

## A New Horizon of Discussion on God

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In my treatise on the Foundation for Professional Ethics,<sup>1)</sup> I point out that humans innately possess 4 capacities : Creative, Adaptive, Inquisitive and Collaborative.

### I . Here is the Role of the Inquisitive Capacity

We had seen how the Human Creative Capacity is in crisis if it is not controlled by the Adaptive Capacity. As for the Adaptive Capacity, it would not be strong enough to perform its controlling duty, if it is not strengthened by the Inquisitive Capacity. Humanity is lucky to have this last capacity abundantly. Men need 4 accessories for living : provisions, clothing, shelter and medicine. If a man has not enough for living, he struggles; but when he has enough, he is still dissatisfied, because, out of the depth of his nature, he yearns for something higher than the material. Man keeps searching for it until he finds it in Religions of many forms which can satisfy his supra-material needs, at least in some contexts.

The common teaching of all Religions is the belief in the life-to-come which is the continuation of this life. A system of thought that has no concern about the next life, may be a philosophical system, but can not be a Religion. Religions are also Philosophies : philosophies that believe in the life-after-death. However, Religions require more than Philosophies : they require regulations to be kept in order to conform to the belief of the life-to-come.

### I . Importance of The Topic

Religions are social phenomena that no intellectual should overlook whether or not he believes in any of them. Such is because the human Inquisitive Capacity is so powerful that it can bring forth many beneficial achievements that nothing of equal quality can perform. But if this Capacity is wrongly used, great damage would result instead. We can read from History of Mankind that Religious Wars are more cruel than Political Wars, Political Wars are more cruel than Economical Wars, and Wars between sects of the same Religion are more cruel than Wars between two different Religions. Some religious people have religious experiences and dare not express them in words for fear that the listeners may be misled. We can cite as examples the Pacceka Buddhas according to the Buddhist doctrine. St. Paul also said :

"I am boasting because I have to. Not that it does any good, but I will move on to visions and revelations from the Lord. I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago — still in the body? I do not know; or out of the body? I do not know : God knows — I was caught up right into the third heaven. And I know that this man — still in the body? or outside the body? I do not know, God knows — was caught up into Paradise and heard words said that cannot and may not be spoken by any human being. On behalf of someone like that I am willing to boast, but I am not going to boast on my own behalf except of my weaknesses; and then, if I do choose to boast I shall not be talking like a fool because I shall be speaking the truth. But I will not go on in case anybody should rate me higher than he sees and hears me to be, because of the exceptional greatness of the revelations. (2 Corinthians 12:1-7)

It is the fact that all World Religions declared to have a good number of mystics, but very few of them commit their mystic experiences into positive writing, but keep on saying negatively that it is inexplicable or ineffable. The moderate ones, while exposing something positively, take at the same time some precautions by saying that they can expose only a minimum part of the reality of the experiences. Buddha, for example, compares his teaching to a handful of leaves, while all he knows is like leaves of the whole forest. Jesus Christ, before sending his disciples to preach his Gospel to the World, recommends them to receive the Holy Spirit first, because "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot understand them now.

However, when the Spirit of Truth has come, He will guide you into all truth." (John 16: 12-13). Some parts of the Religious Scriptures are the words of the mystics who tried to reveal their experiences in some way, so that the devotees may approach the supra-mundane by human means. We have to know how to interpret them.

The Hermeneutics of human language tries to analyse and interpret the mystical language of the Religious Founders and others, finally finds out 5 steps of understanding their mystical language. By this way we may approach the intention of each mystic, and by comparing their intentions we may hope to better approach the hidden reality.<sup>2)</sup>

### III. The Mystical Language may have 5 Levels of Meaning

1. Surface Meaning is the meaning at the level of the ordinary people, imbued with personal feeling and inclination. Oftentimes they quarrel with each other because of their differences in their feelings and inclinations, with the result of killing and wounding each other, leaving aside the smaller innumerable cases of hurting and displeasing the feeling of each other. Let us take the word "snake" as an example. When some people hear the word "snake", they may bear different meanings in each of their minds. Some of them may be able to understand only at the surface meaning and nothing more: that is they understand according to their own feelings and inclinations when they have experiences with snakes in the past. Some may have an experience of eating snakes and like to eat them; some may hate snakes because they were once bitten by snakes; or, some may be snake-tamers and have experiences of playing with snakes; some may have experiences of healing poisonous-snake bites; and some others may have experiences of bringing up snakes in a snake-farm, etc. All these people have various experiences with snakes and have different feelings about snakes, because of profits or damages they might gain from their experiences with snakes.

2. Deep Meaning is the meaning at the scientific level. The people at this level have also feelings and experiences about snakes and have therefore the surface meaning in their minds, but they know that it is only relative understanding at the popular level. They try, therefore, to get the scientific data about snakes and deduce a scientific knowledge independent of feeling and inclination. It is scientific and

absolute knowledge based on the scientific method. "Snake is a crawling animal, without feet, moving through scales under the abdomen..."

