need only recall, in the words of Shakespeare, that 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy'.

*Frithjof Schuon*

When I first came to live with Black Elk, I was eager to hear him talk about religious matters. All he talked about, though, was animals. Because of my academic background, I kept wondering when he was going to get serious and talk real theology. When was he going to talk metaphysics? When was he going to speak the kind of language I had become accustomed to from Thomas Aquinas? He never did. This was puzzling to me, because I knew he was a man of great sanctity who had experienced the Great Mysterious frequently through his visions. Finally, it occurred to me that, in talking about animals and birds, the wind and the four directions, he was talking about what non-Natives call 'religion'. He was, indeed, speaking a sacred, metaphysical language, but it was phrased in terms of living realities in the immediacy of one's experience.

*Joseph Epes Brown*

### **The Fate of the Indians and Other Traditional Cultures**

And he said, 'What hast thou done?

The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground'.

*Genesis 4.10*

I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream ... the nation's hope is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.

*Black Elk*

What lies below this fury, of which our punitive expeditions and 'wars of pacification' are only more evident manifestations? It would not be too much to say that our educational activities ... are motivated by an *intention* to destroy existing cultures. And that is not only, I think, because of our conviction of the absolute superiority of our *Kultur*, and *consequent contempt and hatred for whatever else we have not understood* (all those for whom the economic motive is not decisive), but grounded in an unconscious and deep-rooted envy of the serenity and leisure that we cannot but recognize in people whom we call 'unspoiled'.

*AK Coomaraswamy*



The history of the many images of the Indian that appear in the course of American literature sets a whole series of works and authors in an unusual, revelatory perspective. It is also extremely instructive, for it shows us the (quite simple) stylistic means by which a program of genocide can be facilitated. It also shows us that the chief culprit, *the actual agent of the slaughter, was the idea of progress*, which by its very nature demands the elimination of everything that it decrees old, obsolete, out of date and nostalgic, while at the same time it represses the love, so congenial to man, of that delicate, wise patina that time deposits on the things of this world ... the idea of progress has not only justified and promoted the slaughter — at times physical, at times spiritual, depending on the circumstances — but it has even removed it from consciousness.

*Elemire Zolla*

...*Black Elk Speaks* is an extraordinarily human document — and beyond that the record of a profound spiritual journey, the pilgrimage of a people towards their historical fulfillment and culmination, towards the accomplishment of a worthy destiny. That the pilgrimage was in a tragic sense abruptly ended at Wounded Knee in 1890, that Black Elk's words would at last take a tragic turn — "There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead" — is of little consequence in the long run, I believe. For in that sudden and absolute investment in the tragic, in the whole assumption of a tragic sense, there is immeasurable vindication, the achievement of a profound and permanent dignity, an irreducible impression on the records of human history.

*N Scott Momaday*

In order fully to understand the abruptness of the breakup of the Red Indian race one must take account of the fact that this race had lived for thousands of years in a kind of paradise that was practically speaking without limits ... Theirs was a rugged paradise to be sure, but one that nevertheless provided an environment full of grandeur and of a sacred character ... The Indians identified themselves spiritually and humanly with this inviolate Nature ... But as time went on, and concordantly with the development of the 'Iron Age' in which passions predominate and wisdom disappears, abuses begin to arise with increasing frequency ... The privileged situation of the Indians, on the fringe of 'History' and of its crushing urban civilizations, had inevitably to come to an end. There is nothing surprising in the fact that this disintegration of a paradise ... coincided with modern times. The crushing of the Indian race is tragic because in its deepest and most intimate nature this noble people was opposed to 'assimilation';

the red man could only conquer or die; it is the spiritual basis of this alternative that confers on the destiny of the red race an aspect of grandeur and martyrdom ... They embodied a character, an idea, a principle, and, being what they were, they could not be unfaithful to themselves. This great drama might be defined as the struggle, not only between a materialistic civilization and another that was chivalrous and spiritual, but also between urban civilization (in the strictly human and pejorative sense of this term, with all its implications of artifice and servility) and the kingdom of Nature considered as the majestic, pure, unlimited apparel of the Divine Spirit. And it is from this idea of the final victory of Nature (final because it is primordial) that those Indians who have remained faithful to their ancestors draw their inexhaustible patience in the face of the misfortunes of their race; Nature, of which they feel themselves to be embodiments, and which at the same time is their sanctuary, will end by conquering this artificial and sacrilegious world, for it is the Garment, the Breath, the very Hand of the Great Spirit.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Why is it that the fate of Tibet has found such a deep echo in the world? There can only be one answer: Tibet has become the symbol of all that present-day humanity is longing for, either because it has been lost or not yet realized or because it is in danger of disappearing from human sight: the stability of a tradition, which has its roots not only in a historical or cultural past, but within the innermost being of man, in whose depth this past is enshrined as an ever-present source of inspiration. As on a gigantically raised stage we witness the struggle between two worlds, which may be interpreted, according to the standpoint of the spectator, either as a struggle between the past and the future, between backwardness and progress, belief and science, superstition and knowledge — or as the struggle between spiritual freedom and material power, between the wisdom of the heart and the knowledge of the brain, between the dignity of the human individual and the herd-instinct of the mass, between the faith in the higher destiny of man through inner development and the belief in material prosperity through an ever-increasing production of goods. We witness the tragedy of a peaceful people without political ambitions and with the sole desire to be left alone, being deprived of its freedom and trampled underfoot by a powerful neighbour in the name of 'progress', which as ever must serve as a cover for all the brutalities of the human race.

*Lama Govinda*

One can truly say that this remote land [Tibet] behind the snowy rampart of the Himalaya had become like the chosen sanctuary for all those things whereof the historical discarding had caused our present profane civilisation, the first of its kind, to come into being ... the violation of this sanctuary and the dissipation of the sacred influences concentrated there became an event of properly cosmic significance, of which the ulterior consequences for a world which tacitly condoned the outrage or, in many cases, openly countenanced it on the plea that it brought 'progress' to a reluctant people, have yet to ripen.

*Marco Pallis*

What treaty that the whites have kept has the red man broken? Not one. What treaty that the white man ever made with us have they kept? Not one. When I was a boy the Sioux owned the world; the sun rose and set on their land; they sent ten thousand men to battle. Where are the warriors today? Who slew them? Where are our lands? Who owns them? What white man can ever say I stole his land or a penny of his money? Yet, they say I am a thief. What white woman, however lonely, was ever captive or insulted by me? Yet they say I am a bad Indian. What white man has ever seen me drunk? Who has ever come to me hungry and unfed? Who has ever seen me beat my wives or abuse my children? What law have I broken? Is it wrong for me to love my own? Is it wicked for me because my skin is red? Because I am a Sioux; because I was born where my father lived; because I would die for my people and my country?

*Sitting Bull*

Let there be no mistake about it: if the general public accepts the pretext of 'civilization' in all good faith, there are some for whom it amounts to no more than mere economic hypocrisy, a cloak for their designs of conquest ... but what strange times indeed, when so many men allow themselves to be persuaded that they are making a people happy by reducing them to subjection, by robbing them of what is most precious in their eyes, namely their own civilization.

*René Guénon*

# TRADITION AND RELIGION

## Revelation

From time to time a Revelation 'flows' like a great tidal wave from the Ocean of Infinitude to the shores of our finite world ... From 'time to time': this is a simplification which calls for a commentary; for since there is no common measure between the origin of such a wave and its destination, its temporality is bound to partake, mysteriously, of the Eternal, just as its finiteness is bound to partake of the Infinite. Being temporal, it must first reach this world at a certain moment in history; but that moment will in a sense escape from time. 'Better than a thousand months' is how the Islamic Revelation describes the night of its own advent. There must also be an end which corresponds to the beginning; but that end will be too remote to be humanly foreseeable ... There is only one water but no two waves are the same. Each wave has its own characteristics according to its destination, that is, the particular needs of time and place towards which and in response to which it has providentially been made to flow.

*Martin Lings*

It has been said more than once that total Truth is inscribed, in an immortal script, in the very substance of our spirit; what the different Revelations do is to 'crystallize' or 'actualize', in differing degrees according to the case, a nucleus of certitudes.

*Frithjof Schuon*

If a work of the highest inspiration may be likened to a spark that is struck from a flint, the flint being man and the striker God, then a Revelation is as a spark struck by God from Himself.

*Martin Lings*

To say that Revelation is 'super-natural' does not mean that it is contrary to nature in so far as nature can be taken to represent, by exhaustion, all that is possible on any given level of reality; it means that Revelation does not originate at the level to which, rightly or wrongly, the epithet 'natural' is normally applied. This 'natural level' is precisely that of physical causes, and hence of sensory and psychic phenomena considered in relation to those causes.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Whoever sets out to define a spiritual phenomenon situated in the almost heavenly era of the great Revelations has to beware of assessing it according to the impoverished categories of later ages or, still worse, those belonging to the inbuilt profanity of the 'free-thinking' world. Buddhism ... is anything but a purely human ideology; were it such, its quality as a way of enlightenment or salvation would be unintelligible. To deny the celestial character of Sakyamuni and his Message is after all tantamount to saying that there are effects without a cause.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Revelation speaks an absolute language because God is absolute, not because the form is; in other words, the absoluteness of the Revelation is absolute in itself, but relative *qua* form. It is quite out of the question that a 'revelation', in the full sense of the word, should arise in our time, one comparable, that is to say, to the imparting of the great sutras or any other primary scriptures: the day of revelations is past on this globe and was so already long ago. The inspirations of the saints are of another order.

*Frithjof Schuon*

## **Tradition**

Tradition, in the rightful sense of the word, is the chain that joins civilisation to Revelation.

*Lord Northbourne*

By a Tradition is meant not merely a historical continuity, and still less a blind observance of customs bereft of their formal meaning, but a transmission of principles of more-than-human origin applied in every field of thought and action.

*Aristides Messinesi*

Wherever a complete tradition exists this will entail the presence of four things, namely: a Revelation; a current of Grace issuing from that source and transmitted without interruption through a variety of channels; a way of 'verification' ... finally there is the formal embodiment of tradition in the doctrines, arts, sciences and other elements that go together to determine the character of a normal civilisation.

*Marco Pallis*

In all epochs and in all countries there have been revelations, religions, wisdoms; tradition is a part of mankind just as man is part of tradition.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Only the divine Suchness is unborn and therefore undying, limitless and therefore not limiting, free and therefore the seat of Deliverance. The voice of tradition is the invitation to that freedom whispered in the ear of existential bondage; whatever echoes that message in any degree or at any remove may properly be called traditional; anything that fails to do so, on the other hand, is untraditional and humanistic.

*Marco Pallis*

Traditions appear out of the Infinite like flowers; they can no more be invented than can sacred art which is their witness and their proof.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Tradition is inextricably related to revelation and religion, to the sacred, to the notion of orthodoxy, to authority, to the continuity and regularity of transmission of the truth, to the exoteric and the esoteric as well as to the spiritual life, science and the arts.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

...tradition ... namely an effective communication of principles of more-than-human origin ... through use of forms that will have arisen by applying those principles to contingent needs.

*Marco Pallis*

Tradition is far beyond being merely an accumulation of human endeavour and invention even if it does have a history. Granting that the external characteristics and expression of a tradition are coloured by and reflect the passage of time, nonetheless, to equate tradition with a form of historical continuity is to ignore its supra-formal essence in the name of which it remains free and objective in relation to spatio-temporal determinations ... Tradition cannot be improvised from human means for by the terms of a tradition the human state as such is by definition a mode of ignorance — a blindness that cannot, by merely having recourse to itself, overcome its own unknowingness.

*Brian Keeble*

The growth of a genuine tradition resembles that of a crystal, which attracts homologous particles to itself, incorporating them according to its own laws of unity.

*Titus Burckhardt*

The contemplative or intellectual element ... being the central element of any true tradition, is the one essential factor in the absence of which all the others, necessary as they are in their own relative order, rituals,

arts, moral legislation and the Active Life in general, are bound eventually to fall apart through lack of a principle to unify them.

*Marco Pallis*

It is therefore our increasing weakness, and with it the risk of forgetfulness and betrayal, which more than anything obliges us to externalize or make explicit what at the beginning was included in an inward and implicit perfection. Saint Paul needed neither Thomism nor cathedrals, for all profundities and splendors were in himself and all around him in the sanctity of the early community. And this, far from supporting iconoclasts of all kinds, refutes them completely; more or less late epochs — the Middle Ages, for example — have an imperious need for externalizations and developments, just as water from a spring, if it is not to be lost on its way, needs a channel made by nature or by the hand of man; and just as the channel does not transform the water and is not meant to do so — for no water is better than spring water — so the externalizations and developments of a spiritual patrimony are there, not to change that patrimony, but to transmit it as fully and effectively as possible.

*Frithjof Schuon*

The very idea of tradition has been destroyed to such an extent that those who aspire to recover it no longer know which way to turn.

*René Guénon*

Outside tradition there can assuredly be found some relative truths ... but outside tradition there does not exist a doctrine that catalyzes absolute truths and transmits liberating notions concerning total reality.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Tradition speaks to each man the language he can comprehend, provided he wishes to listen. The latter proviso is crucial, for tradition, let it be repeated, cannot 'become bankrupt'; rather it is of the bankruptcy of man that one should speak, for it is he who has lost all intuition of the supernatural. It is man who has let himself be deceived by the discoveries and inventions of a falsely totalitarian science ... man has ended by being submerged in his own creations; he will not realize that a traditional message is situated on quite a different plane or how much more real that plane is ... Tradition is abandoned, not because people are no longer capable of understanding its language, but because they do not wish to understand it, for this language is made to be understood till the end of the world ... an affirmation of the

truth, or on behalf of truth, is never in vain ... every initiative taken with a view to harmony between different cultures and for the defense of spiritual values is good, if it has as its basis a recognition of tradition or of the traditions. 'When the inferior man hears talk about *Tao*, he only laughs at it; it would not be *Tao* if he did not laugh at it ... the self-evidence of the *Tao* is taken for a darkness.' These words of Lao-Tze were never more timely than now. Errors cannot but be, as long as their quite relative possibility has not reached its term; but for the Absolute errors have never been and never shall be. On their own plane they are what they are, but it is the Changeless that shall have the final say.

*Frithjof Schuon*

### **Religious Forms and Orthodoxy**

If we can grasp the transcendent nature of the human being, we thereby grasp the nature of revelation, of religion, of tradition; we understand their possibility, their necessity, their truth. And in understanding religion, not only in a particular form or according to some verbal specification, but also in its formless essence, we understand the religions ... the meaning of their plurality and diversity; this is the plane of gnosis, of the *religio perennis*, whereon the extrinsic antinomies of dogmas are explained and resolved.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Religions are 'mythologies', which as such are based on real aspects of the divine and on sacred facts — hence on realities but on aspects alone; the limitation is at once inevitable and completely effective.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Every *dharma* is for its followers the supreme vehicle of the claims of the Absolute.

*Abhishiktananda*

A form, though limited and consequently subject to time, may convey something timeless and in this respect escape historical conditions.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Religion: n. A daughter of Hope and Fear, explaining to Ignorance the nature of the Unknowable.

*Ambrose Bierce*

A religion is a form, and so also a limit, which 'contains' the Limitless, to speak in paradox; every form is fragmentary because of its necessary exclusion of other formal possibilities; the fact that these



forms — when they are complete, that is to say when they are perfectly ‘themselves’ — each in their own way represent totality does not prevent them from being fragmentary in respect of their particularization and their reciprocal exclusion.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Each religion is *the* religion and *a* religion, *the* religion inasmuch as it contains within itself the Truth and the means of attaining the Truth, *a* religion since it emphasizes a particular aspect of Truth in conformity with the spiritual and psychological needs of the humanity for whom it is destined.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

Essentially all religions include decisive truths, mediators and miracles, but the disposition of these elements, the play of proportions, can vary according to the conditions of the revelation and its human receptacles.

*Frithjof Schuon*

...when one says *the* Prophet it means the prophet of Islam ... when one says *the* Incarnation it refers to Christ who personifies this aspect. And although every prophet and saint has experienced ‘enlightenment’, *the* Enlightenment refers to the experience of the Buddha which is the most outstanding and universal embodiment of this experience.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

The main object of religion is not to get a man into heaven but to get heaven into him.

*Thomas Hardy*

He whose soul melteth not away like snow in the hand of religion, in his hand religion like snow away doth melt.

*Sufi saying*

The rediscovery of religion is the great intellectual, moral and spiritual adventure of our time.

*Bede Griffiths*

Traditional forms are keys to unlock the gate of Unitive Truth; but they are also (since a key can close, as well as open a gate) possible obstacles to its profoundest knowledge.

*Marco Pallis*

Religion is like a blind man looking in a black room for a black cat that isn’t there, and finding it.

*Oscar Wilde*

Orthodoxy is the principle of formal homogeneity proper to any authentically spiritual perspective...

*Frithjof Schuon*

In order to be orthodox a religion must possess a mythological or doctrinal symbolism establishing the essential distinction between the Real and the illusory, or the Absolute and the relative ... and must offer a way that serves both the perfection of concentration on the Real and also its continuity. In other words a religion is orthodox on condition that it offers a sufficient, if not always exhaustive, idea of the absolute and the relative, and therewith an idea of their reciprocal relationships.

*Frithjof Schuon*

You have no idea how much nastier I would be if I was not a Catholic. Without supernatural aid I would hardly be a human being.

*Evelyn Waugh*

A religion is limited not by what it includes but by what it excludes...

*Frithjof Schuon*

When a man seeks to escape from 'dogmatic narrowness' it is essential that it should be 'upwards' and not 'downwards': dogmatic form is transcended by fathoming its depths and contemplating its universal content, and not by denying it in the name of a pretentious and iconoclastic 'ideal' of 'pure truth'.

*Frithjof Schuon*

He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth will proceed by loving his own sect of church better than Christianity, and end by loving himself best of all.

*Coleridge*

Religion alive confronts the individual with the most momentous option this world can present. It calls the soul to the highest adventure it can undertake, a proposed journey across the jungles, peaks and deserts of the human spirit. The call is to confront reality, to master the self. Those who dare to hear and follow this secret call soon learn the dangers and difficulties of its lonely journey.

*Huston Smith*

A manifesto about religion:

- The world religions bear witness to the experience of Ultimate Reality to which they give various names.
- Ultimate Reality cannot be limited by any name or concept.
- Ultimate Reality is the ground of infinite potentiality and actuality.
- Faith is opening, accepting and responding to Ultimate Reality...
- The potential for human wholeness — or in other frames of reference, enlightenment, salvation, transformation, blessedness, *nirvana* — is present in every human person.

- Ultimate Reality may be experienced not only through religious practices but through nature, art, human relationships and service to others.
- As long as the human condition is experienced as separate from Ultimate Reality, it is subject to ignorance and illusion, weakness and suffering.
- Disciplined practice is essential to the spiritual life ... Humility, gratitude and a sense of humor are indispensable in the spiritual life.

*Snowmass Statement*

...the majority of the historians of religion defend themselves against the messages with which their documents are filled. This caution is understandable. One does not live with impunity in intimacy with 'foreign' religious forms ... But many historians of religions end by no longer taking seriously the spiritual worlds they study; they fall back on their personal religious faith, or they take refuge in a materialism or behaviourism impervious to every spiritual shock.

*Mircea Eliade*

When we reach a certain level of religious understanding, the light we seek is not what confirms us in our present position but something that leads us beyond it.

*Aelred Graham*

God has no religion.

*Gandhi*

## **Theology / Doctrine**

Theology is the thought of a religion, the thought about the divine; there exists no general theology, always only the thought of a [particular] religion ... 'Theology' is in truth an 'unfree' metaphysics.

*Martin Buber*

Doctrine is, as it were, a symbolical prefiguring of the knowledge to be attained; it is also, in its manifestation, a fruit of that knowledge.

*Titus Burckhardt*

Doctrine grows, not so much by addition of new knowledge, as by the need to refute errors and to reanimate a diminishing power of intuition.

