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# The Non-Dual Path of Negation

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**Abstract:** The non-dual path—which runs through the undercurrent of all the great traditions and religions at their esoteric and initiatory level—is underpinned by the *doctrine of Unity*, namely the fact that the ultimate Reality is one. In this respect, negation is neither local nor tied to a positive content (simple negation), nor does it affirm elsewhere the existence of what it denies (presuppositional negation), but it presents itself, in a more original way, as the *neutralization* of all determination and dualism, i.e., of false assumptions on what there is that prevent us from accessing to *that* which, being unqualifiable, really is. In order to grasp the meaning of the via *negativa* as a path of deconstruction and disidentification (*Neti-Neti)* and of the apparent obscurity of non-knowledge (*Agnosia*), which is expressed in the lexicon proper to negative theology (silence, abyss, inexpressible, unrepresentable, non-manifest), the questioning about the Being-in-itself must not be separated from that about one's own Self. This original negativity, which proceeds from the metaphysical ignorance of the truth of the self and the truth of what is (*Avidyā*), once lifted, opens the way to the subjective apprehension of Reality, i.e., the perspective of *transcendental interiority:* the Supreme Identity between the Being-in-itself and Oneself.

**Keywords:** negation; neutrality; non-duality; religion; universal Self

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## 1. Introduction: Negation and Neutralization[1]

How can we understand the status of negativity in negative theology, as it encompasses the principle—silence, the abyss, the inexpressible, the unrepresentable, the non-manifested—and the subject relating to it[2]? What is the relation between the negativity of the principle and negativity as the subjective ordeal of despair and desolation? To this end, we distinguish between negation and neutralization[3].

In the first case, negation depends on what it denies, in that it can only deny to the extent that it denies "something", i.e., it presupposes the representation of the existence it denies. In its classical sense, negation does not constitute the negation of an existence but that of the representation of this existence. What is denied is a *determined representation*, most often unconscious of itself, and not the pure existence on which the negation bears. In the second case, neutralization is a process of *indetermination*, i.e., the pure suspension (or "reduction", *Ausschaltung*[4]) of the representation which governs most of our actions and beliefs.

Neutralization does not consist in negating a term—while negation contains a latent affirmation ("it is not here" meaning "it is elsewhere")—nor does it deny the existence of a positive content (the unicorn for example), but it suspends the negation *itself*. There is indeed a "positivity" in negation that makes it unfit to deliver what it is all about, for the problem does not lie in *this* or *that* representation, but in the *general* regime of representation, which, as its Latin etymology indicates, refers to the repetition of an absent presence or, *Vor-stellung*, to "what-is-laid-before-me". Its dual structure, between the represented and the representing, between the object and the subject, establishes a difference between the two terms. Representation is structurally constituted by *Twoness*[5].

The problem of "God"—that of his existence and nature—which inevitably involves the destiny of the subject (my own existence) and of the world, comes from the occultation

of the nature of the questioner[6]. This absence of reflexivity, of self-thematization, is itself ordered, ultimately, by a "natural attitude" underpinned by an unconscious metaphysical thesis characterized by the duality of a finite and imperfect self, and a perfect and infinite God, conceived as an "absolute Self", "other" than "me". As it turns out, the noetic regime of representation, by its dualistic structure[7], cannot but apprehend the relation between the finite and the infinite as that of an unsurpassable separation.

The destruction of this *appearing* separation[8]—revealed as an "illusion"—*coincides* with the process of self-transcendence, i.e., of destruction of the *ego* which hinders the access to *that* which cannot be objectified and thus neither thought nor experienced, as it is *nothing*[9] and thus cannot be an object *for* a subject.

While negation is attached to a determined form, neutralization, on the other hand, overcomes the very opposition between subject and object, opening up to the non-duality of the two terms involved. Negation is attached to the form: it is a limitation agent. Neutralization, *supra-formal*, is an *un-limiting* process, leading beyond the double representation—determined and dual—of "God" and "me"[10].