3. The Deepest Meaning is the meaning in the minds of the mystical communicators, especially the Founders of Religions and of the Religious Schools. These venerable persons understand something beyond ordinary human experiences. They cannot express it by ordinary languages which in fact derive from human experiences. Humans invented languages to communicate what they experience or to explain their experiences. The communicatees also understand according to their experiences (surface meaning) or according to what they can deduce from their experiences (deep meaning). If they try to understand the words of the mystics they may understand at these two levels. They can never rise up to the understanding itself of the mystical communicators. Many mystics, e.g. the Pacceka Buddhas, emphasize at this human defect and decide not to communicate so as to avoid misunderstanding. Some, however, like Sammasam-Buddhas, hope that at least some disciples may reach the "deeper meaning".

We can imagine an allegory of a man climbing up and reach the top of a high mountain. He sees a beauty never experienced by his villagers before. However, he desires to share to his village fellows the beauty he perceives. He comes down to his village on the plane and tries to communicate to the villagers by comparing, in many ways, to what the villagers can understand in their experiences. But most villagers laugh at him because of their incredulity. But some suspect something behind and beyond their ordinary experiences. The latter climb up the same mountain. The more they climb up, the more extraordinary experiences they see: they are having the "deeper meaning", until they reach the top of the mountain, then they experience the same beauty as the communicators. Now they have the same difficulty to explain what they see to the people on the plain. If they try to do at all they have to use the same method of the previous communicator, that is to use the language of ordinary experiences to explain the extraordinary unknown experiences. Such a communication is called by Venerable Buddhadasa, "Dharmic Language", which means using the Human Language (the Language of ordinary experiences) to explain what is beyond. We have to look for the inner part beyond the cover to see the core of reality.

4. Deeper Meaning is the meaning at the level of Dharma-practicers of any religion. They are not satisfied with the ordinary levels of human language, so they put the Religious Precepts into practice,

though they don't clearly understand yet the what and the why, but they have confidence in the person of the communicator and believe his words. By practising, they are sure to get deeper and deeper meaning of reality. The more they practise, the deeper meaning of reality they reach and the more they are happy. It is the happiness unexperienced by those who never practise it at all.

5. Critical Meaning derives from the fifth paradigm of philosophy. It is composed of an analysis and evaluation with an unbiased attitude. At this level, we accept all levels for granted and consider all of them as data for our analysis and evaluation, so that we may choose the best at the moment and expect always for the better. It is the Contextual Method that leads us to the Critical Understanding.

By the above analysis we find out that the fifth level is the best for contemporary intellectuals to follow, because it opens the way to further and further creativity: the intellectual creativity for peaceful co-existence of mankind. Surely it does not promise a way to supernatural happiness which is to reach by a required religious means. This fifth level promises only the sure way for enhancing the quality of life for all people of good will, regardless of their faiths or traditions. It prepares, however, the sure means for any religious way that brings them to the deeper and deepest meanings.

#### IV. Data about the Supreme From Religions

A man of good sense, reflecting on his own experiences, should find out that at least sometimes in his own life, he had done something purposely, and he would do more so in the future. You are no exception. Suppose you are inquired about your presence in a classroom thus :

*Inquirer:* Why do you come to this philosophy class (which is so boring)?

*You :* Because I want to pass the exam (so I have to come in spite of my feeling).

*Inquirer:* Why do you want to pass the exam (which burdens you with stress and strains)?

*You :* Because I want to get the certificate.

*Inquirer:* Why yearning for a certificate (which is only a sheet of paper).

*You :* Because I expect a good job (that needs a certificate).

*Inquirer:* Why competing for good jobs (which means more tiring

effort)?

*You :* Because I hope to earn more money.

*Inquirer:* Why hoping for more money (which are only papers)?

*You :* Because with those bank notes I can exchange for facilities of life.

*Inquirer:* Why are you running so eagerly after the facilities of life (sometimes with too much energy).

*You :* I don't know, but everybody runs for them.

This is the ultimate purpose of your life — to run after the facilities of life — because you have no interest to seek further. It is also your ultimate purpose as it is your law of life : the law that is decisive over everything in your life. You submit yourself to nothing further. It is not so for some others who seek further. For them the facilities of life are not the last end of life. There is something more. Let us inquire from them.

*Inquirer:* What is the purpose of having the facilities of life?

*Others :* I need the facilities of life only as condition for the enhancing of the quality of my life according to the teaching of my religion.

*Inquirer:* What is religion for?

*Others :* For attaining the Supreme of my religion.

*Inquirer:* How do you know that the Supreme exists?

*Others :* I have faith ... that is all.

At this point, the role of religion stops. It is the role of philosophy to analyze by the philosophical method to get more and more understanding of the remaining questions and to propose philosophical answers. This is the starting point of Philosophy of Religion. It starts where religion ends its role, or according to my definition : Philosophy of Religion is a branch of Applied Philosophy that uses the Pure Philosophy to interpret the conclusion of Religion.<sup>3)</sup>

The Supreme of each religion is one of the important conclusions of Religion that the Philosophy of Religion has interest to discuss. It is the conclusion of Religion because the religionists as religionists accept by faith, but philosophers as philosophers have the interest to inquire further, to find the possible answers in the philosophical way.