*Titus Burckhardt*

A theology should be like poetry, which takes us to the end of what words and thoughts can do.

*Karen Armstrong*

My dear child, you must believe in God in spite of what the clergy tell you.

*Benjamin Jowett*

### **Exoteric and Esoteric**

Exoterism consists in identifying transcendent realities with the dogmatic forms, and if need be, with the historical facts of a given Revelation, whereas esoterism refers in more or less direct manner to these same realities ... If the purest esoterism includes the whole truth — and that is the very reason for its existence — the question of ‘orthodoxy’ in the religious sense clearly cannot arise; direct knowledge of the mysteries could not be ‘Moslem’ or ‘Christian’, just as the sight of a mountain is the sight of a mountain and not something else...

*Frithjof Schuon*

For nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be made known and come abroad.

*Luke 8.17*

The exoteric viewpoint is doomed to end by negating itself once it is no longer vivified by the presence within it of the esoterism of which it is the outward radiation and veil. So it is that religion, according to the measure in which it denies metaphysical and initiatory realities and becomes crystallized in literalistic dogmatism, inevitably engenders disbelief; the atrophy that overtakes dogmas when they are deprived of their internal dimension recoils upon them from outside, in the form of heretical and atheistic negations.

*Frithjof Schuon*

What characterizes esoterism to the very extent that it is absolute, is that on contact with a dogmatic system, it universalizes the symbol or religious concept on the one hand, and interiorizes it on the other; the particular or the limited is recognized as the manifestation of the principial and the transcendent, and this in its turn reveals itself as immanent.

*Frithjof Schuon*

### **Sacred Texts**

Sacred writings are bound into two volumes: that of Creation and that of Scripture.

*Aquinas*

The seeming incoherence of these texts ... always has the same cause, the incommensurable disproportion between the Spirit and the limited resources of human language: it is as though the poverty stricken coagulation which is the language of mortal men were under the formidable pressure of the Heavenly Word broken into a thousand fragments, or as if God, in order to express a thousand truths, had but a dozen words at his command and so was compelled to make use of allusions heavy with meaning, of ellipses, abridgements and symbolic syntheses.

*Frithjof Schuon*

The Bible gives to every man and to every era such answers to their questions as they deserve. We shall always find in it as much as we seek and no more ... nothing whatever if it is nothing whatever that we seek.

*Karl Barth*

The call of the *Upanishads* comes from beyond time and space.

*Abhishiktananda*

Access to the Vedas is the greatest privilege this century may claim over all previous centuries.

*Robert Oppenheimer*

The *Bhagavad Geeta* is the first of books; it was as if an empire spoke to us, nothing small or unworthy, but large, serene, consistent, the voice of an old intelligence which in another age and climate had pondered over and disposed of the same questions which exercise us.

*Emerson*

Those who talk of the Bible as 'a monument of English prose' are merely admiring it as a monument over the grave of Christianity.

*TS Eliot*

## **Jesus**

Verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.

*John 8.58*

Who is Jesus? He has no name.

*Meister Eckhart*

Jesus is God's face turned towards man, and man's face turned towards God.

*Abhishiktananda*

Every man is half God, half man; he is both spirit and flesh. That is why the mystery of Christ is not simply a mystery for a particular creed: it is universal.

*Nikos Kazantzakis*

Jesus is not the founder-head of a religion; that came later. Jesus is the guru who announces the mystery.

*Abhishiktananda*

The message of Christ, like that of the Bible, is not *a priori* a teaching of metaphysical science; it is above all a message of salvation, but one that necessarily contains, under cover of an appropriate symbolism, metaphysics in its entirety.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Truth is the perfect correlation of mind and reality; and this is actualised in the Lord's person.

*William Temple*

Christ is less real in his temporal history than in the essential mystery of my being.

*Abhishiktananda*

Christ is the head of the *corpus mysticum*, which includes all men from the beginning of the world to its end. He is not the president of a special-interest club.

*Eric Voegelin*

People argue about Jesus — it is easier than to let yourself be scorched by contact with him.

*Abhishiktananda*

Jesus is the God whom we can approach without pride and before whom we can humble ourselves without despair.

*Pascal*

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world could not contain the books that should be written.

*John 12.47*

Perhaps it is no wonder that the women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man — there never has been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never flattered or coaxed or patronised; who never made arch jokes about them, never treated them either as 'The women, God help us!' or 'The ladies, God bless them!'; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously; who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them

for being female; who had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unself-conscious. There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything 'funny' about woman's nature. *Dorothy Sayers*

Jesus was an extremist for love, truth and goodness.

*Martin Luther King*

## **Monks and Hermits**

Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross and follow me. *Mark 10.21*

Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money...

*Luke 9.3*

The monk is a man who lives in the solitude (Greek: *monos*) of God, alone in the very aloneness of the Alone ... He does not become a monk in order to do social work or intellectual work or missionary work or to save the world. The monk simply consecrates himself to God.

*Abhishiktananda*

The monastery is neither a museum nor an asylum. The monk remains in the world from which he has fled, and he remains a potent, though hidden, force in that world.

*Thomas Merton*

Monasticism is not situated outside the world; it is the world that situates itself outside monasticism.

*Frithjof Schuon*

I have not yet managed to achieve it — the 'surrender' of my 'ego' as a Christian, monk, a priest. And yet I must do so. Perhaps it will then be given back to me, renewed. But meanwhile, I must leave it behind — totally — without any hope of its return. And that means absolute poverty, nakedness, hunger, fasting, a vagrant life without means of support, total solitude in heart, in body and in spirit. And still more it involves the breaking of all those bonds that are as old as myself, those bonds that are in the most secret recesses of my heart. All that superego derived from my family upbringing, from my whole training as a young child, as a young man, as a priest, as a monk.

*Abhishiktananda*

The monk is a man who, in one way or another, pushes to the frontiers of human experience and strives to go beyond, to find out what transcends the ordinary level of existence. *Thomas Merton*

The vocation to solitude is ... to become fully awake.  
*Thomas Merton*

But I'll tell you what hermits realize. If you go off into a far, far forest and get very quiet, you'll come to understand that you're connected with everything.  
*Alan Watts*

Contemplation stands supreme; viewed either from the standpoint of God or from that of Man, or from that of Holy Church. God has created the universe for His own glory, and out of love, in order to diffuse His intrinsic goodness ... and to make intelligent creatures sharers in His eternal Bliss. Every creature is then in its own intimate way a manifestation, an ontological witness of God, a 'Theophany.' Everything reflects, in some measure, the divine attributes, nay participates in the divine Essence and receives its existence from the absolutely Existent. Therefore it cannot but point to God not only as its supreme Source, but especially as to its ultimate Goal. Intelligent creatures, angels and men, were created *ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei* (*Gen. 1.26*), to the image and likeness of God. Man, if we follow the hermeneutics of the Greek Fathers, is made to the image of God by his intelligence and free will, and to His likeness by grace and supernatural gifts. The dignity and happiness of man lie in this very image and likeness. His goal is to know God ... to seek Him ... and to love Him beyond measure ... Some at least of the members of society have to be deputed in the name of the rest of their brethren to a life entirely dedicated to the quest for God. *Abhishiktananda*

Monks and nuns the world over speak the same language, as it were. In the things that really matter, they are often much closer to each other across religious boundaries than they are to lay people in their own respective religious groups. *David Steindl-Rast*

Let us face the fact that the monastic vocation tends to present itself to the modern world as a problem and as a scandal. In a basically religious culture, like that of India, or of Japan, the monk is more or less taken for granted. *Thomas Merton*



What wonderful happiness there was, then, in the world! There were still men on this miserable, noisy, cruel earth, who tasted the marvelous joy of silence and solitude, who dwelt in forgotten mountain cells, in secluded monasteries ... They were poor, they had nothing, and therefore they were free and possessed everything, and everything they touched struck off something of the fire of divinity...

*Thomas Merton*

When anyone reproaches a hermit or a monk for 'fleeing' the world, he commits a double error: first, he loses sight of the fact that contemplative isolation has an intrinsic value independent of the existence of a surrounding 'world'; second, he pretends to forget that there are forms of flight which are perfectly honorable: if it is neither absurd nor shameful to do one's best to escape from an avalanche, it is no more so to run away from the temptations or even simply the distractions of the world ... In our days people are very ready to say that to flee the world is to shirk 'responsibilities,' a completely hypocritical euphemism that conceals spiritual laziness and a hatred of the absolute behind 'altruistic' or 'social' ideas; people are happy to ignore the fact that the gift of oneself to God is always a gift of oneself to all. It is metaphysically impossible to give oneself to God without this resulting in something good for the environment; to give oneself to God — though it were hidden from all — is to give oneself to man, for this gift of self has a sacrificial value of an incalculable radiance.

*Frithjof Schuon*

These acosmics are no less present to the world than are those who have been cast into the great stream of life, but their presence is at the very point from which this stream comes forth. They bear witness to the absolute, the *kaivalya*, to the Unmoving, *acala*, and do so on behalf of this world, while apparently remaining on its fringe. They are like the pivots of this world, holding it steady by their own stillness within the Unmovable.

*Abhishiktananda*

Such men [true solitaries], out of pity for the universe, out of loyalty to mankind, and without a spirit of bitterness or resentment, withdraw into the healing silence of the wilderness, or of poverty, or of obscurity, not in order to preach to others but to heal in themselves the wounds of the whole world.

*Thomas Merton*

# RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

## **Divinely-appointed Diversity**

In my father's house there are many mansions...

*John 14.1*

Other sheep have I which are not of this fold.

*John 10.16*

For he who is not against us is on our part. *Mark 9.40*

For each we have appointed a law and traced out a path, and if God had wished, verily He would have made you one people.

*The Quran*

To God belongeth the East and the West; whithersoever ye turn... there is the countenance of God.

*The Quran*

The lamps are different but the light is the same...

*Rumi*

Even those who are devoted to other gods, and sacrifice to them full of faith, are really worshipping me ... I am seated in the hearts of all.

*Bhagavad Gita*

That which is called the Christian Religion existed among the Ancients, and never did not exist, from the beginning of the human race.

*Augustine*

The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nation's different reception of Poetic Genius, which is everywhere called the spirit of Prophecy.

*Blake*

We can enjoy the divine mind through various Ideas, seek it through various traces, travel toward that goal by various paths...

*Marsilio Ficino*

Pluralism is a gift of God.

*Abhishiktananda*

By the Word of God — that is to say by Jesus Christ — Isaiah and Plato, Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius, uttered and wrote such truths as they declared. There is only one Divine Light...

*William Temple*

### **The Collision of Religions and Ecumenism**

Needless to say our ancestors were aware of the existence of other religions besides their own; but dazzled and penetrated as they were by the great light shining directly above them, the sight of more remote and — for them — more obliquely shining lights on the horizons could raise no positive interest nor did it create problems. Today, however those horizons are no longer remote; and amidst the great evil which results from all that has contributed to bring them near, some good has also inevitably stolen its way in.

*Martin Lings*

Diversity does not mean disunity, once the Centre of all has been reached.

*Abhishiktananda*

*Dharma* and the *dharmas*, unitive suchness and the suchness of diversified existence: here is to be found the basis of an interreligious exegesis which does not seek a remedy for historical conflicts by explaining away formal or doctrinal factors such as in reality translate differences of spiritual genius. Far from minimizing the importance of these differences in the name of a facile and eventually spurious ecumenical friendliness, they will be cherished for the positive message they severally carry and as necessities that have arisen out of the differentiation of mankind itself.

*Marco Pallis*

We in the West now realize that we have no monopoly of religious truth. We must in honesty change our attitude towards other faiths, for our watchword must be 'Loyalty to truth'. This changed attitude, however, does not weaken, but rather, instead, reinforces one's faith in God, for He is seen to be not a small or partial being but the Great God who is working throughout all times and places and faiths.

*Rudolf Otto*

The essential problem that the study of religion poses is how to preserve religious truth, traditional orthodoxy, the dogmatic theological structures of one's own tradition, and yet gain knowledge of other traditions and accept them as spiritually valid ways and roads to God.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

...understanding, at least in realms as inherently noble as the great faiths of mankind, brings respect; and respect prepares the way for a higher power, love — the only power that can quench the flames of fear, suspicion, and prejudice, and provide the means by which the people of this small but precious earth can become one to one another.

*Huston Smith*

...genuine ecumenism requires the communication and sharing, not only of information about doctrines which are totally and irrevocably divergent, but also of religious intuitions and truths which may turn out to have something in common ... Ecumenism seeks the inner and ultimate spiritual 'ground' which underlies all articulated differences. A genuinely fruitful dialogue cannot be content with a polite diplomatic interest in other religions and their beliefs. It seeks a deeper level...

*Thomas Merton*

Western culture will be in danger of a decline into a sterilizing provincialism if it despises or neglects the dialogue with other cultures... the West is forced (one might also say: condemned) to this encounter... One day the West will have to know and to understand the existential situations and the cultural universes of the non-Western peoples; moreover, the West will come to value them as integral with the history of the human spirit and will no longer regard them as immature episodes or as aberrations from an exemplary History of man — a History conceived, of course, only as that of Western man.

*Mircea Eliade*

...if we are to consider what may be the most urgent practical task to be resolved by the philosopher, we can only answer that this is ... a control and revision of the principles of comparative religion, the true end of which science ... should be to demonstrate the common metaphysical basis of all religions and that diverse cultures are fundamentally related to one another as being the dialects of a common spiritual and intellectual language.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

Sanskrit literature will be no less influential for our time than Greek literature was in the 15<sup>th</sup> century for the Renaissance.

*Schopenhauer*

'East and West' imports a cultural rather than a geographical antithesis: an opposition of the traditional or ordinary way of life that

survives in the East to the modern and irregular way of life that now prevails in the West. It is because such an opposition could not have been felt before the Renaissance that we say that the problem is one that presents itself only accidentally in terms of geography; it is one of times much more than places. *René Guénon*

### **Mystical Convergence**

My heart has opened unto every form; it is a pasture for gazelles, a cloister for Christian monks, a temple for idols, the Ka'ba of the pilgrim, the tables of the *Torah* and the book of the *Qur'an*. I practice the religion of Love; in whatsoever direction its caravans advance, the religion of Love shall be my religion and my faith.

*Ibn Arabi*

Thus it appears that the sweltering inhabitants of Charleston and New Orleans, of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta, drink at my well. In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the *Bhagavat Geeta*, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of Bramin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the *Vedas*, or dwells in the root of the tree with his crust and water jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.

*HD Thoreau*

Who is a Christian? Who is a Hindu? Who is a Muslim? I know only the children of my Father who is in heaven. *Abhishiktananda*

Benares is to the East, Mecca to the West; but explore your own heart, for there are both Rama and Allah. *Kabir*

...the only possible ground upon which an effective *entente* of East and West can be accomplished is that of the purely intellectual wisdom that is one and the same for all times and for all men, and is independent of all environmental idiosyncrasy.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

Theologians may quarrel, but the mystics of the world speak the same language.

*Meister Eckhart*

I am neither Christian nor Jew nor Parsi nor Muslim. I am neither of the East nor of the West, neither of the land nor sea ... I have put aside duality and have seen that the two worlds are one. I seek the One, I know the One, I see the One, I invoke the One. He is the First, he is the Last, he is the Outward, he is the Inward.

*Rumi*

## **Conversion**

When one is born into a religion that is not too unsuitable for pronouncing the name of the Lord, when one loves that native religion, well-oriented and pure, it is difficult to conceive of a legitimate motive to abandon it before direct contact with God offers the soul to the divine will itself. Beyond this threshold, the change is only legitimate as an act of obedience. In fact history shows how this rarely happens. More often — perhaps always — the soul that reaches the highest spiritual regions is confirmed in the love of the tradition that served as its ladder. If the imperfection of the native religion is too great, or if it appears in a native environment under a form that is too corrupt, or if circumstances prevent that religion from being born or even kills it, the adoption of a strange religion is legitimate. Legitimate and necessary for certain people; not, without a doubt, for all. It is the same for those who have been raised without any religious practice. In all other cases, to change religions is an extremely grave decision and it is even more serious to push someone else to do so. It is still an infinitely more serious exercise, in this sense, to officially apply such pressure upon conquered lands.

*Simone Weil*

All generalizations are false, including this one.

*Mark Twain*

# BEAUTY AND SACRED ART

## Beauty

Beauty is the splendour of Truth. *Plato*

Beauty always communicates a celestial dew-drop, if only for an instant. *Frithjof Schuon*

Beauty is the Spiritual making itself known sensuously. *Hegel*

Beauty is that ray which parting from the visage of God, penetrates into all things. *Marsilio Ficino*

God is beautiful, and he loves beauty. *The Prophet*

Virtue is the beauty of the soul as beauty is the virtue of forms. *Frithjof Schuon*

The beautiful is the experimental proof that the incarnation is possible. *Simone Weil*

The archetype of Beauty, or its Divine model, is the superabundance and equilibrium of the Divine qualities, and at the same time the overflowing of the existential potentialities in pure Being ... Thus beauty always manifests a reality of love, of deployment, of illimitation, of equilibrium, of beatitude, of generosity. *Frithjof Schuon*

## Sacred Art

To make the primordial truth intelligible, to make the unheard audible, to enunciate the primordial world, to represent the archetype, such is the task of art, or it is not art. *Walter Andrae*

Sacred art is the form of the Supra-formal, it is the image of the Uncreate, the language of Silence. *Frithjof Schuon*

...wherever religion is a living force, there it finds its natural expression in art. *Lama Govinda*

...no religion cares for art when it first enters the world. The need for a protective frame made up of visual or auditive forms comes later, just like the need for extensive commentaries of the revealed book, although every genuine expression of a religion is already included as a latent possibility in its original manifestation.

*Titus Burckhardt*

Art, as soon as it is no longer determined, illumined and guided by spirituality, lies at the mercy of the individual and purely psychical resources of the artist ... the artist who lives in a traditional world works under the discipline of a genius which surpasses him.

*Frithjof Schuon*

The intelligibility of traditional art does not depend on recognitions but, like that of a script, on legibility.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

Traditional art derives from a creativity which combines heavenly inspiration with ethnic genius, and which does so in the manner of a science endowed with rules and not by way of individual improvisation.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Works of art are reminders; in other words, supports of contemplation.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

[Sacred art] does not try to imitate nature, but to reveal a higher reality by omitting all accidentals, thus raising the visible form to the value of a symbol.

*Lama Govinda*

Sacred art is made as a vehicle for spiritual presences.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Bach: a scale of tears upon which our desires for God ascend.

*EM Cioran*

The architecture of a mosque excludes all tension between heaven and earth.

*Titus Burckhardt*

Islamic art is abstract, but also poetical and gracious; it is woven of soberness and splendor...

*Frithjof Schuon*



Sacred art ... is made at the same time for God, for angels and for man; profane art on the other hand exists only for man and by that fact betrays him.

*Frithjof Schuon*

All true art ... makes us alive to the tremendous mystery of being, in which we ourselves, together with all other living things and existing things, come forth from the depths of God and return again to Him. An art that does not produce something of this is not worth the name.

*Thomas Merton*

The poet, the painter, the artist, is always in touch with this transcendent Mystery — insofar as he is an authentic poet — however much he may be enclosed in the world of the senses and the imagination ... Poetry and mysticism derive from a common source...