The essay aims to clarify the difference between *negation*—dual, relative because representative—and *neutralization*, shedding light equally on the destruction of the ego-principle, suffering from its apparent duality with the principle, and on the supra-essential void. Neutrality leads us back to the *essential obscurity* of *that* which, being *nothing* determined, *neither* this *nor* that, transcends the very duality of the positive and the negative, of fullness and emptiness[11]—*superior negation* for it is the freeing act itself by which, beyond any predicative determination, Divinity is freed from "God" and our Self from "myself".

Starting with the essential and defining relationship of philosophy to the Principle, we encounter the first type of negativity with reason's self-realization of the supra-conceptual nature of that which, unthinkable, is yet to think. The self-negating lucidity of Reason, the impossibility of determining the absolute, is associated with the dual and determinative nature of the regime of representation which, structured by the "idea of God" and the "idea of myself" as separate existences, stands in the way to *That*[12] which cannot be "object" of knowledge nor known from "outside". The limitations of representation are revealed by the supra-formal heart of exoteric forms of religion, which point toward the placeless place of interiority.

Secondly, the lifting of the *veil of duality* marks the step toward the second level of negation, as *negation of representation*. Because the duality structures the latter, by abolishing the representation, the negation as the latent position is suspended, so it is necessary to call *neutralization* (*ne-uter*) the process that suspends the negation as opposed to affirmation as well[13]. Referring our apparent knowledge to its unknowingness, "non-knowledge" (*Agnosia*) becomes the methodological principle leading—such is the meaning of *methodos*—to the knowledge of the absolute.

The neutralization of the idea of God leads to that which, *neutral*, exceeds all determination and representation. The neutralization of the idea of myself constitutes for the soul the test of its simplification, the process of deconstruction of its egoity, and, consequently, of the very meaning of its identity. A difficult path, though necessary, through the "night of the soul", which is indeed the night of a soul on its way through its shadow[14]. The night would not be so thick if the soul were not often reminded of its emptiness: yet it is there, in the Emptiness of its being, that the Being of beings resides, the "God from within". The path of interiority leads to the absorption, the *enstase*, of the subject, in the supra-dual identity between "God" and "me".

Finally, at the third and last stage of neutralization, the "world" itself is brought back to its illusory beingness as an "external" reality. The veil between "me" and "God" having been lifted, their duality suspended, it is now the world that appears as an *appearance of duality*. So that "exteriority" being revealed as an *externalized interiority*, the "outside" as the *self-expression* of an "inside", there is fundamentally no difference between the Ultimate Reality, Oneself, and Divinity.

*Being in oneself* refers to the act of returning to ourselves, as in those ordinary moments of life where the consciousness, magnetized by the outside, caught in the fascination for what it aims, turns towards itself in a *counter-intentional* way[15]. In the ordinary dual structure of understanding, interiority is often empirically and psychologically referred to as an ''inside" by opposition to an "outside" which, in the natural attitude, constitutes the hallmark of reality—naturally construed and defined as "external reality".

However, once outside and inside, in their oppositional logic, no longer make sense, the *neutral path* opens up a space for what could be formulated in terms of *supra-essential identity* between the three meanings of the expression "being in oneself". In its common sense, the formula refers to the process of self-apprehension of consciousness ("go into yourself") or the result of this process, Self-identity. In its philosophical sense "being in itself" refers to the true "reality", "things in themselves" (*Dinge an sich*). In its theological sense, to the Being-in-itself, infinite, and unconditional, namely to the principle, "God".

In the following non-dual metaphysical perspective, interiority is not to be attributed to "me", but it is beyond egoity[16]. It has nothing to do with the order of manifestation, with its finite and determinate forms, but, on the contrary, with the formless itself. *Transcendental* interiority, beyond the duality of ''inside" and ''outside", is that of a *We as One*[17]. The sublime subject's enstase which celebrates, in the form of the world, God's movement of ecstasy[18].