There are many questions the philosophers of religion have interest to discuss. However the core question seems to be the various concepts of all religions about the Supreme. Phenomenologically every religion has some kind or other of explanations about the Supreme Reality,

shortly called the Supreme, which is counted as the basic belief of each religion. The philosophers who have interest in this topic would gather these explanations to consider them in common perspective and to find out if there is any common understanding or how they are different from each other, hoping by this way to suggest some useful inspirations to the religionists for the better understanding of their own faiths, and for the more effective practices of their religions. Of course at this point, the role of philosophers are limited only to the suggestions which the religionists are free to accept or to reject. Even in case of acceptance, the religionists are still free to choose what and how to accept. They are also free to adopt and adapt in the manner they like. Philosophers as philosophers are like the surveyors. They survey for surveyance's sake. The road-surveyors never construct the roads they had surveyed. They suggest to the constructors who are free to accept at the degree they see fit.

You may ask why the religionists don't search for themselves in stead of relying on the philosophers. There are, in fact, religionists who are also philosophers, so they research as philosophers and practice as religionists. Sometimes from their experiences of practice, they also educate the others. Beside being philosophers, religionists, they are also educators. It is not bad, provided they know how to divide their time and know how to discriminate their roles. Surely they cannot devote their time to religious practice like the mystics, to speculation like professional philosophers, to preaching like full-time educators. They might function better as administrators and have to rely on the authority of real philosophers, the real mystics and the real educators have their proper areas.

All depend on the interest and satisfaction of each person how to arrange his capacity and energy. Some may like to commit themselves fully to religious experiences as mystics, some to philosophical researches, some to the general education, but some may prefer to alternate their activities, and may devote different percentages of their commitment to various activities, such as 50-50 %, 20-80 %, 40-35-25 %, etc.

## V. To Think as Philosophers

There are many ways of thinking philosophically suggested by philosophers. Some say that there are as many ways as there are philosophers (see Epistemology). Here I would like to limit my

consideration only to the way of Globalizational Philosophy with the Critical Thinking. Critical Thinking consists in Analysis and Evaluation. Analysis is to split the topic into simpler ones, as far as simple enough for the circumspect consideration, that is until a clear research question can be proposed clearly and succinctly: what is it about? And how much is it interested and valuable? The first question is directed to the Raw Meaning and the second to the Ripe Meaning.

Once the question is established, we can go further to find the possible answers. We analyze the answers and group them into different trends. We analyze each trend into the essential contribution, the context of the trend, the reasons that support that trend, the importance that can be analyzed into the impact and the interestedness. If our interest goes further into more details of the subject, we may inquire further into the questions that emerge in each particular trend, and go on analyzing and evaluating in the same way, until interest comes to the halt. When we feel no more philosophical curiosity in that topic, let us shut it down and let our next curiosity show up.

## VI. Levels of Interpretation

We use our Critical Thinking in Philosophy to discover the meaning in what we have interest. We are not satisfied only to know what it is or to understand what does it mean which remains only at the level of the Raw Meaning, but our curiosity goes as far as the Ripe Meaning which is to understand what does it mean to our life, that is how does it impact our life. To discover up to the Ripe Meaning, we need a thinking technique: in this purpose we call it Hermeneutics.

### 1. Logic and Hermeneutics

Logic as the rules and the process of reasoning, is as old as the humans grasp of the Supreme — since the first time a human conceived a concept of the Supreme and believed in Its existence — for any belief goes hand in hand with the conviction. Even though a belief has no reasoning as its element nor as its origin, however anyone who believes in it needs a conviction to believe and the guarantee for conviction is inevitably a reason or reasons. We can say therefore that reason always accompanies belief. Anyone who believes is convinced that he has reason or reasons to believe, of course at the level of his capacity of reasoning, though others may

judge that his reason is fallacious, or, weak or insufficient. For the believers of that level, it is always sufficient.

We can expect, therefore, that the ideas of the Supreme, from whatever sources that we take into our philosophical consideration, are accompanied always (or almost always) by one or other kind of reason, at least for the believers of that level. We shall not, therefore, hurry to conclude or judge that such an idea has no reason, or weak reason, or against reason, but we shall use Hermeneutics to analyze clearly the reasons behind each concept (we shall call the context of that concept). We shall try to interpret it as most valuable as possible, before we go on considering other aspects in the course of our philosophical enterprise.

## 2. The Supreme

Philosophers as philosophers have no need to have personal experiences of the Supreme so as to discuss philosophically on the Supreme, because, there are plenty at hand of concepts about the Supreme from various religious traditions (they can do if they like to, however, as believers of some particular religious tradition). They may just accept as they are, collect them, systematize them and reflect on them in the philosophical way until some philosophical conclusions show up.