*Bede Griffiths*

We would remind all students of art that their true function is the revelation of the beautiful, the true, the good. It is not the fugitive moments of personal experience, but the eternal and universal, that best comes to the world through them.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

The path dips down to Gal Vihara: a wide, quiet, hollow, surrounded by trees. A low outcrop of rock, with a cave cut into it, and beside the cave a big seated Buddha on the left, a reclining Buddha on the right, and Ananda, I guess, standing by the head of the reclining Buddha. In the cave, another seated Buddha ... I am able to approach the Buddha barefoot and undisturbed, my feet in wet grass, wet sand. Then the silence of the extraordinary faces. The great smiles. Huge and yet subtle. Filled with every possibility, questioning nothing, knowing everything, rejecting nothing, the peace not of emotional resignation but of Madhyamika, of *sunyata*, that has seen through every question without trying to discredit anyone or anything — without refutation — without establishing some other argument. For the doctrinaire, the mind that needs well-established positions, such peace, such silence, can be frightening. I was knocked over with a rush of relief and thankfulness at the obvious clarity of the figures, the clarity and fluidity of shape and line, the design of the monumental bodies composed into the rock shape and landscape, figure, rock and tree ... Looking at these figures I was suddenly, almost forcibly, jerked clean out of the habitual, half-tied vision of things, and an inner clearness, clarity, as if exploding from the rocks themselves, became evident and

obvious. The queer evidence of the reclining figure, the smile, the sad smile of Ananda standing with his arms folded (much more 'imperative' than Da Vinci's Mona Lisa because completely simple and straightforward). The thing about all this is that there is no puzzle, no problem, and really no 'mystery'. All problems are resolved and everything is clear, simply because what matters is clear. The rock, all matter, all life, is charged with *Dharmakaya* ... everything is emptiness and everything is compassion. I don't know when in my life I have ever had such a sense of beauty and spiritual validity running together in one aesthetic illumination. Surely, with Mahabalipuram and Polonnaruwa my Asian pilgrimage has come clear and purified itself. I mean, I know and have seen what I was obscurely looking for. I don't know what else remains but I have now seen and have pierced through the surface and have got beyond the shadow and the disguise. This is Asia in its purity, not covered over with garbage, Asian or European or American, and it is clear, pure, complete. It says everything; it needs nothing. And because it is needs nothing it can afford to be silent, unnoticed, undiscovered. It does not need to be discovered. It is we, Asians included, who need to discover it. *Thomas Merton*

### **Genius and Culturism**

We live in a world which on the one hand tends to deprive men of their center, and on the other hand offers them — in place of the saint and the hero — the cult of the 'genius'. Now a genius is all too often a man without a center, in whom this lack is replaced by a creative hypertrophy. To be sure, there is a genius proper to normal, hence balanced and virtuous, man; but the world of 'culture' and 'art for art's sake' accepts with the same enthusiasm normal and abnormal men, the latter being particularly numerous ... in that world of dreams or nightmares that was the nineteenth century ... Modern art — starting from the Renaissance — does include some more or less isolated works which, though they fit into the style of their period, are in a deeper sense opposed to it and neutralize its errors by their own qualities ... Despite the fact that Beethoven was a believer, he was inevitably situated on the plane of humanism, hence of 'horizontalty'. And though there was nothing morbid about him, we note the characteristic disproportion between the artistic work and the spiritual personality; characteristic, precisely, for genius arising from the cult of man, thus from the Renaissance and its consequences. There is no denying what is powerful and profound about many of Beethoven's musical motifs, but, all things considered, a music of this

sort should not exist; it exteriorizes and hence exhausts possibilities which ought to remain inward and contribute in their own way to the contemplative scope of the soul. In this sense, Beethoven's art is both an indiscretion and a dilapidation, as is the case with most post-Renaissance artistic manifestations ... This kind of talent — or of genius, as the case may be — makes one think of children who play with fire, or of Goethe's sorcerer's apprentice: these people play with everything, with religion, with the social order, with mental equilibrium, provided they can safeguard their originality; an originality which, retrospectively, shows itself to be a perfect banality, because there is nothing more banal than fashion, no matter how clamorous ... These remarks can be applied to the whole of that universe of dreams which is called 'culture': flooded by literary opium, siren songs, vampirizing, and — to say the least — useless production, people live on the fringe of the natural world and its exigencies, and consequently on the fringe — or at the antipodes — of the 'one thing needful'. The nineteenth century — with its garrulous and irresponsible novelists, its *poètes maudits*, its creators of pernicious operas, its unhappy artists, in short with all its superfluous idolatries and all of its blind allies leading to despair — was bound to crash against a wall, the fruit of its own absurdity; thus the First World War was for the *belle époque* what the sinking of the *Titanic* was for the elegant and decadent society that happened to be on board, or what Reading Goal was for Oscar Wilde, analogically speaking ... A particularly problematic sector of culture with a humanist background is philosophical production, where naïve pretension and impious ambition become involved in the affairs of universal truth, which is an extremely serious matter; on this plane, the desire for originality is one of the least pardonable sins ... The most serious reproach we can make concerning the general run of these 'thinkers' is their lack of intuition of the real and consequently their lack of a sense of proportion; or the short-sightedness and lack of respect with which they handle the weightiest questions human intelligence can conceive, and to which centuries or millennia of spiritual consciousness have provided the answer.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Culture is an instrument wielded by professors to manufacture professors who when their time comes, will manufacture professors.

*Simone Weil*

Culture is the arts elevated to a set of beliefs.

*Tom Wolfe*

Modern art has to be what is called 'intense' ... roughly speaking it means saying only one thing at a time, and saying it wrong.

*GK Chesterton*

The whole of the so-called miracle of Greece amounts to a substitution of reason alone for intelligence as such; apart from the rationalism which inaugurated it, artistic naturalism would have been inconceivable. Extreme individualism results from the cult of 'form', of form envisaged as something finite and not as 'symbol'; reason indeed regulates the science of the finite, of limits and of order, so that it is only logical that an art which is directed by reason should share with reason itself a flatness refractory to all mystery.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Traditional art extended itself to the whole of life and left an imprint of beauty upon the everyday existence of human beings rather than being concerned only with paintings that we put in museums and at best visit a few Sundays each year.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

We know that a man can read Goethe or Rilke in the evening, that he can play Bach and Schubert, and go to his day's work in Auschwitz in the morning.

*George Steiner*

The capacity for imaginative reflex, for moral risk in any human being is not limitless; on the contrary, it can be rapidly absorbed by fictions, and thus the cry in the poem may come to sound louder, more urgent, more real than the cry in the street outside. The death in the novel may move us more potently than the death in the next room. Thus there may be a covert, betraying link between the cultivation of aesthetic response and the potential of personal inhumanity.

*George Steiner*

...the greater part of what is taught in the fine arts department of our universities, all of the psychologies of art, all the obscurities of modern aesthetics, are only so much verbiage, only a kind of defence that stands in the way of our understanding of the wholesome art, at the same time iconographically true and practically useful, that was once to be had in the marketplace or from any good artist ... our aesthetic is nothing but a false rhetoric, and a flattery of human weakness by which we can account only for the arts that have no other purpose than to please.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

# SAMSARA

## Impermanence

The phenomena of life may be likened unto a dream, a phantom; a bubble, a shadow, a glistening dew, or lightning flash, and thus they ought to be contemplated. *Prajna-Paramita*

It is unsure whether tomorrow or the next life will come first.  
*The Buddha*

... life is but a day;  
A fragile dewdrop on its perilous way  
From a tree's summit...  
*Keats*

You cannot step into the same river twice. *Heraclitus*  
[To which someone replied, 'You can't step into the same river once.']

In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life: it goes on.  
*Robert Frost*

[On being asked the essential teaching of Buddhism]:  
'Not always so.'  
*Suzuki Roshi*

Impermanence is a principle of harmony. *Pema Chödrön*

The right time is any time that one is still so lucky as to have.  
*Henry James*

The shortness of life, so often lamented, may be the best thing about it.  
*Schopenhauer*

## Evil and Original Sin

...the serpent is to be found in Paradise because Paradise exists. Paradise without the serpent would be God.  
*Frithjof Schuon*

When the gates of Paradise were opened the gates of Hell were opened at the same time.  
*Islamic saying*

I am the Lord and there is none else. I form the light and create the darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.

*Isaiah 45.7*

...what manifests itself as 'evil' relatively to our human situation has its roots, cosmically speaking, further back in an imperfection inseparable from all manifestation as such, be it in the shape of a world, an individual being, or even a paradise.

*Marco Pallis*

The best one can say ... about manifestation is that the infinite nature of divine possibility evidently includes it and therefore also requires it; were it not so, the infinite would not be itself.

*Marco Pallis*

...of that relative [world] the thing we call evil is a necessary function, being in fact the measure of the world's apparent separation from its principle, God — an illusory separation inasmuch as nothing can exist side by side with the infinite, however real it may claim to be at its own relative level.

*Marco Pallis*

I enquired into the nature of Evil, and found no substance there.

*Augustine*

The stain of sin is not something positive in the soul ... It is like the shadow which is the privation of light.

*Aquinas*

Man is a twofold being, one part capable of evil and the other capable of good; that which is capable of good is not also capable of evil, but that which is capable of evil is also capable of good.

*Blake*

Ignorance: the root and stem of all evil.

*Plato*

Imaginary evil is romantic and varied; real evil is gloomy, monotonous, barren, boring. Imaginary good is boring; real good is always new, marvellous, intoxicating.

*Simone Weil*

Suffering and moral evil have the same source — a craving for the intensification of separateness which is the primary datum of all creatureliness.

*Aldous Huxley*

When we love our sin then we are damned indeed.

*Graham Greene*

I haven't much use for anyone who can spare Original Sin. Myself, I resort to it on every occasion, and without it I don't see how I should avoid uninterrupted consternation.

*EM Cioran*

[Original sin] is a situation of disharmony in which we *find* ourselves, as opposed to that in which we can place ourselves by our personal choices.

*Aelred Squire*

It is a great liberty to be able not to sin; it is the greatest liberty to be unable to sin.

*Augustine*

Perfect spiritual freedom is a total inability to make any evil choice.

*Thomas Merton*

There is no other forgiveness of sin but being made free of it.

*William Law*

The demonic always creeps in by creating an opposition between certain truths and virtues that, when they are separated, become errors.

*Augusto Del Noce*

If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?

*Solzhenitsyn*

### **The Dream of the Ego**

A life devoted to the interests and enjoyments of this world, spent and wasted in the slavery of earthly desires, may be truly called a dream, as having all the shortness, vanity and delusion of a dream.

*William Law*

Remember that sometimes not getting what you want is a wonderful stroke of luck.

*The Dalai Lama*

Fear, hope, loss, gain — these are the on-going action of the dream of the ego, the self-perpetuating, self-maintaining structure which is self-deception.

*Chögyam Trungpa*

In fact all religious philosophies have agreed that such egoic experience is a preliminary illusion, a veil, a film of *maya* — a dream to Heraclitus, and to Lao-Tze, the fundamental illusion of all Buddhism, a state of sleep, of death, of socially accepted madness, a womb state to which one has to die, from which one has to be born.

*RD Laing*

One of the most widespread errors of our time is a superficial 'personalism' which identifies the person with the external self, the empirical ego, and devotes itself solemnly to the cultivation of this ego. But this is a cult of pure illusion ... When this error is taken over into religion it leads to the worst kind of nonsense — a cult of psychologism and self-expression which vitiates our whole cultural and spiritual self.

*Thomas Merton*

Not to admit that which exceeds us, and not to wish to exceed oneself: that is in fact the whole program of psychologism, and it is the very definition of Lucifer.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Freedom from self requires a method ... and recourse to cosmic principles that transcend the limitations of the human individuality ... And yet there are those who would vanquish the ego while obstinately refusing submission to a legitimate traditional form ... Auto-determination in spiritual matters amounts to intellectual anarchy.

*Whitall Perry*

The same thing happens to becoming a Christian as to all radical cures; one puts it off as long as possible.

*Kierkegaard*

Vanity: games, hunting, visiting, comedies, deceitful perpetuation of one's name.

*Pascal*

## **Suffering**

As long as one suffers one lives.

*Graham Greene*

The discomforts or misfortunes which come to a man always have three causes: the man himself, the world and God. We may, according



to the point of view adopted, take into consideration one or other of these causes, but we cannot deny one of them. Man is the author of his ill fortune insofar as it is felt as suffering. The world is its author insofar as it seeks to keep man in the cosmic illusion. God is its Author inasmuch as it comes to man as a sanction, though also as a means of purification, and so as a test. *Frithjof Schuon*

The healthy are not real. They have everything except being — which is uniquely conferred by uncertain health. *EM Cioran*

Not till we are lost ... not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations. *HD Thoreau*

Happy people are poor psychologists. *Stefan Zweig*

Every life is the story of a collapse. *EM Cioran*

Men that look no further than their outsides, think health is an appurtenance unto life ... but I that have examined the parts of man, know upon what tender filaments that fabrick hangs. *Sir Thomas Browne*

Only through suffering can we find ourselves. *Dostoevsky*

Sorrow is one of the vibrations that prove the fact of living. *Antoine de Saint-Euxpéry*

A pessimist is an optimist in full possession of the facts. *Schopenhauer*

My life has been full of terrible misfortunes most of which never happened. *Montaigne*

## **Karma**

We are the heirs of our actions. *The Buddha*

We are the manifestation of our karmic relations at any given moment, and upon their modification we change accordingly. What we call life is no more than a procession of transformations. *Roshi Yasutani*

The ungodly shall be punished according to their own imaginations.  
*Wisdom of Solomon 3.10*

No man is rich enough to buy back his past. *Oscar Wilde*

Every moment and every event in every man's life on earth plants something in his soul.  
*Thomas Merton*

From virtuous action all happiness arises; from non-virtuous actions all sufferings arise.  
*Shantideva*

Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.  
*Galatians 6.7*

Cast your bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days.  
*Ecclesiastes 11.1*

Time wounds all heels.  
*Groucho Marx*

### **Spiritual Materialism**

It is far more comfortable to have to do with religion than with God.  
*Martin Buber*

It is important to see that the main point of any spiritual practice is to step out of the bureaucracy of the ego. This means stepping out of the ego's desire for a higher, more spiritual, more transcendental version of knowledge, religion, virtue, judgement, comfort or whatever it is that the particular ego is seeking. One must step out of spiritual materialism.  
*Chögyam Trungpa*

As the fly that clings to honey hinders itself from escaping, so the soul that clings to spiritual sweetness hinders freedom and contemplation.  
*John of the Cross*

When we learn to deal directly with our complaints and difficulties, romanticized ideas about the spiritual life are no longer meaningful.  
*Tarthang Tulku*

To have some deep feeling about Buddhism is not the point; we should just do what we do, like eating supper and going to bed. This is Buddhism.  
*Suzuki Roshi*

No matter what the practice or teaching, ego loves to wait in ambush to appropriate spirituality for its own survival and gain.

*Chögyam Trungpa*

Fine language about things of the Spirit is a vainer babble than in other matters.

*William Law*

The secret to living well and longer is: eat half, walk double, laugh triple and love without measure.

*Tibetan proverb*

# DAILY LIFE

## **Morality, Works, Daily Life**

All ethical darkness is in itself mental darkness ... where there is evil, there too is foolishness...  
*Abraham Kook*

It is only the thought of perfection that produces any good — and this good is imperfect. If one aims at imperfect good, one does evil.  
*Simone Weil*

Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.  
*CS Lewis*

The first requirement for purity of mind is purity of conduct.  
*John Blofeld*

The first rule of action laid down by the *Gita* is to do the work that should be done without desire for the fruit. *Aurobindo*

Good works are the devotions of the free will...  
*The Prophet*

Do what is right at a given moment and leave it behind.  
*Ramana Maharshi*

Morality is even the best ornament of all and a cooling nectar to alleviate suffering.  
*The Buddha*

He that is faithful in that which is least is also faithful in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust in much. *Luke 16.10*

To avoid sin and practice virtue is not to be a saint, it is only to be a man, a human being.  
*Thomas Merton*

To be a man is, precisely, to be responsible. *Antoine de Saint-Euxpéry*

Most people really believe that the Christian commandments (e.g. to love one's neighbour as oneself) are intentionally a little too severe — like putting the clock on half an hour to make sure of not being late in the morning.  
*Kierkegaard*

He said not: Thou shall not be tempted, thou shall not be travailed, thou shall not be afflicted; but he said: Thou shalt not be overcome.

*Mother Julian*

Boredom is cured by prayer, by abstention from vain speech, by working with the hands according to our strength, by reading the Word of God, and by patience; for it is born of a faint soul, of idleness and vain speech.

*Seraphim of Sarov*

Experience, it is said, makes a man wise. That is very silly talk. If there were nothing beyond experience it would simply drive him mad.

*Kierkegaard*

Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is 'finding his place in it', while really it is finding its place in him.

*CS Lewis*

Jesus condemned no one except hypocrites. *Kallistos Ware*

It is the same whether a bird is held by a fine string or a stout one. In either case the bird is a prisoner if it does not snap the string and fly away.

*John of the Cross*

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind see.

*Mark Twain*

Worry is interest paid on trouble before it becomes due.

*Dean William Inge*

Pray, hope, and don't worry. Worry is useless.

*Padre Pio*

To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity and trust.

*HD Thoreau*

[The yogi is] fearless and pure in heart, steadfast in the exercise of wisdom, open-handed and restrained, performing sacrifice, intent on studying Holy Writ, ascetic and upright, hurting none, truthful, free from anger, renouncing all, at peace, averse to calumny, compassionate

to all beings, free from greed, gentle, modest, never fickle, patient, enduring, pure, not treacherous nor arrogant.

*Bhagavad Gita*

On putting the question:

Disciple: Is it permissible to smoke while meditating?

Master: Most certainly not!

Disciple: Is it permissible to meditate while smoking?

Master: Of course!

## **Work**

More things are produced, and better and more easily when one man performs one task according to his nature, at the right moment, and at leisure from other occupation.

*Plato*

Everyone has been made for some particular work, and the desire for that work has been put in every human heart.

*Rumi*

It is not only prayer that gives God glory but work. Smiting on an anvil, sawing a beam, whitewashing a wall, driving horses, sweeping, scouring, everything gives God some glory if being in his grace you do it as your duty.

*Gerard Manley Hopkins*

We cannot pretend to culture until by the phrase 'standard of living' we come to mean a qualitative standard ... Modern education is designed to fit us to take our place in the counting-house and at the chain-belt; a real culture breeds a race of men able to ask, What kind of work is worth doing?

*AK Coomaraswamy*

*Laborare est orare* (To work is to pray) *Medieval maxim*

Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.

*Aristotle*

Acting is not an important job in the scheme of things; plumbing is.

*Spencer Tracy*

Work without love is slavery.

*Mother Teresa*

Let the beauty of what you love be what you do.

*Rumi*

Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all.

*Nelson Mandela*

It may be proved, with much certainty, that God intends no man to live in this world without working; but it seems to me no less evident that He intends every man to be happy in his work.

*Ruskin*

It is right and necessary that all men should have work to do which shall be worth doing, and be of itself pleasant to do...

*William Morris*

The artist is not a special kind of person, but everyone who is not an artist in some field, is an idler ... There is only one person who has the right to abstain from all constructive activities, the contemplative monk or nun.

*Roger Sworder*

Success is never so interesting as struggle. *Willa Cather*

It is a beautiful truth that every man has something of the artist in him.

*Walt Whitman*

Choose a job you love and you will never have to work a day of your life.

*Confucius*

The contemporary form of true greatness lies in a civilization founded on the spirituality of work.

*Simone Weil*

### **Love, Relationship, Forgiveness, Compassion**

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal ... Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

*I Corinthians 13.1, 4-8*

To treat our neighbour who is in affliction with love is something like baptizing him.

*Simone Weil*

God is hidden in our neighbor, either in the perfections which teach truth or in the troubles which call forth charity.

*Frithjof Schuon*

I take upon myself ... the deeds of all beings, even of those in the hells ... I take their suffering upon me ... I bear it, I do not draw back from it, I do not tremble at it, I do not lose heart ... I must bear the burden of all beings, for I have vowed to save all things living, to bring them safe through the forest of birth, age, disease, death and rebirth. I think not of my own salvation, but strive to bestow on all beings the royalty of supreme wisdom. So I take upon myself all the sorrows of all beings ... Truly I will not abandon them. For I have resolved to gain supreme wisdom for the sake of all that lives, to save the world.

*The Bodhisattva's Vow*

Love is something other than the mere disposition of a subject to an object.

*Thomas Merton*

Love is heaven revealed in the soul; it is light and truth; it is infallible; it has no errors for all errors are the want of love.