## 2. The Premise of Negation: The Idea of God

Reason is powerless to grasp that which, *No-Thing*, cannot be an object of knowledge and description. But this is a peculiar negation: if for the unbeliever the divine non-appearance is the sign of its non-existence, for the mystic on the other hand there is a Subject at the heart of the worldly phenomenality who does not appear, who, overflowing the immanent conditions of manifestation, shines by his absence (Lavaud 2015). The task of the mystic, in this regard, is to say the unspeakable, to experience the inexperienced, and to manifest the unmanifested.

In other words, negation here is neither a latent affirmation, a presuppositional negation, nor a simple negation, i.e., the pure suppression of a positive content such as the one which denies the divine existence, but the paradoxical *modus essendi* of that which transcends the very opposition between presence and absence, between position and negation[19].

Hence the issue raised by the production by reason itself of the idea of God which, though thought of *as* unconditional, turns out to be conditioned in so far as the very idea of unconditionality is *opposed* to the conditions of the self that affirms itself "other" than that which we commonly call "God". Dually structured, the "idea of God" might then be the main obstacle—as related to a *profound ignorance* of our own self—to the experience and knowledge of that which cannot be so but *as Subject*[20].

### *2.1. The Positivist Reason*

It is a need of Reason, carried by and towards the unconditional, and the destiny of philosophy in general, to relate to the Principle[21]. Philosophy indeed, in its metaphysical essence, in so far as it is concerned with the foundations of existence and in its approach construes the world by bringing the multiplicity of phenomena back to a prior unity, constitutes a patient meditation of the Principle, *terminus a quo* of all manifested realities and *terminus ad quem*, the finality of our existence[22].

The One, or the Sun (Plato 2004), is indeed *ratio essendi*, the condition of possibility of existence—that by which things are—and *ratio cognoscendi*, the condition of possibility of their intelligibility—that by which things can be understood. Based on the discrimination (*viveka*)[23] between the eternal, the reality, the being on one side and the temporary and the appearance on the other, philosophy is thus inseparable from ''theology" (de Koninck 2002), not only because it thinks the Supreme, but because it strives to understand what is from the Principle standpoint[24].

The ordinary and empirical consciousness, off centered, carried outside itself by living in the glamour of its fascination for this or that being, never ceases to throw itself from object to object, eager for that which can never fulfill it. It lives at the surface of things, in the *mode of exteriority* as an existential modality of relation to the world and, originally, to oneself[25]. But it is then to live an inwardly dead life to live without referring to the mystery of existence and to the enigma of our own self.

Philosophical consciousness, on the contrary, as it goes back to itself and frees itself from the grip of the world and of the *doxa* as well as from the empirical *ego* with its interests, can be called ''transcendental". It is no more attached to this or that being, in its determination, but only to the indeterminate Being of beings. Philosophy is open to the absolute because in a certain sense, it is no longer of this world[26] and is already possessed by that which it seeks. I aim for the One Sun because I am carried by its rays. The somewhat erotic meaning that Plato attributes to philosophy is defined as a divine "madness"[27] which tears away the world, a *metaphysical desire* which is not the desire of this or that, but the desire of the absolute, inclusive, and yet supremely exclusive of all things, is ultimately founded on the discrimination between goods and the Sovereign Good[28].

Hence the attempt, because the Principle constitutes the foundation and the finality of philosophy, to establish its necessary existence, what has been called in the framework of rational theology the "proofs" for God's existence[29], but also the realization of the limits of such a rational attempt as that which, supra-rational, is at the source of rationality, cannot be proved nor reproved. Nor can one discuss that which is thought of as Oneness: to talk about the unique Reality amounts to losing it by the very duality of our own position of exteriority to the subject of the demonstration[30].

Such was the meaning of Pascal's "Night of Fire" (Fletcher 1949), as he recorded it in his 1654 "Memorial": the vertigo and staggering revelation of the meaningless and doomed attempt of reason to grasp the God of faith. The hidden God, *Deus absconditus*, is indeed not hidden in the sense that it could be one day brought to light, but it is so qualified as it is a Mystery, obscure *in itself*, as such foreign to reason. What might be considered an antithesis—historically crystallized in the classical debate between the truths of reason and the truths of faith—is in fact pure *annihilation*. The reason is not "the other" of God. God is the fire that *destroys* reason by leading it to its nullity. He is the very ruin of that which tries to seize it.