## 3. Is Belief Necessary?

Nothing can oblige a philosopher to believe or not to believe anything. Each philosopher is to have his own stance. It is not then surprising that in this affair some philosophers (who have interest to discuss this topic) believe in none of what various faiths teach on the Supreme, some believe according to the teaching of one faith and reject the teaching of all others, some believe all by compromising all teachings as equally good, some others choose an unbiased attitude, and accept that all religious faiths are good but differently good, thence trying to draw critically their own conclusions as seem to be the best for them from all the available data. They are willing to share their convictions with each other for mutual improvement of understanding. Such is the attitude of the Globalizational Philosophers.

The writer believes that this last category are not only Philosophers of Religion, but also Philosophers of the Philosophy of Religion, that is they are ready to give ears to all philosophers of religion, to appreciate the values of all religions, to analyze and evaluate all for the best understanding of the Supreme that all human effort has

reached so far. Such an attitude does not, by any means, exclude these philosophers from a real faith in one particular religion, by accepting the determined formulae of that religion as the core of their exposition and are ready to comply to all obligations of the religious community, keeping faithfully however, their philosophical attitude towards all faith.

## 4. How Important is a Name?

Venerable Buddhadasa, a philosopher Buddhist Monk of Thailand, expressed his idea about the Supreme thus :

“Some may call God, some may call Dharma, some others may call Dao or Natural Law, etc., it means the same thing in reality. It is the Supreme in all respects. The same thing can be called by many names. The Supreme is all the same. All the Masters of the World are only the Announcers of the same Supreme.” (Suan Moke 17 November 1973)

It is then the role of the Hermeneutics of the Globalizational Philosophy to clear up whether the different names assigned to mean the Supreme in Ven. Buddhadasa's mind mean the same thing, or how much they mean differently from each other. It is to emphasize here that the Globalizational Philosophy has no intention to combine all religions into one and unique Religious Formula, nor to let the peoples of our time to live individualistically which is no more possible today, but aims at inducing the believers of all faiths to have interest of each other, on the principle of mutual respect, mutual recognition of equal right and duty towards each other.

## 5. Ontology and Hermeneutics

Ontology aims at studying the topics of the pure reality as being. Pure reality is the general being or *Ens* in quantum *ens* (Greek : *on* or *os on*) : the being in common to all that exist whether they are humans, animals or things. Being or *ens* is that has being (has the to be or *esse*) “*Ens est quod habet esse*”. *Esse* means to be or existence. All beings have existence. The pure reality has pure existence, that is existence in general or the *To Be* without specification. Ontology has as its object the search to know what is “Being as such” or “Being as being”. If the study reveals the idea of the Supreme Being and the discoverers happen to believe in Its Existence which may affect the situation after death, the Ontology transforms itself into Religion. All religions confirm the existence of the Supreme but expound It in various forms. All religions, therefore, offer one or other form of the

Supreme as object of the study of Ontology.

Philosophy of Religion is not Religion nor Ontology as such. Philosophy of Religion uses Hermeneutics to discover the meaning of Being accepted from Ontology, and the meaning of the Supreme, accepted from the teaching of Religions. To know the meaning means also to appreciate their value. The Hermeneutics that we are using to study the meaning of the Supreme is not in the position to confirm or to deny the existence of the Supreme. Its role is to accept the ideas of the Supreme from Religions, then to try to evaluate the meaning of the Supreme on the basis of Ontology by the method of Hermeneutical Analysis. Each researcher may have faith and devotion to the Supreme in whatever concrete manner, by holding whatever practices and attitude. It is to be left to the free decision of each.

### 6. The Supreme and God

God is Supreme. If He is not really Supreme, He should not be named God. But not all Supremes (i.e. the understandings about the Supreme) are God, because some ideas of the Supreme according to some categories of thinkers cannot be identified with the ideas of God in the strict sense. "Asangata-Dharma is not God". This affirmation may stimulate controversy. We need Hermeneutics to help us by analyzing this saying in each particular case. Ven. Buddhadasa identified Dharma with God, as shown above; but he stated clearly that his Dharmic God is not a personal God. It has no consciousness. It is nevertheless a prudent and strict system of laws. Nothing can escape its strict sanction which is more exact than any computer capacity. Many God-believers protest Ven. Buddhadasa's affirmation by criticizing that the Venerable misused the word "God". Hermeneutics may intervene by explaining that all this incident results from definitions. Ven. Buddhadasa equalizes God and the Supreme: all what is called Supreme is God and what is called God is Supreme. But some do not agree. For the latter God is a person equipped with consciousness at the highest level possible.

Now let us ask from the Pantheists about God. They would say: "All is God" (Gr. Pan Theos estin). It means that every part of the Universe is God without exception. It cannot mean that any particular part of the Universe is a particular God with variety of consciousnesses in the same way as humans who are also diverse Gods with diverse consciousnesses. It cannot mean so because Pantheism is also Monotheism not Polytheism. If the pantheists can use the term God to mean impersonal God, why Ven. Buddhadasa

could not do the same? Why should he be alienated from the right of doing the same thing?