*William Law*

Love of God could not defraud creatures: we may forget men in loving God without thereby lacking in charity towards them, but we cannot, without defrauding both men and ourselves, forget God while loving men.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Love is holy because it is like grace — the worthiness of its object is never really what matters.

*Marilynne Robinson*

How could man live at all if he did not grant forgiveness every night to himself and all his brothers?

*Goethe*

Love is something more stern and more splendid than mere kindness.

*CS Lewis*

Any human face is a claim on you, because you can't help but understand the singularity of it, the courage and loneliness of it. But this is truest of the face of an infant. I consider that to be one kind of vision, as mystical as any.

*Marilynne Robinson*



The compassion that you see in the kindhearted is God's compassion: He has given it to them to protect the helpless.

*Ramakrishna*

Compassion is proportionate to detachment.

*Thomas Merton*

Compassion is the chief law of human existence.

*Dostoevsky*

For the Spirit of Love, wherever it is, is its own Blessing and Happiness because it is the Truth and Reality of God in the Soul, and therefore is in the same Joy of Life and is the same Good to itself, everywhere and on every Occasion.

*William Law*

There is no justice in love, no proportion in it, and there need not be, because in any specific instance it is only a glimpse or parable of an embracing, incomprehensible reality. It makes no sense at all because it is the eternal breaking in on the temporal. So how could it subordinate itself to cause or consequence? *Marilynne Robinson*

The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

*James 3.17*

## **Animals and Ahimsa**

The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way it treats its animals.

*Gandhi*

It was the spiritual consciousness of a people that was awakened in the spirit of one person [Mahatma Gandhi]. But the message of the Indian spirit, of Indian wisdom, was not for India alone. It was for the entire world.

*Thomas Merton*

To a man whose mind is free there is something even more intolerable in the sufferings of animals than in the sufferings of man. For with the latter it is at least admitted that suffering is evil and that the man who causes it is a criminal. But thousands of animals are uselessly butchered every day without a shadow of remorse. If any man were to refer to it, he would be thought ridiculous. And that is the unpardonable crime.

*Romain Rolland*

The good man is the friend of all living things.

*Gandhi*

People speak sometimes about the 'bestial' cruelty of man, but that is terribly unjust and offensive to beasts, no animal could ever be so cruel as a man, so artfully, so artistically cruel. *Dostoevsky*

Animals do feel like us, also joy, love, fear and pain but they cannot grasp the spoken word. It is our obligation to take their part and continue to resist the people who profit by them, who slaughter them and who torture them. *Denis de Rougemont*

# LIVING IN THE SPIRIT

The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone born of the Spirit. *John 3.8*

Spiritual experience is the meeting place of the known and the unknown, the seen and the unseen, the relative and the absolute. *Abhishiktananda*

Let us enter the cell of self-knowledge. *Catherine of Siena*

We have no spiritual need except for a restoration of the divine nature in us. *William Law*

The spirituality of St Basil includes four principal elements: separation from the world, purification, meditation on Holy Scriptures and continual prayer. The first element cuts man off from the currents of profane life; the second empties the soul of illusory contents; the third infuses the discursive intelligence with divine light; essentially the fourth brings about deification. We could formulate this as follows: in renunciation the soul leaves the world; in purification the world leaves the soul; in meditation God enters the soul; in continual prayer the soul enters into God. *Frithjof Schuon*

## **Solitude, Silence and Contemplation**

The conditions of a solitary bird are five:  
The first, that it flies to the highest point;  
the second, that it does not suffer for company,  
not even of its own kind;  
the third, that it aims its beak to the skies;  
the fourth, that it does not have a definite colour;  
the fifth, that it sings very softly.

*John of the Cross*

True solitude is the home of the person, false solitude the refuge of the individualist. *Thomas Merton*

As soon as a man is fully disposed to be alone with God, he is alone with God no matter where he may be. *Thomas Merton*

You cannot practice too rigid a fast from the charms of worldly talk.

*Fenelon*

Silence like the sunlight will illuminate you in God and will deliver you from the phantoms of ignorance ... More than all things love silence: it brings you a fruit that tongue cannot describe.

*Isaac of Ninevah*

It is better to curb the tongue than to fast on bread and water.

*John of the Cross*

What if all the tumult of the body were to quiet down, along with all our busy thoughts about Earth, sea, and air? What if this very world should stop, and the mind cease thinking about itself, go beyond itself and be quite still? What if all the fantasies that appear in dreams and imagination should cease, and there be no speech, no sign ... so that we should hear the voice of the One who made all things, not through any symbol, but we might hear the One whom in these things we love, might hear that very Self without these? And what if it could be continued on, and all other visions be withdrawn, and this one ravish, and absorb, and wrap up its beholder amid inward joys? And what if life could be forever like this single breathless moment of illumination!

*Augustine*

There is something terribly wrong with a culture inebriated by noise and gregariousness.

*George Steiner*

Silence is as deep as eternity, speech as shallow as time.

*Thomas Carlyle*

Peace is always beautiful.

*Walt Whitman*

Contemplation is the highest expression of man's intellectual and spiritual life. It is that life itself, fully awake, fully active, fully aware...

*Thomas Merton*

Love of God, far from being essentially a feeling, is that which makes the wise man contemplate rather than doing something else.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Many people have taken action, but if their state of being is not peaceful or happy, the actions they undertake only sow more troubles

and anger and make the situation worse. So instead of saying 'Don't just sit there; do something,' we should say the opposite, 'Don't just do something: sit there.'

*Thich Nhat Hanh*

In the past we may have made the primary mistake in distinguishing between the inner world of our mind and the world outside. These are not two separate worlds but belong to the same reality. If we are able to see deeply into our mind we can simultaneously see deeply into the world.

*Thich Nhat Hanh*

## **Renunciation**

The call to complete renunciation cuts across all *dharmas* and disregards all frontiers.

*Abhishiktananda*

If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth — only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair.

*CS Lewis*

Freedom exists in the act of renunciation ... it is the faculty of renunciation that gives us power over ourselves and the things of the world around us.

*Lama Govinda*

Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose.

*Kris Kristofferson*

Sincere and integral faith always implies renunciation, poverty and privation, since the world — or the ego — is not God.

*Frithjof Schuon*

It is easier for a camel to go though the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. *Mark 10.25*

*Sannyasa* confronts us with a sign of that which is essentially beyond all signs — indeed, in its sheer transparency [to the Absolute] it proclaims its own death as a sign ... However the *sannyasi* lives in the world of signs, of the divine manifestation, and this world of manifestation needs him, 'the one beyond signs,' so that it may realize the impossible possibility of a bridge between the two worlds ... These ascetics who flee the world and care nothing for its recognition are precisely the ones who uphold the world ... They go their way in secret

... society needs to know them. It needs to know that they are there, so that it may preserve a reminder of transcendence in the midst of a transient world ... The sign of *sannyasa* ... stands then on the very frontier, the unattainable frontier, between two worlds, the world of manifestation and the world of the unmanifest Absolute. It is the mystery of the sacred lived with the greatest possible interiority. It is a powerful means of grace — that grace which is nothing else than the Presence of the Absolute, the Eternal, the Unborn, existing at the heart of the realm of becoming, of time, of death and life; and a grace which is at the same time the irresistible drawing of the entire universe and its fullness towards the ultimate fullness of the Awakening to the Absolute, to the *Atman*. This sign, this grace is supremely the *tarana*, the raft by which man passes over to the 'other shore' ... Finally, it is even the *taraka*, the actual one who himself carries men across to the other shore, the one and only 'ferryman,' manifested in manifold ways in the form of all those rishis, mahatmas, gurus, and buddhas, who throughout history have themselves been woken and in turn awaken their brother-men.

*Abhishiktananda*

I have seen all things that are done under the sun and behold all is vanity and vexation of the spirit.

*Ecclesiastes 1.14*

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

*John 12.24*

## **Repentance**

Repentance is a kind of table-talk, till we see so much of the deformity of our inward nature as to be in some degree frightened and terrified at the sight of it.

*William Law*

Repentance and positive acts on the one hand and divine Mercy on the other efface sins ...

*Frithjof Schuon*

Sparks of divine splendour dwell even in sin, else it would be unable to subsist, or move even the smallest member. And what are the sparks that dwell in sin? Repentance. At the hour of thy repentance and of thy turning away from sin, the sparks that were in it return to the upper regions.

*Rabbi Dov Baer*

## **Faith**

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen...

*Hebrews 11.1*

I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand.

*Anselm*

One must believe in order to understand and understand in order to believe. These are not successive, however, but simultaneous acts of the mind. In other words, there can be no knowledge of anything to which the will refuses its consent..

*AK Coomaraswamy*

The mysteries of faith are degraded if they are made into an object of affirmation and negation, when in reality they should be an object of contemplation.

*Simone Weil*

Faith rises and falls like the tides of an invisible sea ... it is more valuable, more mysterious, altogether more immense than anything you can learn in college.

*Flannery O'Connor*

...we must trust ourselves to reach eagerly for an answer which is really much too large for us, for which we are not fully ready, and of which we do not seem worthy, since it is a fruit which our own longing, striving and inner labour have not planted.

*Karl Barth*

One can spend a whole lifetime speculating on the suprasensorial and the transcendent, but all that matters is 'the leap into the void' which is the fixation of spirit and soul in an unthinkable dimension of the Real ... this 'leap into the void' we can call 'faith'...

*Frithjof Schuon*

Faith is an attitude of openness or trust.

*Alan Watts*

Faith is a voluntary anticipation.

*Clement*

Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark.

*Rabindranath Tagore*

The modern world tends to be sceptical about everything that demands man's higher faculties. But it is not at all sceptical about scepticism, which demands hardly anything.

*EF Schumacher*

Faith is what someone knows to be true, even if they don't believe it.

*Flannery O'Connor*

A man may have metaphysical certainty without possessing 'faith', that is, without this certainty residing in his soul as an ever-active presence. But, if metaphysical certainty suffices on the doctrinal level, it is far from being sufficient on the spiritual level where it must be completed and enlivened by faith.

*Frithjof Schuon*

And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.

*Luke 17.6*

### **Devotion, Prayer and Invocation**

Prayer — in the widest sense — triumphs over the four accidents of the our existence: the world, life, the body and the soul; or we might say: space, time, matter and desire. It is situated in existence like a shelter, like an islet. In it alone we are perfectly ourselves, because it puts us in the presence of God. It is like a miraculous diamond which nothing can tarnish and nothing resist. Man prays and prayer fashions man. The saint has himself become prayer, the meeting place of earth and Heaven ... He is everywhere where nature prays and he prays with and in her; in the peaks which touch the void and eternity, in a flower which scatters itself or in the abandoned song of a bird. He who loves in prayer has not lived in vain.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Devotion complete culminates in knowledge supreme.

*Ramana Maharshi*

The divine Name is a metaphysical isthmus ... as 'seen by God' it is determination, limitation, 'sacrifice'; as seen by man it is liberation, limitlessness, plenitude.

*Frithjof Schuon*

'Thank God.' No fewer words than those can be found, no happier cry heard, no greater thing be thought, no better balm be applied.

*Augustine*

The personal character of non-canonical prayer does not imply that it is free from rules, for human souls — as the Psalms admirably show — are always alike in their miseries and joys, and therefore in their



duties towards God; it is not enough for a man to formulate his petition, he must also express his gratitude, resignation, regret, resolution and praise.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Prayer, in its widest sense, is 'a direction of the heart' (Rilke).

*Lama Govinda*

Prayer in its perfection ... is contemplation and adoration.

*Metropolitan Anthony*

Let me add this one word more, that he who has learned to pray has learned the greatest secret of a holy and happy life.

*William Law*

He prayeth best who loveth best.

*Coleridge*

Prayer is the key to the morning and the bolt to the evening.

*Gandhi*

For me prayer is an aspiration of the heart, it is a simple glance directed to heaven, it is a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial as well as joy; finally, it is something great, supernatural, which expands my soul and unites me with Jesus.

*Thérèse of Lisieux*

Prayer in action is love. Love in action is service.

*Mother Teresa*

That the will of God should be fulfilled in us is the only aim of prayer.

*Metropolitan Anthony*

The quality of attention counts for much in the quality of prayer. Warmth of heart cannot make up for it.

*Simone Weil*

Religious individuals are not those who believe in a certain dogma or in the truth of certain teachings or those who follow certain moral rules, but those who are filled with devotion and act accordingly.

*Lama Govinda*

No one who has begun to pray, no matter how many sins he may commit, should ever abandon this practice. For it is by prayer that we can amend our lives...

*Teresa of Avila*

That the will of God should be fulfilled in us is the only aim of prayer,  
and it is also the criterion of right prayer. *Metropolitan Anthony*

Invoke Amida's name, have sincere faith in him.  
And soon the lead will change into gold.  
*Shinran*

Prayer is the oxygen of the soul. *Padre Pio*

Devotees by the mere repetition of His Name destroy the mighty army  
of ignorance. *Shivananda*

*Nembutsu* [invocation of the Holy Name] is superior and all other  
practices are inferior, because all virtues are wrapped up in the one  
sacred name. *Hōnen*

I am sure that whether a man eats fish or not, if only he calls upon the  
sacred name, he will be born into the Pure Land.  
*Hōnen*

## **Virtue**

A spiritual virtue is nothing other than a consciousness of a reality.  
*Frithjof Schuon*

What else is speculative virtue but the clarity of the intellect? What  
else is moral virtue but the stable ardour of appetite kindled by the  
clarity of the intellect? *Marsilio Ficino*

The love of God comprises all virtues. *Augustine*

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness,  
goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. *Galations 5.22-23*

Where there is virtue there is grace; the angels confer grace upon  
virtue as wine is poured into a cup of crystal or gold.  
*Frithjof Schuon*

We are to practice virtue, not possess it. *Meister Eckhart*

## **Humility, Poverty, Obedience**

...what is one man that he should make much of his winters, even when they bend him like a heavy snow? So many other men have lived and shall live that story, to be grass upon the hills.

*Black Elk*

A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.

*John 3.27*

Put on the mantle of nothingness,  
and drink of the cup of annihilation,  
then cover your breast with the belt of belittlement  
and put on your head the cloak of non-existence.

*Attar*

Let the athlete of the spirit ever integrate himself  
Standing in a place apart,  
alone, his thoughts and self restrained,  
Devoid of earthly hope, possessing nothing.

*Bhagavad Gita*

Humility is the land where God wants us to go and offer sacrifice.

*Abbot Alonius*

A man who is truly humble cannot despair, because in the humble man there is no longer any such thing as self-pity.

*Thomas Merton*

The word humility comes from the Latin word 'humus' which means fertile ground ... Humility is the situation of the earth.

*Metropolitan Anthony*

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

*Matthew 5.3*

He is a poor man who wants nothing, knows nothing, has nothing.

*Meister Eckhart*

Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues.

*Augustine*

Humility and charity are the two master chords that all other virtues depend on. The one is the lowest, the other is the highest.

*Padre Pio*

The twin pillars of the virtuous character are humility and charity.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Nothing is in vain or without profit to the humble soul; like the bee, it takes its honey even from bitter herbs; it stands always in a state of divine growth, and everything that falls upon it is like a dew of heaven to it.

*William Law*

### **Generosity**

Generosity is the complement of trust in God.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Generosity and compassion are inseparable, and both have their model in God, that is to say, in creation and in the Passion.

*Simone Weil*

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

*Hebrews 13.1*

The earth from which we live is truly a reflection in the material order of the divine generosity.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Gratitude — the capacity to appreciate even little things — forms part of nobleness of soul, as does generosity; both virtues help us, together with faith, to bear the burdens that destiny imposes upon us; God helps us to bear our burdens when we bear them with faith and magnanimity.

*Frithjof Schuon*

### **Equanimity**

Even our repentance must be peaceful.

*Francois of Sales*

Disquietude is always vanity, because it serves no good.

*John of the Cross*

Just as a deep lake is clear and still, even so on hearing the teachings, the wise become exceedingly peaceful.

*The Dhammapada*

I am facing up to my regrets so I can refuse to have them.

*Clive Faust*

Zen is not some kind of excitement, but concentration on our usual daily routine. If you become too busy and too excited your mind becomes rough and ragged. This is not good.

*Suzuki Roshi*

The flower petals fall even though we love them, the weeds grow though we hate them — that is just how it is.

*Dōgen*

Whatever you do, do it gently and unhurriedly, because virtue is not a pear to be eaten in one bite.

*St Seraphim of Sarov*

# THE KALI YUGA

## **The Modern Worldview**

...many false prophets have gone out into the world.

*Epistle of John 4.1*

The spiritual malaise of the [modern] West has no equal anywhere in the world.

*James Cowan*

Riches and piety will diminish daily, until the world will be completely corrupted. In those days it will be wealth that confers distinction, passion will be the sole reason for union between the sexes, lies will be the only method of success in business, and women will be the objects merely of sensual gratification. The earth will be valued only for its mineral treasures, dishonesty will be the universal means of subsistence, a simple ablution will be regarded as sufficient purification ... The observances of castes, laws, and institutions will no longer be in force in the Dark Age, and the ceremonies prescribed by the Vedas will be neglected. Women will obey only their whims and will be infatuated with pleasure ... men of all kinds will presumptuously regard themselves as equals of Brahmins ... The Vaishyas will abandon agriculture and commerce and will earn their living by servitude or by the exercise of mechanical professions ... The dominant caste will be that of the Shudras... *Vishnu Purana*

[Modernism is] anti-traditional, progressive, humanist, rationalist, materialist, experimental, individualist, egalitarian, free thinking and intensely sentimental.

*Lord Northbourne*

And all the Arts of Life they chang'd into the Arts of Death in Albion.

*Blake*

The modern spirit consists fundamentally in the direct *negation* of everything that constitutes the traditional spirit.

*René Guénon*

The camouflage or even occultation of the sacred and of spiritual meanings in general characterizes all crepuscular eras.

*Mircea Eliade*

Readers are advised to remember that the devil is a liar.

*CS Lewis*

Rejection of transcendence implies that all human realities (the state, sexuality, work, the family) lose their symbolic or ideal significance and become 'dumb'.

*Augusto Del Noce*

There is a prophecy in Amos that there will a time when there will be a famine in the land, 'not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord'. That time has now come to pass. It is the present age.

*RD Laing*

Scepticism is the sadism of embittered souls.

*EM Cioran*

What do I think of Western Civilization? I think it would be a good idea.

*Gandhi*

That which is lacking in the present world is a profound knowledge of the nature of things; the fundamental truths are always there, but they do not impose themselves because they cannot impose themselves on those unwilling to listen.

*Frithjof Schuon*

There are those who claim that the idea of God is to be explained only by social opportunism, without taking account of the infinite disproportion and the contradiction involved in such a hypothesis: if men such as Plato, Aristotle or Thomas Aquinas — not to mention the Prophets, or Christ, or the sages of Asia — were not capable of remarking that God is merely a social prejudice or some other dupery of the kind, and if hundreds and thousands of years have been based intellectually on their incapacity, then there is no human intelligence, and still less any possibility of progress, for a being absurd by nature does not contain the possibility of ceasing to be absurd.

*Frithjof Schuon*

... the darkest enigmas of the modern world, enigmas which that world itself denies because it is incapable of perceiving them although it carries them within itself, and because this denial is an indispensable condition for the maintenance of the special mentality whereby it exists.

*René Guénon*

In a world of agnosticism, the idea that spiritual values might correctly hold precedence over the demands of material well-being is an unthinkable proposition. Modern man is hell-bent on the destruction of all numinities, whether they be metaphysical, mythical or totemic, in order that he may pave the way for his own material apotheosis.

*James Cowan*

I have what passes for an education in this day and time, but I am not deceived by it.

*Flannery O'Connor*

The true clash is between two conceptions of life. One could be described in terms of the *religious dimension* or of the presence of the divine in us ... According to the second conception — the instrumentalist one, found in positivism, pragmatism, Marxism, and evolutionism in general, in its philosophic extension — there is nothing in spirit and in reason that possesses an independent metaphysical origin.