If the "God of philosophers and scientists"[31] obeys a "positivist reason", which objectifies the unobjectifiable, the incomprehensible, and supremely unknowable God, beyond all reason, makes himself felt in faith, or rather, as will be later explained, in Self-knowledge[32]. The transition from rational theology to negative theology thus proceeds from the self-realization by reason of its innate insufficiency to grasp That which is excepted from any "positioning", triggering the movement of ascension from the rational ideation of God to the God beyond any idea.

### *2.2. The Dual and Determinative Idea of God*

Is God absent because hidden or hidden because non-existent? The issue of the mundane existence of evil, the "thorn in the flesh of God", is at the heart of the theodicy. This neologism, forged by Leibniz from the Greek *theos* (God) and *Diké* (justice) questions divine justice, in its double meaning, subjective and objective (von Leibniz 2009). Indeed, on the one hand, the investigation is directed toward the nature of the world (disorder, chaos) and hence the nature of God, and on the other hand this understanding plays a role, i.e., to do justice to God. Either God is not at the origin of evil, but then He is powerless in this regard, or He is responsible for evil, which He allowed, and then He is mean. It is this aporia, that the theodicy seeks to overcome, which leads, in the century of extermination camps, to denial of God's existence, considering evil as the proof of divine non-existence[33].

The fundamental question is of course whether God exists because in the absence of a relationship to transcendence, religion loses its foundation.

There are, of course, three philosophical and existential positions regarding the existence of God. Atheism, *a-theos*, "without God", constitutes a negative belief defined by the emptiness of its object[34]. Philosophical agnosticism stays at the threshold of the unknowable (*agnôstos*). It does not deny but suspends its judgment as to the existence of God. As Protagoras writes, "I cannot say anything about the gods, whether they are or not. Too many things prevent us from knowing it: first the darkness of the question, then the brevity of human life" (Henry 2022, pp. 213–43). For lack of evidence, it is better to refrain from denying or affirming the existence of God. But while in a sense atheism, depending on what it denies, remains on the horizon of transcendence, the agnostic meanwhile, by lack of apparent radicality, lives radically out of all relation, as such, to transcendence: the question of the principle is removed or suspended. Consequently, it is the whole of philosophy, moved by the question of the foundation, which is excluded, at least in its metaphysical essence. There is finally the belief, an inverted mirror of the first, which lives from the affirmation of the existence of God. One will naturally oppose the atheist, and everyone will have to choose his side.

But does the approach itself make sense? To ask if God exists and to answer in the affirmative or in the negative has little meaning as long as one does not settle the question which God one is talking about, in other words as long as one does not move on to another question, that of knowing *who* God is—the question of the divine identity involving that of the person who questions it[35].

There can be no confrontation without common ground: choosing to take sides for one or the other of the possibilities regarding divine existence leaves the idea of God itself unexamined. If the believer and the atheist are distinguished only by the positivity or negativity of their belief, more fundamentally, they both come together in the irreflexive sharing—the unthoughtful ordinary way of believing or disbelieving—of a *determinative and dual conception of God*, which lies in the idea of a mutual relationship of *separation*, under the regime of *exteriority*, between the creator, the creation and the creature[36], between God, the world and myself, according to the common idea of God as the Supreme transcendent Other[37]. I may be made in his image, but I am not Him[38]. Finite and imperfect, I can only be exterior and separate from the Perfect and Infinite existence.

### *2.3. The Supra-Formal Locus of Religion*

Religion, which comes from the Latin "*religare*", "to relate" and "connect", is defined by the foundation of two kinds of relation.