In such a case, can we conclude that Personal God and Impersonal God mean the same thing? No! The contradictory concepts cannot mean the same thing, but different concepts can share the same more general term and concept like the term 'bank' can be shared by the bank of the river and the financial bank; the financial bank also can be shared by the narrower concepts like the commercial bank and the government bank. A word has the meaning according to the concrete use. So let us be generous with the usage of the words, and pay more attention to the meaning in each usage. Hermeneutics helps us to be clear that we should not be impeded by the words as our master, but should use the word as the tool of our communication for the mutual understanding.

### 7. Sassana and Religion

"Sassana" was coined in the Eastern Hemisphere. It has been meant to mean the understanding of the teaching of a Master to be put into practice as a means to the enhancing of quality of life. As usual it can mean also such a teaching, held by the believers as sacred and leading to the attainment of the Supreme according to that teaching. Sassana means in general the "Teaching about the relation with the Supreme", which is not necessarily understood as a Personal God.

"Religion" was first coined by the Romans (Religio = Re + ligare) to mean the relation with the Divine, that may be Supreme or not. The Westerners who received the cultural heritage from the Romans have defined it as the "Relation with the Supreme God." As now both words aim at the relation with the Supreme, though with some variety of connotations, because of the variety of the concepts of the Supreme and also of the devotional means to attain the Supreme. In spite of all these nuances, the Globalizational Philosophers through their Hermeneutics would see no obstacle to use both terms as synonyms for different contexts: let the Westerners use the word Religion as the translation of Sassana and vice-versa for the Easterners. Both terms can be used in different contexts like other words of our languages to mean and to be understood with connotations according to the context of each particular usage. Wittgenstein's Theory of Language-games may well justify this case.

### 8. Atheism and A-religionism

A-religionism and A-religionist seem to be unfamiliar terms, though

they can be immediately understood by comparing them with the meanings of Atheism and Atheist. However they are the happy terms to be used for our actual purpose, to disburden our old familiar terms Atheism and Atheist of their ambiguities and inappropriate usages.

'Atheism' should be kept to mean strictly in its etymological sense which means the doctrine that denies the existence of God. It includes Buddhism, Jainism, Naturalism, Marxism, Positivism and Neopositivism. But when this term is used in the Western context, it means rather all the movements that aim at abolishing all religious beliefs including Buddhism and Jainism. It is not to be surprised then to hear the Westerners say that Buddhism is not Atheism and Ven. Buddhadasa affirmed this statement. It is so because they have the understanding that Buddhism is a religion and no religion is Atheism. It means that in such a concept Atheism means Areligionism, which means the doctrine that denies all religious beliefs. Anyone who still has some kind of religious belief cannot be called Atheist.

In the past, the Westerners rarely spoke about Buddhism or Jainism. They did not feel confusion accordingly. But now the situation has changed and confusion may increasingly creeps in with the change. The Western philosophers speak more and more about the Eastern philosophies and religions. It seems to be indispensable now to systematize the terms in order to avoid the misunderstanding and difficulties of communication between the East and the West.

### 9. Theology and Divinity

The Westerners are used to use the word 'Theology' in the sense of 'Divinity', that is to mean all the subjects that concern the Supreme, from the highest to the lowest concern, e.g. Moral Theology to concern about the behaviors of those who believe in God, Pastoral Theology to concern the caring to those who believe in God, etc. There is no trouble in their conscience, because for them God and the Supreme are identical.

The Westerners have realized little by little that some people do not conceive the Supreme as God. Another word has been coined to mean the subject concerning the Supreme in general — Divinity. But this new word has not sensible difference in meaning from the old term Theology. It came from Latin "Divus" which is the adjective of "Deus" which corresponds to the Greek word "Theos." All mean the divine persons who are personal, either supreme or not. For this purpose I would like to suggest "Religiology" to mean the speculative

study of all Religions whether they are theistic or atheistic, keeping Theology for the speculative study of theistic religions and Divinity for the general study of theistic religions. We still have "Religious Studies" to go side by side with Religiology to mean the more general study of all religions, whether theistic or atheistic, like Social Science is a more general study than Sociology. We may need a name to call the subject concerning the speculative study of atheistic religion. May I suggest "Asangatology" and "Asangatic Study" for the general study of atheistic religions.

At this point it is appropriate time to coin some more terms for the more effectivity of our study of religions. We need "Ultimology" to mean the study of all ideas of the Ultimate, whether Supreme or not, in the same way as "Ontology" means the study of beings in general. We need also "Supremology" to mean the study of all ideas of the Supreme, whether the Supreme is understood as God or Asangata, thus because the Supreme is necessarily also the Ultimate, but the Ultimate is not necessarily the Supreme.