*Augusto Del Noce*

... every civilization is a 'two-edged sword'; it is a total good only by virtue of those invisible elements that determine it positively. In certain respects every human society is bad; if its transcendent character is wholly eliminated — which amounts to dehumanizing it since an element of transcendence is essential to man though always dependent on his free consent — then the whole justification of society's existence is removed at the same time, and there remains only an ant-heap ... It is one of the most pernicious of errors to believe, firstly, that the human collectivity as such represents an unconditional or absolute value, and secondly that the well-being of this collectivity represents any such value or any such end in itself. Religious civilizations, regarded as social phenomena and independently of their intrinsic value — though there is no sharp dividing-line between the two — are, despite their inevitable imperfections, like sea-walls built to stem the rising tide of worldliness, of error, of subversion, of the fall and its perpetual renewal ... The rejection of the traditional religious frameworks amounts to an assertion that the founders of religion did not know what they were doing, as well as that abuses are not inherent in human nature, and that they are therefore avoidable even in societies counting millions of men, and that they are avoidable through purely human means; no more flagrant contradiction than this could well be imagined.

*Frithjof Schuon*

When all have become the breakers of idols, the protector of graven images is the true revolutionary.

*TS Eliot*



Nothing is more misleading than to pretend, as is so glibly done in our day, that the religions have compromised themselves hopelessly in the course of the centuries or that they are now played out. If one knows what a religion really consists of, one also knows that the religions cannot compromise themselves and they are independent of human doings ... as for an exhausting of the religions, one might speak of this if all men had by now become saints or Buddhas.

*Frithjof Schuon*

For a few very bright gentlemen of our century ... to speak as if they have discovered spiritual truths of which the entire humanity of the world has hitherto been in ignorance — that untold millions of Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, Confucianists, Shintoists, Jews, Christians, Muslims, plus countless other ethnic groups have all shared in common the same errors ... and for these personages to hold forth as though there had never been Solomon, Shankara, Plato, Ibn Arabi, Eckhart, Nagarjuna, Chuang-Tze and the rest — for such a phenomenon to be possible surely the politest explanation one can give is lack of imagination.

*Whitall Perry*

If Reason seems to have any Power against Religion, it is only where Religion is become a dead Form, has lost its true State, and is dwindled into Opinion.

*William Law*

One of the peculiar sins of the twentieth century which we've developed to a very high level is the sin of credulity. It has been said that when human beings stop believing in God they believe in nothing. The truth is much worse: they believe in anything.

*Malcolm Muggeridge*

[Modern philosophy] believes it can attain to an absolute contact with Reality by means of analyses, syntheses, arrangements, filtrations and polishings — thought that is mundane because of this very ignorance and because it is a 'vicious circle', which not only provides no escape from illusion, but even reinforces it through the lure of a progressive knowledge that is in fact nonexistent.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Stupid — well, there are so many kinds of stupidity, and cleverness is one of the worst.

*Thomas Mann*

A taste for formula goes along with a weakness for definitions, for whatever has the least relation to reality.

*EM Cioran*

For the darkening of the world, the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the transformation of man into a mass, the hatred and suspicion of everything free and creative, have assumed such proportions throughout the earth that such childish categories as pessimism and optimism have long since become absurd.

*Martin Heidegger*

The most dangerous criminal today is the entirely lawless modern philosopher.

*GK Chesterton*

Civilization is a disease which is almost invariably fatal.

*Dean William Inge*

[Today] people think themselves incomparably more 'realistic' than anyone has ever been, even in the recent past. What we call 'our own times' or 'the twentieth century' ... seems to hover, like an uprooted island or a fabulously clear-headed monad, above millennia of childishness and fecklessness. The contemporary world is like a man ashamed of having had parents and wanting to create himself, and to recreate space, time and all physical laws as well, and seeking to extract from nothing a world objectively perfect and subjectively comfortable, and all this by means of a creative activity independent of God. The unfortunate thing is that attempts to create a new order of Being can only end in self-destruction. *Frithjof Schuon*

I would like to analyse the attitude of historicists of all kinds ... all those who believe that one can understand culture only by reducing it to something lower (sexuality, economics, history, etc.) — and to show that theirs is a neurotic attitude. The neuropath demystifies life, culture, the spiritual life ... he can no longer grasp the deep meaning of things, and consequently, he can no longer believe in their reality.

*Mircea Eliade*

That which the vast majority of men now living celebrate as 'progress' is ... a profound decadence, continuously accelerated, which is dragging humanity towards the pit where pure quantity reigns.

*René Guénon*

This is perhaps the greatest danger resulting from materialism which may be compared to a general encrusting over the human scene

whereby the free circulation of the spiritual influence, of which tradition is the vehicle, is hindered more and more, until that crust, which in man is so aptly described as a 'hardening of the heart', begins to crack by its own rigidity, whereupon the obscure forces of dissolution already mentioned begin to pour in, reducing everything to a state of disintegration. This, broadly speaking, is the story of the modern world.

*Marco Pallis*

Freedom, identified with a vague notion of nature, unfolds in a vacuum, and toward what ends? Rest, happiness, friendship. These are the first fruits of Being, but they are utopian and ineffectual because they are not ordered to any hierarchy of values. In truth, Being is not a hidden treasure that will free itself ... by exploding the crust of a repressive society. Being is an ascending totality within which human relationships are articulated: among humans, with nature, and with the supernatural. If Being is not affirmed as an order of values, it is pushed into the realm of dreams; being formless, it is confused with the impossible delights of a lost world or an imaginary world.

*Augusto Del Noce*

## **Religious Decadence**

The history of religious forms can play an extremely important role in the crisis we are living through. The crises of modern man are to a large extent religious ones, insofar as they are an awakening of his awareness to an absence of meaning. When one feels that one has lost the key to the meaning of existence ... that is undoubtedly a religious problem, since religion is precisely a reply to fundamental questions...

*Mircea Eliade*

Religions, like the ideologies that have inherited their vices, are reduced to crusades against humour.

*EM Cioran*

Of all the bad men, religious bad men are the worst.

*CS Lewis*

There are some forms of religion which must make God weep.

*Karen Armstrong*

...the worst of these false idealisms are, in certain respects, those which annex and adulterate religion.

*Frithjof Schuon*

## **The Materialist Shell, Scientism and the 'Environmental Crisis'**

The equating of the supernatural with the irrational is characteristic ... it amounts to claiming that the unknown or the incomprehensible is the same as the absurd. The rationalism of a frog living at the bottom of a well is to deny the existence of mountains; this is logic of a kind, perhaps, but it has nothing to do with reality.

*Frithjof Schuon*

When profane science leaves the domain of the mere observation of facts, and tries to get something out of an indefinite accumulation of separate details which is its sole immediate result, it retains as one of its chief characteristics the more or less laborious construction of purely hypothetical theories. These theories can necessarily never be more than hypothetical, for facts in themselves are always susceptible of diverse explanations and so never have been and never will be able to guarantee the truth of any theory ... and besides, such theories are not really inspired by the results of experience to nearly the same extent as by certain preconceived ideas and by some of the predominant tendencies of modern thought.

*René Guénon*

The Earth is bleeding from wounds inflicted upon it by a humanity no longer in harmony with Heaven and therefore in constant strife with the terrestrial environment.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

Whether we and our politicians know it or not, Nature is party to all our deals and decisions, and she has more votes, a longer memory, and a sterner sense of justice than we do.

*Wendell Berry*

If it should turn out that we have mishandled our own lives as several civilizations before us have done, it seems a pity that we should involve the violet and the tree frog in our departure.

*Loren Eiseley*

This world no longer possesses a sheltering womb where one could be perfectly safe ... in Wittenberg, Europe, everywhere, a new breed of man has been concocted, the womb of Holy Mother Church is breached, the umbilical cord that bound him to her is cut, and that oriental/Roman mother was the ultimate, spiritualized form of Mother Earth. Mother Isis, the World Mother. Now man will tear to pieces the body of his mother, Nature, and will quarry her for new and different

forms of power and resources: her body, gagged and bound, no longer sacrosanct, must yield up its energy in ever-changing forms to satisfy those human demands — however destructive, however excessive they may be — that man's capriciousness or mutual distrust might spawn.

*Heinrich Zimmer*

The Last Days were announced to St John by a voice like the sound of many waters. But the voice that comes in our day summoning us to play out the dark myth of the reckoning is our meager own, making casual conversation about the varieties of annihilation ... the thermonuclear Armageddon, the death of the seas, the vanishing atmosphere, the massacre of the innocents, the universal famine to come ... Such horrors should be the stuff of nightmare ... They aren't. They are the news of the day ... we have not stumbled into the arms of Gog and Magog; we have *progressed* there.

*Theodore Roszak*

... they wanted to try the experiment of depersonalising [Nature]. With that in view, the first step they surely needed to take was to stop using the feminine pronoun, or indeed any personal pronoun for 'nature' altogether. But this was not done ... The literature of early modern science is a mine of highly-coloured passages that describe Nature, by no means as a neutral object, but as a seductive and troublesome female, to be unrelentingly pursued, sought out, fought against, chased into her innermost sanctuaries, prevented from escaping, persistently courted, wooed, harried, vexed, tormented, unveiled, unrobed, and 'put to the question' (i.e., interrogated under torture), forced to confess 'all that lay in her innermost recesses,' her 'beautiful bosom' must be laid bare, she must be held down and finally 'penetrated,' 'pierced,' and 'vanquished' ...

*Mary Midgley*

Just who has imposed on the suffering human race poison gas, barbed wire, high explosives, experiments in eugenics, the formula for zyklon B, heavy artillery, pseudo-scientific justifications for mass murder, cluster bombs, attack submarines, napalm, intercontinental missiles, military space platforms and nuclear weapons? If memory serves it was not the Vatican.

*David Berlinski*

This dethronement of Nature, or this scission between man and the earth — a reflection of the scission between man and God — has borne such bitter fruits that it should not be difficult to admit that, in these days, the timeless message of Nature constitutes a spiritual viaticum

of the first importance ... It is not a matter of projecting a supersaturated and disillusioned individualism into a desecrated Nature — this would be a worldliness like any other — but, on the contrary, of rediscovering in Nature, on the basis of the traditional outlook, the divine substance which is inherent in it; in other words, to ‘see God everywhere’...  
*Frithjof Schuon*

The spiritual revolt of man against heaven has polluted the earth, and no attempt to rectify the situation on earth can ever be fully successful without the revolt against heaven coming to an end.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope.

*Wendell Berry*

The new ecology may help us if we keep it strictly in the realm of cautious scientific investigation. As a philosophy or a religion though, it is a sickness unto death.

*Brian Coman*

...modern science displays a certain number of fissures that are not only due to the fact that the world of phenomena is indefinite and that therefore no science could come to the end of it; those fissures derive especially from a systematic ignorance of all the noncorporeal dimensions of reality. They manifest themselves right down to the foundations of modern science, and in domains as seemingly ‘exact’ as that of physics; they become gaping cracks when one turns to the disciplines connected with the study of the forms of life, not to mention psychology, where an empiricism that is relatively valid in the physical order encroaches strangely upon a foreign field. These fissures, which do not affect only the theoretical realm, are far from harmless; they represent, on the contrary, in their technical consequences, so many seeds of catastrophe.

*Titus Burckhardt*

Evolutionism is not a science; it is a science fiction, even a kind of hoax ... that has imprisoned modern man in what looks like an irreconcilable conflict between ‘science’ and ‘religion’. It has destroyed all faiths that pull mankind upward and has substituted a faith that pulls mankind down ... it is the most extreme product of the materialistic utilitarianism of the nineteenth century.

*EF Schumacher*

The embrace of essential beastliness, made scientific and respectable by a reading of Darwin that may or may not have done justice to his intentions...

*Marilynne Robinson*

The thesis that we are all nothing more than vehicles for a number of 'selfish genes' has accordingly entered deeply into the simian gabble of academic life, where together with materialism and moral relativism it now seems as self-evident as affirmative action.

*David Berlinski*

There is scarcely a more desperately vain or naive illusion — far more naive than Aristotelian astronomy! — than to believe that modern science, in its vertiginous course towards the 'infinitely small' and the 'infinitely great', will end up by rejoining religious and metaphysical truths and doctrines.

*Frithjof Schuon*

O if we but knew what we do  
When we delve or hew —  
Hack and rack the growing green!  
Since country is so tender  
To touch, her being so slender,  
That, like this sleek and seeing ball  
But a prick will make no eye at all,  
Where we, even where we mean  
To mend her we end her,  
When we hew or delve:  
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.

*Gerard Manley Hopkins*

### **The Humanist Betrayal**

The loss of God is death, is desolation, hunger, separation. All the tragedy of man is in one word, 'godlessness'.

*Metropolitan Anthony*

Men have never been so oppressed as in societies which set man at the pinnacle of values and exalt his greatness or make him the measure of all things.

*Jacques Ellul*

Humanistic culture, insofar as it functions as an ideology and therefore as a religion, consists essentially in being unaware of three things:

firstly, of what God is, because it does not grant primacy to Him; secondly, of what man is, because it puts him in the place of God; thirdly, of what the meaning of life is, because this culture limits itself to playing with evanescent things and to plunging into them with criminal unconsciousness. In a word, there is nothing more inhuman than humanism, by the fact that it, so to speak, decapitates man.

*Frithjof Schuon*

...we are given a number of definitions of man which make him out to be nothing but an exceptionally intelligent animal with an unduly large brain, or a tool-making animal, or a political animal, or an unfinished animal, or simply a naked ape. No doubt, people who use these terms cheerfully include themselves in their definition and will have some reason for doing so. For others they merely sound inane, like defining a dog as a barking cabbage. Nothing is more conducive to the brutalisation of the modern world than the launching, in the name of science, of wrongful and degraded definitions, such as the 'naked ape'. What could one expect of such a creature ... When people speak of animals as 'animal machines' they soon start treating them accordingly, and when they think of people as naked apes, all doors are opened to the free entry of bestiality. *EF Schumacher*

Of all the ways of defining man, the worst is that which makes him out to be a rational animal.

*Anatole France*

The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity.

*WB Yeats*

Humanitarians forget to put to themselves the question of what man is, and what becomes of him when he is cut off from the Transcendent, which is his *raison d'être*. If Rousseau and other 'idealists' had foreseen all the outcomes of their inane philanthropy they would have become Carthusian monks.

*Frithjof Schuon*

There are few today who properly value, either in theory or practice, the innate image of man or his inward Way — and neither of these elements can be reduced to psychological or sociological elements.

*Karlfried Durckheim*

Our own self-realization is the greatest service we can render to the world.

*Ramana Maharshi*



The death of the spirit is the price of progress. Nietzsche revealed this mystery of the Western apocalypse when he announced that God was dead and that He had been murdered. This Gnostic murder is constantly committed by the men who sacrificed God to civilization. The more fervently all human energies are thrown into the great enterprise of salvation through world-immanent action, the farther the human beings who engage in this enterprise move away from the life of the spirit. And since the life of the spirit is the source of order in man and society, the very success of a Gnostic civilization is the cause of its decline. A civilization can, indeed, advance and decline at the same time — but not forever. There is a limit toward which this ambiguous process moves; the limit is reached when an activist sect which represents the Gnostic truth organizes the civilization into an empire under its rule.

*Eric Voegelin*

In the world it is called Tolerance, but in hell it is called Despair ... the sin that believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and remains alive because there is nothing for which it will die.

*Dorothy Sayers*

The true nihilism of today is reductionism ... Contemporary nihilism no longer brandishes the word nothingness: today nihilism is camouflaged as nothing-but-ness. Human phenomena are turned into mere epiphenomena.

*Victor Frankl*

My luck is getting worse: last night, for instance, I was mugged by a Quaker.

*Woody Allen*

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.

*Plato (?)*

Pouring poison in a golden cup does not make it nectar.

*Hindu proverb*

The danger is not that the soul should doubt whether there is any bread, but that, by a lie, it should persuade itself that it is not hungry.

*Simone Weil*

...a profane system of thought is always the portrait of an individual, even when it is mingled with some glimmerings of knowledge, as must always be the case since the reason is not a closed vessel.

*Frithjof Schuon*

In Kafka we have the modern mind, seemingly self-sufficient, intelligent, sceptical, ironical, splendidly trained for the great game of pretending that the world it comprehends in sterilized sobriety is the only and ultimate real one — yet a mind living in sin with the soul of Abraham. Thus he knows two things at once, and both with equal assurance: that there is no God, and that there must be God.

*Erich Heller*

The 'common understanding' has a regimen of quarantine, Customs and border security — 'to keep us all safe'. *Clive Faust*

If you board the wrong train, it is no use running along the corridor in the other direction.

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

### **Relativism and Psychologism**

While nineteenth century materialism closed the mind of man to what is above him, twentieth century psychology opened it to what is below him.

*René Guénon*

The subconscious is a sink of psychic residues, a sort of garbage pit or compost heap, fitted only for the roots of 'plants', and far removed from the light that erects them.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

What we term 'psychological imposture' is the tendency to reduce everything to psychological factors and to call into question not only what is intellectual or spiritual — the first being related to truth and the second to life in and by truth — but also the human spirit as such, and thereby its capacity of adequation and, still more evidently, its inward illimitation and transcendence. The same belittling and truly subversive tendency rages in all the domains that 'scientism' claims to embrace, but its most acute expression is beyond all doubt to be found in psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is at once an end-point and a cause, as is always the case with profane ideologies, like materialism and evolutionism, of which it is really a logical and fatal ramification and a natural ally.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Relativism reduces every element of absoluteness to a relativity while making a completely illogical exception in favor of this reduction itself. Fundamentally it consists in propounding the claim that there is no truth as if this were truth or in declaring it to be absolutely true that

there is nothing but the relatively true; one might as well say that there is no language or write that there is no writing.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Like all dreamers, I mistook disenchantment for truth.

*Jean-Paul Sartre*

One of the most insidious and destructive illusions is the belief that depth-psychology ... has the slightest connection with the spiritual life, which these teachings [of modern science] persistently falsify by confusing inferior elements with superior. We cannot be too wary of all these attempts to reduce the values vehicled by tradition to the level of phenomena supposed to be scientifically controllable. The spirit escapes the hold of profane science in an absolute fashion.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Psycho-analysis doubly deserves to be called an imposture, firstly because it pretends to have discovered facts which have always been known ... and secondly and chiefly because it attributes to itself functions that in reality are spiritual, and thus in practice puts itself in the place of religion.

*Frithjof Schuon*

The mentality of today seeks to reduce everything to categories connected with time; a work of art, a thought, a truth have no value in themselves and independently of any historical classification ... everything is considered as an expression of a 'period' and not as having possibly a timeless and intrinsic value; and this is entirely in conformity with modern relativism, and with a psychologism ... that destroys essential values. In order to 'situate' the doctrine of a scholastic, or even a Prophet, a 'psycho-analysis' is prepared — it is needless to emphasize the monstrous impudence implicit in such an attitude — and with wholly mechanical and perfectly unreal logic the 'influences' to which this doctrine has been subject are laid bare. There is no hesitation in attributing to saints ... all kinds of artificial and even fraudulent conduct; but it is obviously forgotten ... to apply the same principle to oneself, and to explain one's own supposedly 'objective' position by psychological considerations: sages are treated as being sick men and one takes oneself for a god ... it is a case of expressing a maximum amount of absurdity with a maximum amount of subtlety.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Nothing is more repellent than a pseudo-scientific definition of the contemplative experience ... he who attempts such a definition is tempted to proceed psychologically, and there is really no adequate 'psychology' of contemplation. *Thomas Merton*

It is these intuitive, non-linear and non-sequential modes of consciousness with which we are concerned in meditative and mantric practices. They are neither measurable nor susceptible to biofeedback. But it is typical of the shallow-mindedness of the general public that it promptly falls into the trap of pseudo-scientific 'spirituality', which believes in measuring and quantifying mental states and experiences, as if the 'amount' of energy involved had anything to do with the value or the spiritual significance of the resultant state of mind.