On the one hand, the horizontal relation between men, the assemblies—the *umma*, the *ekklesia*, and *sunagôgê*—having as such a social and normative function of gathering and regulation: there are acts and things considered "impure" and other "sacred", in accordance with the scriptures[39].

On the other hand, the vertical relation to the transcendence of the Principle, which is indicated by another possible etymology, "*religere*", "to collect" and bring back inside—to "meditate"—indicates the *modality of being* of one who, beyond the formal and external respect of tradition and authority, refers to religion *from within*. The subject does not act because he is told to do so and blindly follows the footsteps of the community—he may as well not act, or even act contrary to prescribed rules and customs—but he is the one seeking within the true master. The Sufi tradition calls this way of being the "way of the heart", *fu'âd* or *lubb* in Arabic[40], *Hridayam* in Sanskrit for Vedic thought[41], the way that leads to the Centre in its *supra-essential identity* with the Principle and whose search constitutes the very spiritual essence of religion, which as such unites religions without being reducible to any one of them.

Indeed, there is a discrepancy between the function and forms of religion and the supra-formal essence of any religion, namely between the role that religion plays among men and the multiple forms it takes on the one hand, and what constitutes its heart and as such cannot be confused with the form which expresses it on the other hand. In short, between the *exoteric dimension* and the *esoteric dimension* of religion[42].

In its exoteric or public dimension religion relates to dogmas, i.e., representations accepted thoughtlessly, by habit or social pressure, a hold-for-truth without proof and objective certainty[43]. This is where reason lies at the crossroads of politics in its institutional self-constitution (texts, hierarchy, religious authorities)[44]. Religion in its esoteric or hidden, initiatory dimension, is quite different from that. It is no longer a question of believing, without questioning, but on the contrary of going *beyond belief*, deeply moved by the desire to *know* the Principle. In the first case I believe to be reassured and stay in a comfort zone of the mind: comfortable is the position of the one who knows where to go and what to think. In the second case, I leave the comfort of belief: I do not care about the form of religion, as such unilateral and partial, but I look for its universal essence.

Taken in their esoteric dimension, traditions and religions come together: there is a *transcendent unity* of religions (Schuon 1948), transcendent because this unity cannot be fixed in a form or be the prerogative of a particular form, being precisely *supra-formal*. Each religion from this angle, determined, constitutes a form of expression and, as such non-exclusive of another form, if it is seized from the inside. If for example, the opposition between monotheism and polytheism is meaningful from the exoteric point of view, from the esoteric point of view it has no real relevance, the multiplicity of the gods depicting the plural expression, under various personal and avatar aspects, of one supra-formal and unrepresentable Principle (Borella 2007). In this way, I could respond to the call of Muslim prayer, participate in the Mystery of the Eucharist, and honor Shiva with a *puja*, for all forms will henceforth be reacquainted from a deeper source: from a supra-formal standpoint, all forms will appear as the rich diversity of expression of the celebration of the sacredness and divinity of existence. In other words, religion in its spiritual essence looks beyond the idea of God, for it is not a representation but the Absolute itself, the Un-Bound One, that one calls forth from within.[45]

In this respect, one could distinguish the belief, determined and representative, from the faith, indeterminate and without representation, which consists of abandoning oneself, jumping into the void, and renouncing the idea of God as well as the idea of oneself[46]. The term "mystic" may well be used, if we mean not the experience of supra-physical phenomena (lights, visions, etc.), always of the order of the *object* and as such dubitable, but the experience of the *subject*, beyond the form and the I-ness identification, till the realization of the non-duality between what previously was seen as two different terms.[47] So that religion realizes its essence of "*religare*" by going from belief to Self-knowledge of God—*by himself*, i.e., by "union" (*unio mystica, Yoga*[48], *coincidentia oppositorum*[49])—in a way contrary to personal development, which we could call *impersonal deconstruction*.

## 3. The Way of the Neutral: Beyond the Dualism of Representation

Let us return to the initial question of whether God exists, which now leads us to that of knowing *who* God is, distinct in that it digs behind the question itself and takes into view the "idea of God", i.e., the underlying representation which predetermines its enunciation and which, as we highlighted, implies, on the one hand, the objectification or externalization of God, and on the other hand the dualism between "God" and "myself".