How about the "Theodicy" (literally meaning the Justice of God), the word coined by Leibniz to name his philosophical treatise on God, published in 1710, to justify all God's actions for humanity according to his principle "This is the best possible World that God could create". Later it became the name of the subject of study about the Supreme, either personal or impersonal, including the First Mover of Aristotle. The Westerners also attributed the name "God" to It, so that his philosophy may be used as the foundation of their Theodicy and Theology. Shall we try a more general term for the universal discussion: the Supreme as genus of God, the First Mover (of Aristotle), the Idea of the Good (of Plato), the One (of Plotinus), the Brahman (of Hinduism), the Asangata (of Buddhism and Jainism), etc. as its species. Thence we shall have Supremology as genus and Theodicy, Theology, Asangatology, Brahmanology, Ultimatology, etc. as its species.

By this way, I hope that our study of Metaphysics of the Supreme Being might be more developed, more justified, more unbiased and fairer. We shall not anymore waste our time to discuss about the scope of our subject which has been very biased in the past, because it depends largely on the personal likeness and acceptance. In the study of say "Vegetables", we don't lose our time to choose what vegetables I like to eat or not. But we cast our interest to all kinds of vegetables first, then and only then we should classify what I like from what I don't like. It should be the same with our Metaphysics. We should start with the Ultimology to include all the concepts of the

Ultimate, then we may pay a special interest in the "Supremology", then and only then we could limit our more special interest in Theology or Asangatology, or Brahmanology or what not.

### 10. Supremology

We may define "Supremology" as the Study of the Supreme. It means, of course, the discussion on the various concepts and the evaluations of the supreme that are found in humanity. If we hold our Principle of Respect for Human Dignity, any concept of the Supreme of any man must be included in the scope of this subject. This is how we should honor the conscience of a human. Another question is the choice of the content for the purpose of each study. We have to evaluate the importance of the issue and the impact on society of the concepts, so that we may fairly spend our limited resource for our particular study. It is more advisable to start with the most basic to the more specific. All things considered, we may divide our Supremology into 4 levels of study :

1) **Popular Supremology** : this should be the basic content of Ethics and Morality.

2) **Philosophical Supremology** : put it as the highlight of the Globalizational Ontology.

3) **Religious Supremology** : this should be the foundation of Religious Studies in general and of any particular Religious Study. Philosophy of Religion should start with the interpretation of this basic teaching of religions. All other topics should be the consequences of this central topic. If this central topic is clear, all the other topics would also be clear, and all the further steps of research will be able to go on deeply and without unnecessary confusions.

4) **Meta-Supremology** : Hermeneutics will analyze and evaluate all the above studies so that all humans who reach this point may enjoy the mutual understanding, the mutual respect, and the mutual sharing of values with sincerity. This will contribute greatly to the personal peace and the World Peace. So let us make Meta-Supremology as a special section of our Hermeneutics.

### 11. Theology and Supremology

The Western Philosophers are familiar with discussion on God. Whether they are conscious or not, they are used to use the term 'God' or 'Divine' in the sense of the Supreme, except when the context obliges them to mean the Personal God, so in such a situation they mean what they say. For example, when the Westerners speak about

Theism, they mean the doctrines of all religions including Buddhism and Jainism, and when Atheism is concerned, Buddhism and Jainism are normally excluded. Pantheism means ordinarily the doctrine that all are parts of the Supreme which surely does not mean exactly what the word 'Theos' refers in Pan + Theos or even Pan + en + Theos. To clear up all the above-mentioned confusions and ambiguities in such an important issue, I would like to suggest the following classified terms :

<i>Supreme</i> .....	the Transcendent of any definition
<i>God</i> .....	Personal Supreme
<i>Asangata</i> .....	Impersonal Supreme
<i>Supremism</i> .....	doctrine that believes in the existence of the Supreme
<i>Asupremism</i> .....	doctrine that does not believe in the existence of the Supreme
<i>Pansupremism</i> .....	doctrine that believes that all are parts of the Supreme
<i>Panensupremism</i> .....	doctrine that believes that all exist in the Supreme
<i>Theism</i> .....	doctrine that believes in the Personal Supreme
<i>Atheism</i> .....	doctrine that does not believe in the Personal Supreme
<i>Pantheism</i> .....	doctrine that believes that all are parts of the Personal Supreme
<i>Panentheism</i> .....	doctrine that believes that all exist in the Personal Supreme
<i>Asangatism</i> .....	doctrine that believes in the Impersonal Supreme
<i>Anasangatism</i> .....	doctrine that does not believe in the Impersonal Supreme
<i>Panasangatism</i> .....	doctrine that believes that all are parts of the Impersonal Supreme
<i>Panenasangatism</i> .....	doctrine that believes that all exist in the Impersonal Supreme

Let us try to use such terminology in discussing the Philosophy of Religion, maybe the mutual understanding in dialogue and cooperation among religionists might be more open. To follow the logical order of understanding, let us clarify first the meaning of the Supreme in general, before the specified concepts are tackled.