*Lama Govinda*

Our experience of the material world is obtained only while we are awake. Our experience of the psychic world may be obtained while we are awake or dreaming, and it may be produced by means of concentration or austerities or drugs. Beyond the material and the psychic worlds the mind enters the world of spiritual experience. Such experience differs altogether from psychic experience. It can be recognized by its lasting effect on the experiencer; psychic visions cannot transform a man's nature, no matter how startling and vivid they may be ... A Psychic experience may cause you no particular emotion, or it may depress or terrify you; a spiritual experience will always be accompanied by great joy. *Christopher Isherwood*

Psychoanalysis justifies its importance by asserting that it forces you to look at and accept reality. But what sort of reality? A reality conditioned by the materialistic and scientific ideology of psychoanalysis, that is, a historical product: we see a thing in which certain scholars and thinkers of the nineteenth century believed.

*Mircea Eliade*

Sometimes in an age of relativism it is important to rediscover the value of absolutes. While these may not appeal to an age wedded to the chimera of change, nonetheless absolutes have their place. They are the bedrock, the foundation of all cultural aspiration. In themselves they contain no power other than as an expression of their luminous point of origin. They are the guardians; they hover like Fra Angelico's angels above the tumult, intimating a beauty that is changeless. Even if their presence goes unfelt, it does not mean that they do not exist.

It simply means that we who have chosen to co-habit with them within the realms of time and eternity are not listening to what they have to say.  
*James Cowan*

## **Machines and the Artificial World**

Men have built around themselves a world made of artificial phenomena, within whose distorting framework all their errors and all their misdeeds take on the appearance of self-evident truths or glories.  
*Frithjof Schuon*

Nothing is less instructive than a machine. *Simone Weil*

[The technological society] accepts all of Marxism's negations against contemplative thought, religion and metaphysics; ... [it] accepts, therefore, the Marxist reduction of ideas to instruments of production; ... [but] on the other hand, [it] rejects the revolutionary-messianic aspects of Marxism, and thus what is still religious in the revolutionary idea. In this regard, it truly represents the bourgeois spirit in its pure state, the bourgeois spirit triumphant over its two traditional adversaries, transcendent religion and revolutionary thought.

*Augusto Del Noce*

Servant of the machine, man must become a machine himself, and thenceforth his work has nothing really human in it. There is a price to be paid for fabricating around us a society which is as artificial and as mechanised as our own, and this is that we can exist in it only on condition that we adapt ourselves to it. This is our punishment.

*Phillip Sherrard*

All my life I had hated machines. I could remember how bitterly at school I had resented reading the news that someone had flown across the Atlantic or travelled through the Sahara in a car. I had realized even then that the speed and ease of mechanical transport must rob the world of all diversity.

*Wilfred Thesiger*

It is not, truly speaking, the labour that is divided, but the men: divided into mere segments of men ... this degradation of the operative into a machine...

*Ruskin*

The best way to keep a prisoner from escaping is to make sure he never knows he's in prison.

*Dostoevsky*

Nothing should be made by man's labour which is not worth making; or which must be made by labour degrading to the makers ... Simple as that proposition is, it is a direct challenge to the death to the present system of labour in civilised countries. *William Morris*

Was our society, which had always been so assured of its superiority and rectitude, so confident of its unexamined premises, assembled round anything more permanent than a congeries of banks, insurance companies and industries, and had it any beliefs more essential than a belief in compound interest and the maintenance of dividends? *TS Eliot*

Money, mechanization, algebra. The three monsters of contemporary civilisation. *Simone Weil*

In the name of 'science' and of 'human genius' man consents to become the creation of what he has created and to forget what he is, to the point of expecting the answer to this from machines ... machines are in themselves inhuman and anti-spiritual. *Frithjof Schuon*

Since the ocean of facts is infinite, a prodigious expansion of science in the sociological sense becomes possible, giving employment to scientific technicians and leading to the fantastic accumulation of irrelevant knowledge through huge 'research projects' whose most interesting feature is the quantifiable expense that has gone into their production. *Eric Voegelin*

I am here to defend the sphere when the box, the rectangle, and the square appear to be the operative dimensions of our time. It seems that rationalism and its child, scientific materialism, have their own unique geometric shape. Together they move across the world like tinkers across a landscape. They ply their wares at every opportunity, selling this prophylactic or that palliative to a gullible populace. We are all on the lookout for a quick fix, a way of making life easier, more secure, and topping up those coffers dedicated to containing personal wealth and growth. Easefulness is the condiment of our time. We spread it over everything. What the sphere contains in a natural way must be manipulated, intensified, cloned, genetically modified and finally marketed so that it produces the perfect annual report or share price. *James Cowan*

## The Degeneration of Art

...the work of art has come to be for us a sort of autobiography of the artist.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

Our 'aesthetic' approach [to art] can be compared only to that of a traveller who, when he sees a signpost, proceeds to admire its elegance, asks who made it, and finally cuts it down and takes it home to be used as a mantelpiece ornament.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

When standing before a cathedral, a person feels he is placed at the center of the world; standing before a church of the Renaissance, Baroque or Rococo periods, he merely feels himself to be in Europe.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Our artists are 'emancipated' from any obligation to eternal verities, and have abandoned to tradesmen the satisfaction of present needs. Our abstract art is not an iconography of transcendental forms but the realistic picture of a disintegrated mentality.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

Self-projection is, more often than not, the move of the minor craftsman, of the tactics of the hour whose inherent weakness is, precisely, that of originality.

*George Steiner*

Genius is nothing unless determined by a spiritual perspective.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Artistic temperament is a disease that afflicts amateurs.

*GK Chesterton*

Fashion is something barbarous, for it produces innovation without reason and imitation without benefit.

*George Santayana*

Poets of the imagination write of the soul, of intellectual beauty, of the living spirit of the world. What does such work communicate to readers who do not believe in the soul, in the spirit of life, or in anything that can be called 'the beautiful'? ... such terms of quality become ... 'meaningless', because there is nothing for which they stand.

*Kathleen Raine*

[Naturalistic art] is clearly luciferian in its wish to imitate the creations of God, not to mention its affirmation of the psychic element to the detriment of the spiritual, and above all, of the bare fact to the detriment of the symbol.  
*Frithjof Schuon*

Art, like morality, consists in drawing the line somewhere.  
*GK Chesterton*

### **Social and Political Debasements**

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible.  
*George Orwell*

Words that are saturated with lies or atrocity do not easily resume life.  
*George Steiner*

Never have so many been manipulated by so few.  
*Aldous Huxley*

Politicians and diapers must be changed often, and for the same reason.  
*Mark Twain*

One cannot imagine St Francis of Assisi talking about rights.  
*Simone Weil*

Patriotism in its simplest, clearest and most indubitable signification is nothing else but a means of obtaining for the rulers their ambitions and covetous desires, and for the ruled the abdication of human dignity, reason, conscience, and a slavish enthrallment to those in power.  
*Tolstoy*

A patriot must always be ready to defend his country against its government.  
*Edward Abbey*

Every decent man is ashamed of the government he lives under.  
*HL Mencken*

State is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it lies; and this lie slips from its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people.'  
*Nietzsche*

Teach a parrot the terms 'supply and demand' and you've got an economist.  
*Thomas Carlyle*



The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them.

*George Orwell*

Conservatism is not estimable in itself, nor is Change, or Radicalism. To conserve the existing good, to supplant the existing bad by good, is to act on a true political principle, which is neither conservative nor Radical.

*Thomas Hardy*

The planet does not need more successful people. The planet desperately needs more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of all kinds.

*The Dalai Lama*

I don't want to be ruled by my equals; I want to be ruled by my betters.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

The cry of equality pulls everyone down.

*Iris Murdoch*

Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few.

*Bernard Shaw*

Futility; lack of a living faith; the drift into loose morality, greedy consumption, financial irresponsibility, and uncontrolled bad temper; a self-opinionated and obstinate individualism; violence, sterility, and lack of reverence for life and property ... the exploitation of sex, the debasing of language ... the commercialising of religion ... mass hysteria and 'spell-binding', venality and string-pulling in public affairs ... the fomenting of discord ... the exploitation of the lowest and stupidest mass-emotions...

*Dorothy Sayers*

Seven blunders of the world which lead to violence: wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice, politics without principle.

*Gandhi*

The trouble with free elections is you never know who is going to win.

*Leonid Brezhnev*

I do not regard a broker as a member of the human race.

*Balzac*

The past was erased, the erasure forgotten, the lie became the truth.

*George Orwell*

Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.

*Aldous Huxley*

If politicians and scientists were lazier how much happier we should all be.

*Evelyn Waugh*

I believe in equality for all except reporters and photographers.

*Gandhi*

Advertising is the rattle of a stick in a swill-bucket.

*George Orwell*

Every revolution evaporates and leaves behind only the slime of a new bureaucracy.

*Kafka*

In politics what begins in fear usually ends in folly.

*Coleridge*

One leader, one people, signifies one master and millions of slaves.

*Albert Camus*

The Great Leader is a hollow man, the Law of the Market cannot prove itself, and the Nation State mocks its own values.

*Robert Aitken*

Masses are always breeding grounds of psychic epidemics.

*Carl Jung*

I've searched all the parks in all the cities and have found no statues of committees.

*GK Chesterton*

The new pornographers subvert this last, vital privacy; they do our imagining for us. They take away the words that were of the night and shout them over the roof-tops, making them hollow.

*George Steiner*

The very opposite of freedom is cliché, and nothing is less free, more inert with convention and hollow brutality, than a row of four-letter words.

*George Steiner*

The first consequence of the rejection of permanent values has been the replacement of the dyad 'true-false' with the dyad 'progress-reaction'.

*Augusto Del Noce*

Contemporaneity, in the sense of being 'up with the times', is of no value. Wakefulness to experience — as well as to instruction and example — is another matter. But what we call the modern world is not necessarily, and not often, the real world, and there is no virtue in being up-to-date in it.

*Wendell Berry*

There is nothing more banal than fashion. *Frithjof Schuon*

It is one of the clearest symptoms of the decadence of the academy that ideals that once informed the humanities have been corrupted, wilfully misunderstood, or simply ignored by the new sophistries that have triumphed on our campuses. We know something is gravely amiss when teachers of the humanities confess — or, as is more often the case, when they boast — that they are no longer able to distinguish between truth and falsity. We know something is wrong when scholars assure us ... that there is no essential difference between the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and partisan proselytizing, or when academic literary critics abandon the effort to identify and elucidate works of lasting achievement as a reactionary enterprise unworthy of their calling. And indeed, the most troubling development of all is that such contentions are no longer the exceptional pronouncements of a radical elite, but have increasingly become the conventional wisdom in humanities departments of our major colleges and universities.

*Roger Kimball*

It is impossible to imagine Goethe or Beethoven being good at billiards or golf.

*HL Mencken*

Anger and self-righteousness combined with cynicism about the world as he or she sees it are the marks of the ideologue.

*Marilynne Robinson*

The two great aims of industrialism — replacement of people by technology and concentration of wealth into the hands of a small plutocracy — seem close to fulfilment.

*Wendell Berry*

We're all good socialists here, as long as the dividends keep coming.

*George Orwell*

I am sure that I never read any memorable news in a newspaper. If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house burned or one vessel wrecked ... we need never read of another. One is enough. If you are acquainted with the principle, what do you

care for myriad instances and applications? To a philosopher, all news,  
as it is called, is gossip... *HD Thoreau*

What is repugnant to every human being is to be reckoned always as  
a member of a class and not as an individual person. *Dorothy Sayers*

Political correctness is the natural continuum from the party line.  
*Doris Lessing*

For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple,  
and wrong. *HL Mencken*

The further a society drifts from truth the more it will hate those who  
speak it. *George Orwell*

Those are my principles ... and if you don't like them, I've got others.  
*Groucho Marx*

By definition, a government has no conscience. Sometimes it has a  
policy, but no more. *Albert Camus*

When a nation is full of strife, then patriots flourish.  
*Lao-Tze*

If voting made any difference they wouldn't let us do it.  
*Mark Twain*

Every election is a sort of advance auction sale of stolen goods.  
*HL Mencken*

Advertising is the very essence of democracy.  
*Chekhov*

Progress just means bad things happen faster.  
*Terry Pratchett*

To give up much of what we have acquired in the name of progress is  
the greatest challenge facing us today. *James Cowan*

The social order, though necessary, is essentially evil, whatever it may  
be. *Simone Weil*

Dictatorship naturally arises out of democracy, and the most aggravated forms of tyranny and slavery out of the most extreme liberty.  
*Plato*

If there be righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character. If there be beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home. If there be harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation. If there be order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.  
*Confucius*

# PERENNIALISTS

## Perennialist Critics of Modernity

...there are those whose vocation it is to provide the keys with which the treasury of wisdom of other traditions can be unlocked, revealing to those who are destined to receive this wisdom the essential unity and universality and at the same the formal diversity of tradition and revelation.  
*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

Those who are qualified to speak in the name of a traditional doctrine are not required to enter into discussion with the 'profane' or to engage in polemics: it is for them simply to expound the doctrine such as it is, for the sake of those capable of understanding it, and at the same time to denounce error wherever it arises ... their function is not to engage in strife and in doing so to compromise the doctrine.

*René Guénon*

I am not a reformer or propagandist. I don't think for myself ... I am not putting forward any new or private doctrines or interpretations ... For me there are certain axioms, principles or values beyond question; my interest is not in thinking up new ones, but in the application of these that are.

*AK Coomaraswamy*

Even if our writings had on average no other result than the restitution, for some, of the saving barque that is prayer, we would owe it to God to consider ourselves profoundly satisfied.

*Frithjof Schuon*

## On Guénon

The French metaphysician was the first person in the modern era to give a fully authoritative exposition of the axiomatic principles which have informed the *sophia perennis* throughout the ages. On the basis of those principles he also elaborated a profound critique of the 'pseudo-mythologies' on which the prevailing modern outlook depends, and thereby penetrated the darkest enigmas which are indispensable to its maintenance. The power and integrity of his *oeuvre* derives from his steadfast commitment to 'the unanimous tradition', the esoteric wisdom which lies behind the manifold forms

of the world's integral mythological and religious traditions, and from his refusal to compromise to the smallest degree with the shibboleths of modernity. His work truly shines like a beacon in a world disfigured by all manner of modern superstitions, not least of which is the widespread belief in a totalitarian and materialistic science. It was Guénon's providential role to remind a forgetful world of those unchanging metaphysical and cosmological principles in the light of which all knowledge can properly be judged, and to restore to a profane 'civilisation' a lost sense of the Absolute and of the inviolably Sacred.

*Harry Oldmeadow*

### **On Coomaraswamy**

Ananda Coomaraswamy is in many ways to me a model: the model of one who has thoroughly and completely united in himself the spiritual tradition and attitudes of the Orient and the Christian West.

*Thomas Merton*

Coomaraswamy's essays, learned, elegant, and wise, are one of the great treasures of twentieth-century thought.

*Philip Zaleski*

...that noble scholar on whose shoulders we are still standing.

*Heinrich Zimmer*

### **On Schuon**

If Guénon was the master expositor of metaphysical doctrines and Coomaraswamy the peerless scholar and connoisseur of Oriental art who began his exposition of metaphysics through recourse to the language of artistic forms, Schuon seems like the cosmic intellect itself impregnated by the energy of divine grace surveying the whole of the reality surrounding man and elucidating all the concerns of human existence in the light of sacred knowledge.

*Seyyed Hossein Nasr*

I have met with no more impressive work in the comparative study of Oriental and Occidental religion.

*TS Eliot*

Frithjof Schuon is the greatest metaphysical and religious thinker of our century ... I know of no living thinker who begins to rival him.

*Huston Smith*

Schuon is unsurpassed — and I would add unequalled — as a writer on comparative religion. .... If I were asked who is the greatest writer of our time, I would say Frithjof Schuon without hesitation.

*Martin Lings*

In Schuon's writings we find the serenity of the vision of 'that which eternally exists, really and unchangeably' ... His work is full of calm and profound illumination.

*Kathleen Raine*



# TRANSFORMATION

## Grace, Mercy and Free Will

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.  
*Ephesians 2.8*

The effective part of the will is not effort ... it is consent.  
*Simone Weil*

You cannot conceive, nor can I, of the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God.  
*Graham Greene*

There is something mysterious in the universe which is in complicity with those who desire nothing but the good.  
*Simone Weil*

## Transformation

Whatever the excellence of any *dharma*, it remains inevitably at the level of signs; it remains on this side of the Real, not only in its structure and institutional forms, but also in its attempts to formulate the ineffable reality, alike in mythical or conceptual images. The mystery to which it points overflows its limits in every direction ... All *a priori* deductions and speculations fall short of discovering the Spirit in itself beyond the level of religions. It can only be reached existentially, that is, by piercing to the very heart of the religious experience itself ... In every religion and in every religious experience there is a beyond, and it is precisely this 'beyond' that is our goal. *Sannyasa* is the recognition of that which is beyond all signs; and paradoxically, it is itself the sign of what for ever lies beyond all possibility of being adequately expressed by rites, creeds, or institutions.  
*Abhishiktananda*

Transformation is the *form* in which the spirit moves; it is life itself.  
*Lama Govinda*

Our self to live must go through continual change and growth of form, which may be termed a continual death and a continual life going on at the same time.  
*Rabindranath Tagore*

For me, tears are the residue of Divinity's claim upon me. Their dampness on my cheeks is the unfathomable mystery of the cosmos blending with its Origin.

*James Cowan*

The *kesi* does not regard himself as a *sannyasi*. There is no world, no *loka*, in which he belongs. Free and riding the winds, he traverses the worlds at his pleasure. Wherever he goes, he goes maddened with his own rapture, intoxicated with the unique Self. Friend of all and fearing none, he bears the Fire, he bears the Light. Some take him for a common beggar, some for a madman, a few for a sage. To him it is all one. He is himself, he is accountable to no one. His support is in himself, that is to say, in the Spirit from whom he is not 'other'.

*Abhishiktananda*

Abandon your life and the world that you may know the life of the world.

*Rumi*

In this annihilating experience [of *Advaita*, non-duality] one is no longer able to project in front of oneself anything whatsoever, to recognize any other 'pole' to which to refer oneself and to give the name of God. Once one has reached that innermost center, one is so forcibly seized by the mystery that one can no longer utter a 'Thou' or an 'I'. Engulfed in the abyss, we disappear to our own eyes, to our own consciousness. The proximity of that mystery which the prophetic traditions name 'God' burns us so completely that there is no longer any question of discovering it in the depths of oneself or oneself in the depths of it. In the very engulfing, the gulf has vanished. If a cry was still possible — at the moment perhaps of disappearing into the abyss — it would be paradoxically: 'but there is no abyss, no gulf, no distance!' There is no face-to-face, for there is only That-Which-Is, and no other to name it.

*Abhishiktananda*

He not busy being born is busy dying.

*Bob Dylan*

### **Death, Afterlife, Immortality**

The soul of man is immortal and at one time reaches an end which is called 'dying', and is born again but never slain.

*Plato*

We inhabit a spiritual twilight on this planet. It is perhaps the most poignant of all deprivations ... I have said 'deprivation' but perhaps I

should, rather, maintain that this feeling is an unrealized anticipation. We imagine that we are day creatures, but we grope in a lawless and smoky realm towards an exit that eludes us. We appear to know instinctively that such an exit exists. *Loren Eiseley*

It is good to have a reminder of death before us, for it helps us to understand the impermanence of life on this earth, and this understanding may aid us in preparing for our own death. He who is well prepared is he who knows that he is nothing compared with *Wakan-Tanka* who is everything; then he knows that world which is real. *Black Elk*

I know him, that great *Purusha*  
Of the colour of the sun,  
Beyond all darkness.  
He who has known him  
Goes beyond death.  
There is no other way.  
*The Upanishads*

Birth is not a beginning, death is not an end.  
*Chuang-Tze*

I don't go to funerals — been getting into practice for not going to my own.  
*Clive Faust*

Always go to other people's funerals — otherwise they won't come to yours.  
*Yogi Berra*

When a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates the mind wonderfully.  
*Dr Johnson*

I can't forgive my friends for dying; I don't find these vanishing acts of theirs at all amusing.  
*Logan Pearsall Smith*

I had seen birth and death but had thought they were different.  
*TS Eliot*

The Prophet said, 'Die before ye die', and this is the real death, for the other death is but a change of abode.  
*Ahmad al Alawi*

The attitude of the Indian toward death, the test and background of life, is entirely consistent with his character and philosophy. Death has no terrors for him; he meets it with simplicity and perfect calm, seeking only an honorable end as his last gift to his family and descendants.