It will therefore be necessary to go from a positive representation of God to the neutralization of the position and its negation, if one wants to "grasp" *That* which, even negatively and apophatically qualified, remains conditioned by the dual representation that structures the "idea of God".

The neutralization of the "idea of God" will correspond to the self-transcendence of the one seeking God, so that the way of the Neutral constitutes the ascent to the supra-dual root which, preceding the split between the two terms, "God" and "me", finally brings them back to their equal illusion.

### *3.1. The Neutralization of God: The Obscure One*

How shall we proceed? Not by construction, or representation, but by radical *deconstruction* of the idea of God, which separates us from God himself.

Christian mysticism, for example, calls *agnosia* (l'Aéropagite 1943, p. 68; See Jugrin 2016, pp. 102–15) this process of "de-representation" or deconstruction, namely the *un-knowing* process which supposes to get rid of all belief and to suspend all "hold-for-true". We must unlearn, and more fundamentally, come out of "the oblivion of oblivion", a double ignorance as it is ignorant of itself as such (Chrétien 2014b; Layne 2018, pp. 206–22), and become aware of the radicality of our ignorance as to the nature of what is, in short, to free ourselves from the illusion of knowing, to find *That* which, being of all beings, nevertheless transcends all being and all knowledge. It is necessary on this via *negativa*[50] to become *nobody* to find the Fullness in the Nothingness, to get rid of all knowledge to find in the heart of the Unknowingness the true knowledge of which every word indicates the impossible absence.

The transition from negation to neutralization leads to the suspension of the determination of the idea, i.e., to the *supra-ideal indeterminacy* of that which is not of the order of the determined essence but *Supra-essential Nothingness*, *epekeina tès ousias* (Plato 2004, p. 509b1). The process of *Metanoia* (See Walden 1896)—often translated into the lexicon of repentance—consists of going beyond thought (*meta-noesis*), that is, beyond the ideation of God, from the representation of God to his unitive presence in the very *self-destruction of his concept*, from the "positive" relation to God to the neutralization of his idea.

So that Unknowingness reveals the apparent knowledge to its lie, in so far as the absolute unknowingness coincides with the knowledge of the absolute. If *metaphysical ignorance*[51] is an *apparent* knowledge, *agnosia,* or absolute unknowingness in the Supreme Darkness[52], is its antidote, the unknowingness healing us from our ignorance concerning the nature of what is and of ourselves. This unknowingness not only expresses the relation of the subject to God, namely the impossibility of "knowing" God, but it also indicates, on the side of the being of God, that he is the *unknowable*. Supra-essential, God precedes all knowledge, prior to the division on which that "knowledge" is based[53]. If the *Ain Soph*, infinite, is situated beyond the dual logic and the contradiction, beyond the opposition even between being and not being, that he does not allow himself to be understood or objectified, it is because he is a *Subject* who calls for a subject stripped from himself. In this matter, *twoness is exclusive* of God (and Self) Knowledge[54].

It is therefore not enough to qualify it as "unknowable" to be freed from the predetermined and dual idea of God[55]. To throw oneself into the Unknown, and to die there, such is the gift of the absolute to free the self from the weight of its struggles and its sorrows, provided however that the self makes the subjective test of God in the absolute inner tearing, which, beyond the suffering of losing what I was attached to, stems from the self-realization by the "self" of its profound ontological nullity. The tearing is, so to speak, the absolute deflagration of the absolute in me and that which, dissolving any limit, frees me from the self-limitation of the "myself". The proof of God and the subjective trial, from oneself to Oneself, are but one. Hence the invitation to liberate the Absolute from the "idea of God"—to erase, if necessary, up to His name[56].

### *3.2. The Neutralization of the Ego: The God from Within*

The question to be asked now is no longer whether God exists, but *who exists*. Indeed: only a "me" can believe or not believe in "God", as Other than Oneself.