## 12. Asangata and God

Are the two Supremes antagonistic to each other like the God and the Evil of Manicheism and other Dualisms? Or are they the various manifestations of the same Reality? Or only either one or another exists excluding each other? Or this is a delicate issue not to be discussed? Or both concepts are illusions? It is not the competence of Philosophy nor of any human study to judge the existence of the Supreme. This issue is not within the scope of philosophical questions, nor within the scope of scientific data, nor within the scope of any legislation, nor within the scope of any human criterion. The usurpation of such an issue is a kind of intellectual abuse that we must try to eliminate, to clear philosophy from the obstacles to progress and let it be discussed only in the History of Philosophy.

It is not the role of philosophy of Religion, to create contents for Ontology. Its role is not to judge the existence of the Supreme, nor to judge what kind of Supreme is higher and lower. Philosophy of Religion in the Globalizational Age has the role and duty to analyze by Hermeneutics, to understand the meaning of the Supreme already existing in the minds of the believers, found especially in writings, interesting to survey, analyze and interpret, for the better understanding and appreciating as a part of human values that really happen to human facts. It is undeniable that the Supreme is accepted as such by humans, has created human values along history of mankind. The philosophers of Religion has the duty to explore and present to the public like the surveyors. They should not present only what they like and abstain from the facts that they don't like. They must be unbiased according the professional etiquette. The likeness and dislikeness should be held as personal affair. Philosophers should present all beliefs unbiasedly, and keep the preference-judgement for their own practical purpose. They should leave their audience and readers the free choice according to human right that should not be exploited by philosophers of the Globalizational Age. In short Philosophers of Religion are not to create new religions or sects of religions, but to analyze and interpret the existing faiths without bias.

Asangata is the Supreme of Asangatism as God is the Supreme of Theism. The Globalizational Philosophy must accept this fact and start the inquiry from there in the philosophical spirit until some meaning emerges, worthy to be announced to the public. Such is the successful role of philosophers.

Some may ask whether it is fair, philosophically speaking, that the religionists of a faith make the study only of the Supreme according

to their faith. The answer is yes, for they have right according to the human right. If they are not doing in the name of philosophers, the philosophical etiquette doesn't reach them. However, they should not do anything that transgresses the right of others or lacks the due respect to others.

## 13. Personal God and Personification of God

The Personification of God means drawing the transcendental God down to the level of human expression, e.g. God gets angry, God tends His ears to listen, etc. It means so differently from the real nature of the Personal God. It is only the symbolization or the humanization of the real God who is ineffable. So the best way to communicate about Him is to use metaphor. The Personal God, on the contrary, means drawing the human meaning of person from the human level and contributing it to God, on condition that the meaning must be modified in order to refer to God in the excellent way, e.g. the Person of God can never mean in the same way as the human person. However it can be believed that there is something in common that allows the comparison. In the same way, when we say God is spirit, God is love, God is almighty, etc. the expressions are not figures of speech, but analogy.

## 14. God and the gods

"The gods" have 2 meanings. It may mean supernatural beings, of human characters, but more able and may be immortal. It may also mean the personifications of the natural power. They are by no means the Supreme nor the Ultimate. But God is the Supreme and of course also the Ultimate. God has no similarity with Man, but can be referred to only analogically.

### 1) The Immanent and the Transcendent

The Theos' of the Pantheism seems to be immanent, so the supreme is not always transcendent as some may define. To have vocabulary large enough to cover all the study and discussion of our topic, let us divide the concepts of the Supreme into the Immanent Supreme and the Transcendent Supreme, Thus :

The Immanent Supreme  
 The Supreme may be The Transcendent Supreme  
 The Panensupreme : both Immanent and Transcendent

As the Supreme is also the Ultimate, so  
 The Immanent Ultimate

The Ultimate may be The Transcendent Ultimate  
The Panenultimate : both Immanent and Transcendent

To pay religious respect to the Transcendent Supreme and the Transcendent Ultimate, we may offer the names 'The Supreme One' and 'The Ultimate One.'

## 2) The Polarity and the Supreme

"Polarity" is derived from the word "pole". The earth has north pole and south pole. The electric charged object has positive and negative poles. Morris Cohen proposed the Law of Polarity saying that the opposites are the interdependent poles of the same reality : to understand one implies the understanding of the other even though there is nothing of that other in its concept, or at least there is a tendency toward each other, so that whenever a defect happens in one pole, the other pole will immediately fill up. Anywhere between the two poles, we can find the mixture of the two poles in various and supplementary proportions, e.g. the pole good has no evil and the pole evil has no good; but all the between are the mixtures of good and evil in various proportions in the manner of the seesaw board : where the good is more the evil is less, and vice-versa. According to the Law of Polarity, such is the Natural Law of the Universe.<sup>4)</sup>

Is it also the Law of the Supreme? William Hartshorne discussed this problem in his book "Philosophers Speak of God", analyzing the concept of the Supreme according to the tradition of the Western Philosophy into 3 categories : Theism, Pantheism and Panentheism. Hartshorne himself backs Panentheism. He applies the Theory of Polarity to the Philosophy of Religion as follows :Theism teaches that God is above all polarities, He transcends all polarities or holds a special kind of Monopolarity, that is his Monopolarity has no opposite, no tendency to the opposite, and is not mixed in the between which do not exist. He has no similarity to any other polarity that exists in the World which may happen to use the same name, but the referent is totally different, because one is transcendent while the other is immanent. The gap between them is infinite, thus :

Names of Polarity		The Opposite Polarity God
Unity	Plurality	Transcendent Unity
Being	Becoming	Transcendent Being
Composite	Simple	Transcendent Simple
Active	Passive	Transcendent Active
Relative	Absolute	Transcendent Absolute

Pantheism can apply what had been said above about the Theism, with the exception that the World was not by any way created by God, but is the illusory Manifestation of God. The World is the illusion, the unreal image of God, therefore the World is imperfect.