*Ohiyesa*

There's a lot of death around. A hundred per cent strike rate. *That's pretty impressive!*

*Clive Faust*

When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.

*Rabindranath Tagore*

Is not philosophy the study of death?

*Plato*

One who sees the way in the morning can gladly die in the evening.

*Confucius*

The grave is the first stage of the journey into eternity.

*The Prophet*

This transformation is so sacred that it must be undergone in darkness.

*Black Elk*

To *Tao* all under heaven will come  
As streams and torrents flow into a great river or sea.

*Tao Te Ching*

### **The Politics of Eternity**

The politics of those whose goal is beyond time are always pacific; it is the idolaters of the past and the future, of reactionary memory and Utopian dream, who do the persecuting and make wars.

*Aldous Huxley*

We are here as passing pilgrims. Our destination is God. Our quest is for the lost inheritance, the forgotten heritage. The great central aim in life is the coming into a conscious realization of our oneness with God. A separate life has no meaning. Life has meaning only when it becomes full or whole, when the individual soul joins the Supreme.

*Shivananda*

When people talk about 'civilization' they generally attribute a qualitative meaning to the term, but really civilization only represents a value provided it is supra-human in origin and implies for the civilized man a sense of the sacred ... A sense of the sacred is fundamental for every civilization because fundamental for man; the sacred — that which is immutable, inviolable, and so infinitely majestic — is in the very substance of our spirit and of our existence.

*Frithjof Schuon*

Those who might be tempted to give way to despair should realize that nothing accomplished in this order can ever be lost, that confusion, error and darkness can win the day only apparently and in a purely ephemeral way, that all partial and transitory disequilibrium must perforce contribute towards the great equilibrium of the whole, and that nothing can ultimately prevail against the power of truth. Their device should be that used formerly by certain initiatory organizations of the West: *Vincit Omnia Veritas* [Truth conquers all].

*René Guénon*

# Quotations from:

**Abbey, Edward** (1927-1989), hippie anarchist, nature writer, novelist, environmental activist, park ranger, serial husband; best-known for *Desert Solitaire*.

**Abhishiktananda, Swami** (Henri Le Saux) (1910-1973), French Benedictine monk who spent the last 25 years of his life in India where he immersed himself in Advaita. Author of several wonderful books including *The Secret of Arunachala, Guru and Disciple* and *The Furthest Shore*, one of the most penetrating studies of the *Upanishads*. *A Christian Pilgrim in India: the Spiritual Journey of Swami Abhishiktananda*, by Harry Oldmeadow, is quite good.

**Abu Bakr Siraj Ed-Din**, the Sufi name and *nom-de-plume* of Martin Lings (see below).

**Ahmad al Alawi** (1869-1934), Algerian Sufi about whom Frithjof Schuon wrote, 'someone who represents the idea which for hundreds of years has been the life-blood of that civilisation. To meet such a one is like coming face to face, in mid-twentieth century, with a medieval saint or a Semitic Patriarch.' Martin Lings wrote a luminous study of this Sufi Master, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century*.

**Aitken, Robert** (1917-2010), American Zen teacher and author.

**Allen, Woody** (1935-), American film-maker, actor, writer and humorist, and possible child abuser.

**Alonius, Abbot** (5<sup>th</sup> century), Desert Father.

**Ambrose, St** (c. 339-97), Bishop of Milan, one of the four early doctors of the Catholic Church (the others being Gregory the Great, Augustine and Jerome).

**Andrae, Walter** (1875-1956), German archaeologist and architect.

**Anselm, St** (1033-1109), Archbishop of Canterbury and influential exponent of the Ontological Argument, the most elegant and compelling of the classical 'proofs' of God's existence.

**Anthony, Metropolitan** (Andrei Bloom) (1914-2003), Orthodox bishop and theologian, best known for his masterly writings on Christian prayer.

- Aquinas, St Thomas** (c. 1225-74), medieval scholastic philosopher and author of the monumental *Summa Theologica*; a doctor of the Catholic Church who sought to synthesize Aristotelian and Christian thought.
- Aristotle** (384-322 B.C.), one-time pupil of Plato, an ancient Greek philosopher and scientist who wrote and taught over a vast range of subjects, and whose ideas had a profound influence on Western and Islamic thought. Predictably, his philosophy was ridiculed by Bertrand Russell — so much the worse for Bertie!
- Armstrong, Karen** (1944-), British author of Irish Catholic background, formerly a nun, now a popular writer and commentator on religious affairs. Her own life story is told in *The Spiral Staircase*. She has become a go-to authority on matters concerning Islam-West tensions (on which subject she is much more sensible than most!).
- Attar Farid al-Din** (c. 1142-c. 1229), one of the most renowned of the Sufi poets, best known for his *Language of the Birds*, an allegory of the spiritual journey.
- Augustine, St** (354-430), Bishop of the North African city of Hippo, and one of the most influential of the Church Fathers. The patron saint of brewers.
- Aurelius, Marcus** (121-180), Roman Emperor, Stoic philosopher, poet, father of thirteen children.
- Aurobindo Ghose** (1872-1950), Indian philosopher, poet, nationalist and popular guru. Developed a philosophy of spiritual evolutionism.
- Balzac, Honoré de** (1799-181), French novelist, playwright and serious coffee addict.
- Barnes, Julian** (1946-), English novelist and author of the wonderful *Flaubert's Parrot*.
- Barth, Karl** (1886-1968), influential Swiss Protestant theologian who took an active role in opposing the Nazis. Massively influenced later theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann.
- Basho, Matsuo** (1644-1694), famous Japanese poet and haiku master of the Endo period.
- Basil the Great** (329-379), Bishop of Caesarea Mazaca in Cappadocia (present-day Turkey).
- Benjamin, Walter** (1892-1940), German Jewish culture critic and essayist.

- Berdyaev, Nicholas** (1874-1948) Russian philosopher, Christian existentialist and mystic. Expelled from Russia by the Bolshevik regime in 1922. Helped to renew the doctrine of *apocatastasis* ('universal salvation') in Orthodox circles. Berdyaev wrote a short, sympathetic and very acute book about Dostoevsky.
- Berlinski, David** (1942-), American author and caustic critic of contemporary scientism and its popular apostles.
- Bernard, St** (of Clairvaux) (1090-1153), French monk, monastic reformer and founder of the Cistercian Order.
- Berra, Yogi** (1925-2015) American baseball player and coach famous for his malapropisms — e.g. 'A nickel ain't worth a dime anymore' or 'Ninety per cent of baseball is mental; the other half is physical'.
- Berry, Wendell** (1934-), Kentucky poet, farmer, writer, environmentalist and member of the Temenos Academy. He was an early graduate of Wallace Stegner's writing program at Stanford University. A strenuous and eloquent critic of American foreign policy, of industrial farming practices and of environmental desecration.
- Bérulle, Pierre de** (1575-1629), French cardinal, statesman, mystic.
- Bierce, Ambrose** (1842-1914), journalist, poet, Civil War veteran, best known for his short stories and his satirical *The Devil's Dictionary*.
- Black Elk** (c. 1863-1949), Lakota visionary and holy man whose testimony was recorded by John Neihardt in *Black Elk Speaks*, one of the most remarkable spiritual documents of the twentieth century. His significance has been discussed by an obscure Australian author in *Black Elk, Lakota Visionary*.
- Blake, William** (1757-1827), English visionary, artist and poet, and a seminal figure in English Romanticism. My friend Roger Sworder insisted that he was 'the greatest of all Englishmen'.
- Blofeld, John** (1913-1987), English Buddhist, traveller in Eastern lands and writer. Spent many years in China, and worked for some years for the United Nations. His own life-story can be found in *Wheel of Life: The Autobiography of a Western Buddhist*.
- Boehme, Jacob** (1575-1624), shoe-maker, Lutheran theologian, philosopher and mystic.
- Bohr, Niels** (1885-1962), Danish physicist and Nobel Laureate who worked on the Manhattan Project during WW2. 'Astroid 3948 Bohr' is so-named in his honour! Although he claimed to be an atheist Bohr's outlook was influenced by the writings of Kierkegaard.



- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich** (1906-1945), German pastor and theologian, executed by the Nazis.
- Borges, Jorge Luis** (1899-1986), Argentinian poet, novelist and essayist.
- Brezhnev, Leonid** (1906-1982), General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party from 1964 to 1982. Had a very thin joke book.
- Brown, Joseph Epes** (1920-2000), perennialist writer on the spiritual heritage of the American Indians.
- Browne, Sir Thomas** (1606-1682), English naturalist, philosopher and influential literary stylist, dubbed a 'crack'd Archangel' by Herman Melville.
- Buber, Martin** (1878-1965), Austrian-born Israeli, humanistic and existentialist Jewish philosopher, best known for his essay *I and Thou*.
- Burckhardt, Titus** (1908-1984), German-Swiss perennialist and authority on sacred art and all matters Islamic and Sufic. The son of the art-historian Jacob Burckhardt and a school-mate and lifelong friend of Frithjof Schuon.
- Campbell, Joseph** (1904-1987), American writer and comparative mythographer who theorized the universal mythic motif of 'the hero's journey'. Heavily influenced by Jung's theory of mythic archetypes.
- Camus, Albert** (1913-1960), French journalist, novelist, existentialist philosopher, Nobel Laureate, soccer player and critic of all forms of totalitarianism.
- Carlyle, Thomas** (1795-1881), Scottish philosopher, historian and mathematician, deist, anti-Semite and exponent of the view that 'the history of the world is but the biography of great men'. His final words were, 'So, this is death. Well.'
- Cather, Willa** (1873-1947), wonderful American writer, a beautiful soul. Her Nebraska novels are that state's chief claim to fame.
- Catherine of Siena** (1347-1380), Dominican theologian, mystic, doctor of the Church and patron saint of Italy.
- Chardin, Pierre Teilhard de** (1881-1955), Jesuit philosopher, palaeontologist and spiritual evolutionist (see *The Phenomenon of Man*).
- Chekhov, Anton** (1860-1904), Russian doctor and playwright; 'Medicine is my lawful wife and literature is my mistress.'

- Chesterton, GK** (1874-1936), English Catholic writer, journalist and critic, author of the popular Father Brown stories and convert from the Anglican Church to Rome.
- Chödrön, Pema** (1936-), American Buddhist nun and teacher.
- Chögyam Trungpa** (1939-1987), Tibetan Buddhist teacher and writer known for his controversial 'crazy wisdom' ways.
- Chuang-Tze** (Zhuang Zhou) (c. 369-286 B.C.), Chinese philosopher and mystic, and one of the principal figures in the Taoist tradition.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius** (106-43 B.C.), Roman philosopher and statesman. Often figures in Latin primers.
- Cioran, EM** (1911-1995), Romanian philosopher of pessimistic and Nietzschean bent — eg: 'Is it possible that existence is our exile and nothingness is our home?' William Gass described his work as 'a philosophical romance on the modern themes of alienation, absurdity, boredom, futility, decay, the tyranny of history, the vulgarities of change, awareness as agony, reason as disease'.
- Clarke, Arthur C** (1917-1908), science fiction author (most notably, *2001: A Space Odyssey*), inventor, undersea explorer, futurist.
- Clement of Alexandria** (c. 150-215), Church Father who assimilated Hellenistic philosophy into Christian theology.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor** (1772-1834), English Romantic philosopher, poet, critic, preacher, dazzling conversationalist and raconteur, opium addict, and political radical (my favourite English Romantic both as poet and person).
- Coman, Brian** (1942-), research scientist, philosopher, author, raconteur, boat-builder and friend.
- Confucius** (551-479 B.C.), Chinese politician and philosopher, and founding father of the immensely influential school of social, ethical and religious thought; Confucianism became one of the pillars of Chinese society right down to recent times.
- Coomaraswamy, AK** (1877-1947), for many years curator of Indian Art in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and one of the founding figures of the perennialist school, the author of countless books and articles on art, religion, and metaphysics, and one of the most prodigious footnoters in the history of scholarship!
- Cowan, James** (1942-), Australian writer, pilot, adventurer (both physical and spiritual) and the author of insightful books on Aboriginal tradition.

- Cragg, Kenneth** (1913-2012), Scholar and Anglican cleric who served for a time as the Bishop of Egypt, concerned with Christian-Muslim relations. His several books on Islam, such as his first, *The Call of the Minaret* (1956), are amongst the very best written by non-Muslims.
- Crowfoot** (1830-1890), Chief of the Siksikia or Blackfeet tribe of Native Americans.
- Dalai Lama, The** (Tenzin Gyatso) (1935-), the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of Tibet and the head of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism.
- De Rougement, Denis** (1906-1985), Swiss Christian existentialist and culture critic. A collection of his most arresting essays can be found in *Dramatic Personages*. His best-known work is *Love in the Western World*.
- Del Noce, Augusto** (1910-1989), Italian philosopher who elaborated one of the more searching critiques of modernity. Someone described him as 'the most important thinker we don't know'.
- Dōgen** (1200-1253), Japanese Buddhist monk, poet, philosopher and founder of the Soto school.
- Donne, John** (1572-1637), English poet and cleric, one-time member of Parliament.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor** (1821-1881), Russian philosopher, novelist, Slavophil and gambler. In his novels Dostoevsky dramatized some of the great spiritual themes of the modern era.
- Dov Baer, Rabbi** (c. 1700-1772), disciple of Baal Shem Tov and one of the early leaders of Hasidic Judaism
- Durckheim, Karl** (1896-1988), German diplomat, psychotherapist and Zen teacher, one-time Nazi supporter. His full name was Karl Friedrich Alfred Heinrich Ferdinand Maria Graf Eckbrecht von Dürckheim-Montmartin!
- Dylan, Bob** (1941-), singer-songwriter, poet, artist, Nobel laureate.
- Eaton, Gai** (1921-2010), English diplomat, writer, Sufi perennialist.
- Eckhart, Meister** (c. 1260-1327), German Dominican writer, one of the greatest of Christian metaphysicians and esoterists.
- Eiseley, Loren** (1907-1977), American anthropologist, natural scientist and insomniac (as recounted in the autobiographical *All the Strange Hours*).

- Eliade, Mircea** (1907-1986), Massively influential Romanian comparative religionist, would-be novelist, and one-time fascist.
- Eliot, TS** (1888-1965), American-born modernist poet and publisher who spent his later life in England. Developed a social philosophy of Christian conservatism.
- Ellul, Jacques** (1912-1994), French lawyer, theologian, anarchist and a severe critic of modern technology. The phrase ‘Think globally, act locally’ is attributed to Ellul.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo** (1803-1882), Transcendentalist American philosopher, abolitionist, poet and essayist, friend of Thoreau. Asked about his religious beliefs he replied, ‘I am more a Quaker than anything else. I believe in the “still, small voice”, and that voice is Christ within us.’
- Empedocles** (c. 492-432 B.C.), pre-Socratic philosopher.
- Faust, Clive** (1932-), Australian poet, teacher, colleague and friend.
- Fenelon, François** (1651-1715), French Catholic Archbishop, theologian and poet.
- Ficino, Marsilio** (1433-1499), priest, scholar, astrologer, and Neoplatonic philosopher in the Italian Renaissance.
- France, Anatole** (1844-1924), French man of letters.
- Francis of Assisi, St** (1182-1226), Italian friar and preacher, founder of several orders, patron saint of Italy and of animals.
- Francis of Sales, St** (1567-1622), Bishop of Geneva.
- Frankl, Victor** (1905-1997), Austrian Holocaust survivor, humanistic psychologist.
- Freud, Sigmund** (1856-1939), Austrian neurologist and founder of psychotherapy. His best quote: ‘Time spent with cats is never wasted.’
- Frost, Robert** (1874-1963), New England poet and playwright.
- Gandhi, Mohandas** (1869-1948), Indian lawyer, nationalist and advocate of non-violent civil disobedience in the Indian independence movement. Assassinated by a Hindu zealot. Universally known as ‘Mahatma’ (Great Soul), an honorific bestowed by Rabindranath Tagore (see below). Massively influenced such figures as Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel, Desmond Tutu — a veritable honour roll of leaders of non-violent protest movements.

**Ghazzali, Abu Hamid Muhammad** (d. 1111), an Islamic jurist and theologian who became a great Sufi mystic.

**Gilson, Etienne** (1884-1978), a French neo-Thomist and historian of medieval philosophy.

**Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von** (1749-1832), a German poet, novelist, and playwright.

**Govinda, Lama Anagarika** (1898-1985), b. Ernst Hoffmann, German-Bolivian orientalist, Tibetan Buddhist adept, writer and painter.

**Graham, Aelred** (1907-1984), English Benedictine monk with a deep interest in Zen Buddhism and interfaith dialogue.

**Greene, Graham** (1904-1991), novelist, spy, traveller, Catholic convert; one of the most distinguished novelists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Griffiths, Bede** (1906-1993), Benedictine monk, author, leader in the Indian Christian Ashram movement.

**Guénon, René** (1886-1951), French metaphysician, scholar of traditional symbolism, critic of the modern world, and one of the formative authorities of the traditionalist or perennialist school.

**Guigo the Carthusian** (1083-1136), prior of the Grande Chartreuse monastery.

**Hafey, Tom** (1932-2014), one-time Collingwood Football Club coach.

**Hardy, Thomas** (1840-1928), English novelist and poet.

**Hegel, GWF** (1770-1831), the foremost figure in German idealism. Unreadable.

**Heidegger, Martin** (1889-1976), impenetrable existentialist philosopher whose work was influenced by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Nazi affiliations.

**Heller, Erich** (1911-1990), Jewish-Austrian critic and essayist specializing in German thought and literature; the author of *The Disinherited Mind*.

**Heraclitus** (c. 535-c. 475 B.C.) of Ephesus, a pre-Socratic philosopher and author of *On Nature*.

**Hesse, Herman** (1877-1962), German novelist, poet and painter.

**Herschel, Abraham** (1907-1972), Polish-born rabbi, theologian and philosopher who moved to the USA in 1940.

**Hildegard of Bingen** (1098-1178), German Benedictine abbess, writer, composer, mystic and polymath.

- Hōnen** (1133-1212), Japanese monk and founder of the Pure Land (Jodo) school of Buddhism which centres on *nembutsu*, the invocation of the Holy Name of Amitabha Buddha.
- Hopkins, Gerard Manley** (1844-1889), English Jesuit priest and the best of the Victorian poets.
- Hunt, John** (1910-1998), British army officer and leader of the first successful Everest Expedition of 1953.
- Huxley, Aldous** (1894-1963), English novelist, philosopher, advocate of psychedelic drugs and 'Californian Vedantin'.
- Ibn Arabi Muhyi al-Din** (1165-1240), a prolific and profoundly influential Sufi mystic, and author of numerous works including *Meccan Revelations* and *Bezels of Wisdom*.
- Inge, William R** (1860-1954), theologian, author, the 'Red Dean' of St Paul's Cathedral, London.
- Ionesco, Eugene** (1909-1984), Romanian-French *avant-garde* playwright.
- Isaac of Nineveh** (c. 613-700), Syrian bishop, theologian and ascetic.
- Isherwood, Christopher** (1904-1986), British novelist, 'Californian Vedantin', and biographer of Ramakrishna.
- James, Henry** (1843-1916), American novelist-*extraordinaire* and ironist.
- James, William** (1842-1910), American philosopher, psychologist and brother of Henry James.
- Jefferies, Richard** (1848-1887), English nature writer, farmer, mystic.
- John of the Cross, St** (1542-1591), Spanish Carmelite monk, poet, mystic.
- Johnson, Dr Samuel** (1709-1784), poet, essayist, critic, lexicographer ('a harmless drudge') and funny man.
- Jowett, Benjamin** (1817-1893), English theologian, classicist and Master of Baliol College, Oxford.
- Julian, Mother** (of Norwich) (1342-1416), theologian and mystic.
- Jung, Carl** (1875-1961), Swiss psychologist, mythographer and pioneer of analytic psychology.
- Kabir** (15<sup>th</sup> century), Indian mystic, poet and bridge between the Islamic and Hindu traditions.
- Kafka, Franz** (1883-1924), Bohemian Jewish writer who explored themes of alienation, ennui, anxiety and absurdity, particularly in the face of inhuman and incomprehensible social/political/legal institutions and bureaucracies.