The Arabic term *Insan* defines man as "the one who forgets"[57], that is, the one who, in ''oblivion of oblivion", ignores his true nature. Strange figure of man to be the name of a non-knowledge, not of this or that thing, external to oneself, but indeterminate and interior unknowingness of oneself. Lifting the veil of metaphysical ignorance consists on the one hand in extracting oneself from the "matrix", i.e., the lived existence when eyes out, it advances while ignoring itself (far from egocentrism, which is always only adoration of the "self" to the extent of its fascination for the "thing"); and on the other hand to lift the fundamental ignorance, which is ignorance of the true nature of things (*what is reality*) and of oneself (*who am I*) and whose awareness alone, properly inexplicable because

unconditional, opens the way to the search for truth, as no one seeks wisdom who believes himself to be wise (Sheffield 2008, p. 204a).

It will be necessary for the mirror to be washed in order to reflect the light of the Sun, on the universal way of self-purification. Not that we should purify ourselves from any "evil" whatsoever, except to say that "evil" is ignorance itself. The unification of oneself, by self-exaltation towards the One, constitutes then the way of radical *destruction*, at the root of all the lies, of the *radical lie* to oneself, i.e., the one who, within the framework of what can be called the *dualism of representation*, thinks of himself as a separate existence. In other words, the lie is the liar. Death to oneself prepares the advent of God to Oneself. But for the God from within to rise, the "self must die"[58].

*Desolation and desert*—in its return to the Primordial, the purgative way carries with it a necessary, primordial negation. The process of deconstruction of the idea of God coincides indeed with a very specific *pathos*, which is not caused by the world, but raised as from below, in an abyssal roar, by that which, limitless, undoes all limits. The *pathos of the absolute* refers so to speak to the suffering of a wave which, experiencing itself as limited and finite, experiences its emptiness, pains which are nevertheless the jolts of an awakening soul. Such is the Way of the Cross, the trial of Life that leads to oneself: despair, suffering, loss of illusions, what St. John of the Cross refers to with the expression of the "dark night of the soul"[59]. Just as a full cup cannot receive more, so the soul cannot welcome the absolute if it does not empty itself of "me-ness". Since for the self, the finality and the end coincide in its *self-transcendence*, the ego is to be simplified and decomplexified, abandoning its attachment to its *apparent existence*—the "idea of me"—life is revealed as such a process of *de-formation* and *de-finitisation*, i.e., of the *destruction of my world*.

Relieved from egoity, a space opens for the *subjective experience*—in the sense of the subject, and not according to the scheme of subject-object difference—of God in ''me", experienced as the most intimate in oneself, *interior intimo meo*, more intimate than the intimacy of myself[60]. Interiority is no longer that of a particular "me" but, *hyper-interiority*, it unfolds as the locus of the universal: where the living God dwells. In other words, what is in me is more intimate and higher than what I consider as myself—what I call "me" is not truly me.

Thus, to experience God is not to experience a transcendent being, external to oneself, but what is most internal to oneself. Indeed, since God is a subject, only a subject emptied from his "me-ness", having renounced his supposed "me", can coincide with the ultimate Subject, and so declare the coincidence between ''the eye in which he sees God" and ''the eye in which God sees" (Eckhart 1979), between his eye and the eye of God. So that no "I" ever experiences God. My face is just a veil behind which lies the unrepresentable face of God. (I) am nothing other than God experiencing Himself through each being– each one being the discrete manifestation of Oneness—in the play of being[61], calls, caught up in the condition of incarnation—metaphysical ignorance—"me". God freed from his idea and the Self from "me-ness" are but One.

### *3.3. The Neutralization of the World: The Universal Self*

In this play of God veiling Himself, a new question arises. The via *negativa* expresses the absolute transcendence of the divine regarding the worldly conditions of manifestation. But what is this world itself and what is creation the creation of? If in one case the divine negativity indicates its excess on the worldly positivity, what about the status of this world from the point of view of what exceeds it if not more native negativity, of the order of *Self-negation*?