Panentheism holds that everything is in God, therefore God has two polarities within himself, from the one extreme to another, including all the middle parts. God in this sense is greater than reality itself, because He includes all reality and all possibilities, all the perfections and imperfections, all the transcendent and the immanent, and also the Transcendent Unity and the Transcendent Plurality, and even the Unity in Plurality and Plurality in Unity. At the immanent level we feel that the Unity in excess generates triviality and Plurality in excess generates chaos — the middle way is the best policy, i.e. the middle between Unity and Plurality ; the excess of activity tends to irascibility and the excess of passivity tends to boredom. But all these human imperfections are also included in the Panentheistic God without any possibility of degradation. Hartshorne thinks that nothing that is real is unworthy of God, hence there is no necessity to speak of God in the negative way. He also thinks that all aspects of relativity exists in the Absolute because all relativity has value and is worthy to be a part of God.<sup>5)</sup>

## 3) Criticizing Hartshorne

Hartshorne tried to discuss one of the very complex idea within the limited traditional vocabulary of the West. He used the term "God" in a very ambiguous meaning : it may mean the Personal God, the Impersonal or the Asangata-Dharma Supreme, or the Ultimate in general. He did not have enough vocabulary ready for his analysis. We only hope that if he had used the system of vocabulary proposed in this paper, he would have explained clearer in several points. His idea should be rather identified as the Panensupremism than the Panentheism. As he did not try to invent the new terms to call his new ideas and tried to expose his ideas with the limited vocabulary of Theism, Pantheism and Panentheism, tolerating the ambiguity that swings between Theos and Asangata of the Supreme. What he said about God sometimes means the Supreme in general, sometimes means God the Supreme, sometimes means Asangata the Supreme, and sometimes also means the Immanent Ultimate. The more reflexive readers surely get confused and cannot help wondering what he exactly means every time he said about God.

## VI. Conclusion

The writer hopes that this new suggestion would open a new horizon of study in Philosophy of Religion. Maybe the new horizon of the "Supreme" might be the central interest that will unify all people of good will together in a common effort to understand the very foundation of all religions, with the spirit of unbiased, of mutual respect, with the generosity of sharing and the sincerity of mutual well-wishes. This surely might be a happy token for Humanity to enter the Third Millennium with easy feeling that the coming Millennium will not be a Devouring Monster, but a Propitious Supreme who welcomes all His children of any conviction and good will to work together for the common wealth and common human interest that is Peace at All Levels. We still have much to do ahead of us, before we could realize such a Philosophical Dream!

## References

- 1) Bangkok : Assumption University Press, 1994, pp. 2-3
- 2) See Kirti Bunchua, *Contextual Religions* (Bangkok : Assumption University Press, 1994), pp. 9-11.
- 3) Kirti Bunchua, *Contextual Philosophy*, Bangkok : Assumption University Press, 1992, p.27
- 4) Cf. Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God*, Chicago : Chicago University Press, 1953, p.2.
- 5) See op.cit., pp.5-6

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- ▶ Bunchua Kirti *Foundation for Professional Ethics*, Bangkok : Assumption University Press, 1994.
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## Search for a New View of God in the Age of the Global Village

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### I . The Purpose and the Method of this Paper

This paper is not intended to be followed to its logical conclusion, but rather it is a personal essay so that I may present you with some perspectives on traditional and new view of God, especially in regard to the question of how mankind can transcend the barriers of race, nation, religion, culture, etc. Also, in order to unite religion, there is a need for a new comprehensive view of God. The new view of God must be explained in harmony with science.

I need to explain the method by which I present this paper. Generally speaking, traditional Eastern philosophy has an intuitional approach towards truth seeking to grasp the whole reality. Whereas Modern Western philosophy has two approaches to discover truth. The first method was founded by Descartes and is known as deductive method. The deductive method, appealing to reason, leads us to logical and inner-connected holistic knowledge (rationalism). The second method was founded by Francis Bacon, and known as inductive method. The inductive method, working upon facts and experience, leads us to the knowledge of experienced reality (Empiricism).

I understand that Unification Thought is constructed through deductive method. It presents us logically refined and inner-connected holistic knowledge. On the other hand, the Bible is the historical record of living, acting God upon the people as experienced reality. And my knowledge of God is based upon my experience with living God, guided by biblical experience and information. Modern scientific knowledge is acquired through experimentation and