**Kant, Immanuel** (1724-1804), absent-minded heavyweight German philosopher.

**Kazantzakis, Nikos** (1883-1957), writer, philosopher, translator, traveller. A hero of my younger days.

**Keats, John** (1795-1821), English Romantic poet who suffered an early death from tuberculosis.

**Keeble, Brian** (1938-2015), English perennialist and author, founding member of the Temenos Academy and the prime mover behind the Golgonooza Press.

**Kierkegaard, Søren** (1813-55), was a profound but gloomy Danish existentialist-Christian.

**Kimball, Roger** (1953-), American art critic and educational commentator.

**King Jr, Martin Luther** (1929-1968), Afro-American Baptist preacher, advocate of non-violence and leader of the Civil Rights movement.

**Kook, Rabbi Abraham** (1865-1935), Jewish philosopher, Kabbalist and Torah scholar.

**Kristofferson, Kris** (1936-), American singer-songwriter and would-be actor.

**Laing, RD** (1927-1989), Scottish pioneer of 'anti-psychiatry'.

**Lao-Tze** (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), Chinese sage and wellspring of a mystical stream in the Taoist tradition.

**Law, William** (1686-1761), Anglican cleric, theologian and mystic.

**Lawrence, DH** (1885-1930), English poet, novelist, anti-industrialist and crank.

**Lessing, Doris** (1919-2013), was born in Iran to British parents but spent the first thirty years of her life in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) before moving to London. Novelist and Nobel Laureate.

**Levine, Stephen** (1937-2011), American poet, author and Buddhist teacher, best known for his work on death and dying.

**Lewis, CS** (1898-1963), English novelist, poet, scholar, medievalist, broadcaster.

**Lings, Martin** (1909-2005), English writer, perennialist and Sufi master.

**Mandela, Nelson** (1918-2013), anti-apartheid leader in South Africa.

- Mann, Thomas** (1875-1955), prodigious German novelist and Nobel Laureate, author of *The Magic Mountain* and *Dr Faustus*, towering literary creations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Marx, Groucho** (1890—1977), writer, actor, comedian — a very funny man.
- Mechthild of Magdeburg** (c. 1207-1282), a Beguine mystic of the medieval period.
- Mencken, HL** (1880-1956), American journalist, satirist, humorist.
- Merton, Thomas** (1915-1968), Trappist monk, prolific writer, social activist, engaged in inter-religious dialogue and monastic renewal. An ever-fresh and insightful writer on religious and spiritual themes. The story of his early life is told in his *The Seven-Story Mountain*, probably the most popular ‘Catholic’ autobiography of the century. A hero.
- Messinesi, Aristides** (c. 1892-1967), Greek-born English weaver, explorer, author and friend of Marco Pallis.
- Midgley, Mary** (1919-), English moral philosopher who has written extensively on modern science and scientism; a fierce critic of Richard Dawkins (I’m with Mary).
- Momaday, N Scott** (1934-), A Kiowa author prominent in the Native American Renaissance, best known for *The Way to Rainy Mountain*.
- Montaigne, Michel de** (1533-1592), French statesman, philosopher and essayist.
- Morris, William** (1834-1896), writer, artist, designer, socialist and prime mover in the Arts and Crafts movement.
- Muggeridge, Malcolm** (1903-1990), journalist, soldier, spy, broadcaster and gadfly.
- Muhummad al-Arabi al Darqawi** (1760-1823), Moroccan Sufi *shaykh* best known for his teachings about *dhikr* (remembrance).
- Murdoch, Iris** (1919-1999), Irish-born British novelist, playwright and philosopher.
- Murrow, Edward R** (1908-1965), American journalist, war correspondent and broadcaster.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein** (1933-), eminent Iranian Islamicist, poet, and perennialist author.
- Northbourne, Lord** (Walter James) (1896-1982), farmer, ecologist, painter, Olympic rower and perennialist author.



**Nicepheros of Chios** (1750-1821), Orthodox monk and teacher, and lover of trees.

**Nietzsche, Friedrich** (1844-1900), German philosopher and demented genius whose misfortune, as Schuon says, was 'to be born after the Renaissance rather than before it'.

**Nin, Anaïs** (1903-1977), French-Spanish diarist, essayist, novelist and would-be psychologist, erotica enthusiast.

**O'Connor, Flannery** (1925-1964), American novelist, short story writer, essayist and bird-lover.

**Ohiyesa** (Charles Eastman) (1858-1939), Santee Dakota doctor, writer and activist.

**Oppenheimer, J Robert** (1904-1967), theoretical physicist, head of the Manhattan Project, and victim of factitious rumours and allegations generated by the FBI.

**Orwell, George** (Eric Blair) (1903-1950), journalist, novelist, critic, best known for his fictional critiques of totalitarianism and for his lively and provocative essays.

**Otto, Rudolf** (1869-1937), Lutheran theologian, philosopher, comparative religionist and orientalist, best known for *The Idea of the Holy* (1917).

**Pio, Padre** (1887-1968), Italian priest, stigmatist, visionary mystic.

**Pallis, Marco** (1895-1989), Greek-English mountaineer, musician, writer, Buddhist perennialist.

**Pascal, Blaise** (1623-62), a French mathematician, physicist, and Christian philosopher.

**Perry, Whitall** (1920-2005), American perennialist editor and author, a close associate of Frithjof Schuon and compiler of the encyclopedic *Treasury of Traditional Wisdom*.

**Plato** (c. 427-c. 347 B.C.), the greatest of the ancient Greek philosophers, saluted by AN Whitehead in his famous observation that 'the European philosophical tradition consists of a series of footnotes to Plato'.

**Plotinus** (c. 205-270), founder of the Neoplatonic school who synthesized the teachings of Plato and Aristotle in his monumental *Enneads*, a collection of discourses compiled by his disciple Porphyry.

**Pratchett, Terry** (1948-2015), English writer of comic fantasies.

**Priestly, JB** (1894-1984), English novelist, playwright and broadcaster.

- Prophet, The** (Muhammad) (c. 570-632), the 'Messenger of God', 'seal of the Prophets' and founding figure of Islam. The best account of his life is by Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*.
- Radin, Paul** (1883-1959), Polish-American anthropologist and folklorist with a special interest in Native Americans.
- Raine, Kathleen** (1908-2003), poet, critic, Blake scholar and founding member of the Temenos Academy.
- Ramakrishna, Paramahansa** (1836-1886), Hindu saint, sage, mystic, devotee of Kali.
- Ramana Maharshi** (1879-1950), Hindu Advaitan and sage, one of the greatest saints of modern India (although there are probably no degrees of sainthood!).
- Rilke, Rainer Maria** (1875-1925), Bohemian-Austrian poet, novelist, traveller.
- Rimbaud, Arthur** (1854-1891), *avant-garde* French poet with surrealist tendencies.
- Robinson, Marilynne** (1943-), American novelist, essayist and Congregationalist preacher, the author of the wondrously good novel *Gilead*.
- Rolland, Romain** (1866-1944), French dramatist, historian, novelist, Nobel Laureate and mystic. Rolland was a lifelong pacifist, described by Stefan Zweig as 'the moral consciousness of Europe'. Wrote a fine book on Ramakrishna, and others on Tolstoy, Beethoven, Gandhi, Handel ...
- Roszak, Theodore** (1933-2011), culture critic, novelist, best known for *The Making of a Counter Culture* but his finest book is *Where the Wasteland Ends*.
- Rumi, Jalal ad-Din** (1207-73), author of the monumental *Mathnawī* and founder of the Mevlevi Sufi order.
- Ruskin, John** (1819-1900), art critic, anti-industrialist, poet, culture critic and author of the term 'the pathetic fallacy'.
- Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de** (1900-1944), French aviator, poet and journalist. Like Niels Bohr, Saint-Euxpéry has an asteroid named after him — No 2578.
- Santayana, George** (1863-1952), Spanish philosopher, essayist, poet.

- Sartre, Jean-Paul** (1905-1980), French existentialist philosopher, novelist, dramatist, Marxist activist; a crowd of 50,000 Parisians followed his funeral cortege to the Montparnasse Cemetery.
- Sayers, Dorothy** (1893-1957), teacher, poet, crime writer, playwright, Christian apologist and Dante translator.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur** (1788-1860), a German Kantian philosopher with a serious interest in Eastern traditions, especially Buddhism. He has been called (wrongly) 'the first European Buddhist'.
- Schumacher, EF** (1911-1977), German economist whose *Small is Beautiful* was hugely popular in the 1970s. He also wrote *A Guide for the Perplexed*, a fine book.
- Schuon, Frithjof** (1907-1998), the pre-eminent figure in the perennialist movement, prolific author on religious and metaphysical subjects, painter and poet. Huston Smith rightly called him the most profound religious and metaphysical thinker of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Seraphim of Sarov** (1754-1833), Russian mystic and saint, widely venerated in the Orthodox world.
- Shah, Idries** (1924-1996), writer of Afghan background but resident of India, popular author on Sufism. Associated with the Gurdjieff crowd and asserted that Sufism pre-dated Islam. His books sold more than 15 million copies. Doris Lessing was an enthusiast of his work (Shah had a lot of literary friends).
- Shakespeare, William** (1564-1616), English actor, playwright and poet, widely heralded as the greatest writer in the English language.
- Shankara** (788-820), one of the most influential sages in the history of India, the pre-eminent spokesman for *Advaita Vedanta*, the Hindu perspective of 'non-dualism'.
- Shantideva** (8<sup>th</sup> century), Indian Buddhist monk and Madhyamika philosopher.
- Shaw, George Bernard** (1856-1950), self-important Irish playwright who thought he knew everything.
- Sherrard, Philip** (1922-1995), author, translator, Graecophile and perennialist who wrote *The Rape of Man and Nature*, amongst many other books on Christian and Greek subjects.
- Shinran** (1173-1263), disciple of Hōnen and one of the founding fathers of the Pure Land School of Japanese Buddhism.

- Shivananda, Swami** (1887-1963), Indian doctor and guru who founded the Divine Life Society, wrote some 300 books on yoga, Vedanta and such subjects. He lived mainly in the holy city of Rishikesh where there is a large Shivananda Ashram. (Not to be confused with Ramakrishna's disciple of the same name.)
- Simson, Otto von** (1912-1993), German scholar who wrote the definitive *The Gothic Cathedral*.
- Sitting Bull** (c. 1831-1890), Lakota Chief who led the resistance to the white invaders and was the chief strategist at the Battle of Little Bighorn. Killed by Indian Agency Police during the government repression of the Ghost Dance which led to the final defeat of the Plains Indians at the so-called Battle of Wounded Knee.
- Smith, Huston** (1919-2016), teacher, comparative religionist, one-time LSD experimenter, ecumenicist and author of the wildly successful *The Religions of Man* (1958) (later entitled *The World's Religions*). Smith was born in China to Christian missionaries and spent 17 years there. He tells his story in *Tales of Wonder*.
- Smith, Logan Pearsall** (1865-1946), American critic and essayist, known for his aphorisms and epigrams.
- Smith, Sydney** (1771-1845), English cleric, critic, wit.
- Snyder, Gary** (1930-), poet, one-time Beat, environmental activist, serious Zen Buddhist practitioner who spent many years in a Japanese monastery.
- Solzhenitsyn, Alexander** (1918-2008), heavyweight Russian novelist, Nobel Laureate, Christian philosopher who fully exposed the terrors and atrocities of the Soviet Gulag but was also a trenchant critic of the modern West. In some respects Dostoevsky's heir.
- Spinoza, Baruch** (1632-1677), Jewish-Dutch philosopher of rationalist bent. Hegel: 'Either you are a Spinozist or not a philosopher at all' (so there!)
- Squire, Aelred** (1920-1997), English Catholic monk, convert from Anglicanism, author, who moved from the Dominican to the Benedictine Order. Lived as a hermit for some years in Belgium before moving to Norway and then New Mexico. Wrote mainly in the field of Patristics.
- Standing Bear, Luther** (1868-1939), a Lakota chief and one of the earliest to record an Indian testimony about the destruction of the nomadic culture of the Plains Indians.

- Steindl-Rast, David** (1926-), Austrian Benedictine and Zen practitioner involved in interfaith dialogue.
- Steiner, George** (1929-), French-born Jewish Austrian-American critic, philosopher, teacher, novelist and polymath, a truly cosmopolitan intellectual. See his memoir, *Errata: An Examined Life*.
- Suzuki, Shunryu** (1904-1971), Soto Zen monk and teacher, founder of several Zen centres in the West and author of the immensely popular (and very good) *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*.
- Sworder, Roger** (1947-2016), English-born Australian scholar, poet, Platonist, teacher and dissenter. Also my colleague and close friend.
- Tapp, Johnny** (1941-), Australian horse-race caller.
- Tarthang Tulku** (1934-), Tibetan monk and teacher who established several Nyingma centres in the West after emigrating to the USA in 1969.
- Tagore, Rabindranath** (1861-1941), Bengali poet, musician and peace activist.
- Temple, William** (1881-1944), Anglican cleric, author, social commentator, Archbishop of Canterbury; active in promoting British resistance to anti-Semitism.
- Teresa, Mother** (Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu) (1910-1997), Albanian-Indian nun who founded the Missionaries of Charity organisation and spent most of her life in India working for the poor; recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Mother Teresa was subjected to savage criticism by the dreadful Christopher Hitchens.
- Teresa of Ávila, St** (1515-1582), Spanish Carmelite nun, mystic, theologian and doctor of the Church, friend and associate of St John of the Cross.
- Thérèse of Lisieux, St** (1873-1897), French Carmelite nun, 'The Little Flower of Jesus', much loved by the faithful. Early death of tuberculosis.
- Thesiger, Wilfred** (1910-2003), Eccentric English explorer and writer, author of *Arabian Sands*; "I craved the past, resented the present, and dreaded the future."
- Thich Nhat Hanh** (1926-), Vietnamese Buddhist monk, peace activist, meditation teacher, author and advocate of non-violence.

- Thoreau, Henry David** (1817-1862), surveyor, historian, abolitionist, naturalist, tax resister, proto-type hippie, Buddhist neophyte, author of *Walden* and *On Civil Disobedience*, and member of the American Transcendentalists. He died of tuberculosis; when asked if he had made his peace with God he replied 'I didn't know that we had ever quarrelled'.
- Tolstoy, Leo** (1828-1910), Russian aristocrat, formidable novelist and Christian anarchist-pacifist.
- Tracy, Spencer** (1900-1967), American film and stage actor.
- Traherne, Thomas** (1637-1674), English cleric, theologian, poet of the Metaphysical school.
- Truman, Harry** (1884-1972), haberdasher from Independence, Missouri, who became President of the USA.
- Twain, Mark** (Samuel Clemens) (1835-1910), American miner, river-boat captain, journalist, novelist and humorist.
- Van der Post, Laurens** (1906-1996), farmer, soldier, administrator, explorer, conservationist and author. Friendly with many of the Bloomsbury Group and with Carl Jung about whom he wrote a sympathetic book. Several scandals about his personal life emerged posthumously.
- Vivekananda** (1863-1902), Bengali monk, disciple of Ramakrishna, charismatic apostle of Vedanta in the West.
- Voegelin, Eric** (1901-1984), Austrian-American philosopher and political scientist.
- Voltaire**, the *nom-de-plume* of François-Marie Arouet (1694-1778), French philosopher, deist and man of letters who was one of the leaders of the so-called Enlightenment.
- Walking Buffalo** (1871-1967), Stoney (Canada) Indian Chief.
- Ware, Kallistos** (1934-), Orthodox Archbishop, convert from Anglicanism, theologian and academic; a translator of the *Philokalia*.
- Watts, Alan** (1915-1973), one-time Episcopalian priest and teacher before becoming a popular writer on Eastern subjects.
- Waugh, Evelyn** (1903-1966), journalist, novelist, convert to Catholicism, conservative eccentric. Orwell: 'Waugh was almost as good a novelist as it is possible to be ... while holding untenable opinions.'

- Weil, Simone** (1909-1943), French philosopher, mystic, political activist, virtually unknown outside a small French circle until the 1950s. Camus described her as 'the only great spirit of our times'. De Gaulle thought she was 'insane' but, apparently, quoted her frequently.
- Wheelwright, P** (?), 20<sup>th</sup> century scholar of ancient philosophy.
- Whitman, Walt** (1819-1892), journalist, poet, nudist and inspirational figure for the Beats. Ezra Pound: 'America's poet ... He *is* America.'
- Wilde, Oscar** (1854-1900), Anglo-Irish poet, playwright, aesthete and wit ('The only connection between Art and Life is a really well-made button-hole').
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig** (1889-1951), Austrian Jewish philosopher associated with the Cambridge analytical school, author of impenetrable works, one of which, *Philosophical Investigations*, was adjudged in a 1999 survey of American college professors to be the most important work of 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy.
- Wolfe, Tom** (1930-2018), American journalist, novelist, art critic and social commentator associated with 'the new journalism'.
- Wordsworth, William** (1770-1850), poet, one of the leading figures in English Romanticism and a tremendous walker.
- Yasutani, Roshi** (1885-1973), Japanese Soto monk and teacher, best known for *The Three Pillars of Zen* (compiled by Philip Kapleau).
- Yeats, William Butler** (1865-1939), Irish poet and dramatist, Nobel laureate and a leading figure in the Irish Literary Revival. Interested in theosophy and the Vedanta; he collaborated on a translation of the *Upanishads*.
- Zaleski, Philip** (1948-), teacher and author of books on religious and spiritual themes, especially prayer.
- Zimmer, Heinrich** (1890-1943), formidable German Indologist and member of the ERANOS group, dismissed from his academic post by the Nazis, friend of Joseph Campbell and AK Coomaraswamy.
- Zolla, Elemire** (1926-2002), Italian scholar of comparative religion, esoterism and mysticism.
- Zweig, Stefan** (1881-1942), Austrian-Jewish novelist, playwright, journalist whose book *The World Yesterday* gives the most poignant account of the collapse of European civilisation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## Books and Reading

People say life is the thing; I prefer reading.

*Logan Pearsall Smith*

You can never get a cup of tea big enough or a book long enough...

*CS Lewis*

Outside a dog, a book is man's best friend; inside a dog it's too dark to read.

*Groucho Marx*

A house without books is a poor house.

*Herman Hesse*

Reading and life are not separate but symbiotic.

*Julian Barnes*

Books — the best antidote to the marsh-gas of boredom and vacuity.

*George Steiner*

When I picture a perfect reader, I always picture a monster of courage and curiosity, also something supple, cunning, cautious, a born adventurer and discoverer...

*Nietzsche*

When we can't think for ourselves we can always quote.

*Wittgenstein*

No furniture so charming as books.

*Sydney Smith*

I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library.

*Jorge Luis Borges*

I took a speed-reading course and read *War and Peace* in twenty minutes. It's about Russia.

*Woody Allen*

Man reading should be man intensely alive. The book should be a ball of light in one's hand.

*Ezra Pound*

Let us read and let us dance; these two amusements will never cause any harm in the world.

*Voltaire*



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H.O., Bendigo, December 2019