From this point of view, negation is to be attributed to the world that believes itself to be Other than Him, and to Others that believe themselves to be other than Oneself—which is neither negation of a "being" (for only He is) nor simple negation (for there is indeed a world), but *negation of negation*, what can be called a *non-existent existence* or a *non-manifested manifestation*. To dispel the cosmic glamour of creation, which *appears* to be Other, such

is the aim of *Gnosis* which ties in a single destiny to the knowledge of Oneself and that of God.

This unitive way leads man out of his co-existent illusion, that is, of the gap between God and "me" on the one hand and between God and the world on the other hand. Far from pantheism which confuses the divine Ipseity with the unreal otherness of the world[62], ego as an illusion of separation does not exist any more than the world itself[63]. Indeed, from the non-dual point of view, it is the negation of God—He does not exist, or He does not manifest Himself—that *results* from this *native negation* that we call metaphysical ignorance by which I believe myself separated and isolated. Our eyes veiled the true Sight, our ears the true Hearing. *Gnosis*, referring to the lifting of this veil—there is only one knowing Subject[64]—reveals that the sensible, finite, temporal world only *appears* so in its multiplicity, that it is a *relative* reality, the plural expression of one Reality, that of the Universal Self (Hari 2018, pp. 61–73).

So immanence is no longer antinomic to transcendence but constitutes its *mode of manifestation*[65]. The Absolute—the "Un-bound"[66]—*transcends the opposition* between the oneness of the *Non-Manifested* and multiplicity of the *Manifestation*: it lies unborn and unproductive *in itself*, in its Ipseity—as there is nothing which is not It—and at the same time it is *for itself* as the illusory appearances of "another" than Itself. The world is not the creation of which God would be the supreme cause, but Himself under the self-veiling of multiplicity of existence. He simply manifests Himself in the aspect of "another" than Him[67].

Consequently, the path of neutrality sketches an integral metaphysical perspective which, *neither plural nor monistic*[68], neutralizes the unilaterality of every point of view, including that of the only transcendence which, abstaining the Divinity from the unlimited Fullness of its Possibilities, encloses it in an impoverished numerical unity. The divine All-possibility would not be what it is if the possibility of the relative were to miss[69].

## 4. Conclusions: The Sun of Reality

"There is no divinity (or reality, or absolute) apart from the one divinity" (*La illâha illa Allâh*) (Shaya 1981). If only He is, who am I?

If the wave seems distinct from the ocean, from the point of view of form[70], it is in its essence no other than the ocean itself. It *is* the ocean as it experiences itself through its finite and limited form. But this limit is only of appearance, the separation an illusion: what remains is the infinity of the ocean, the transpersonal and supra-dual identity of the Self and the Principle that expresses the mahāvākya *Aham Brahma asmi*[71], (I) am Brahman, (I) am the Absolute.

> "Know what your Self is, that is, your existence; know that deep down you are not you, but you do not know (. . .). When knowledge comes to you, you will know that you have known Allah by Allah, not by yourself. Let's take an example: suppose you don't know your name is Mahmûd, or that you must be called Mahmûd—because the real name and the one who bears it are, in reality, identical. Now you think your name is Muhammad; but after some time of error, you come to know that you are Mahmud and that you have never been Muhammad." (Arabi 1977, pp. 18–19)

> "What will Your new name be, after the surrender of the *ego*? There is no name other than Yours. The Vedas praise You, the world glorifies You. The essence of religious teachings, it is Yourself." (Onru 2020, p. 68)

The quest itself appears from this angle as an illusion, both that of separation and that of union, which presupposes the union between two distinct realities. Gnosis is not the extinction of existence, because it supposes that things have an existence and then lose it when He alone is, but the extinction of the separatist and dual illusion born of Ignorance. It is the realization that there is no Existence except His—of the one who is the Self to Himself revealed as the Sun of Reality.

From the mystics in search of the Non-Manifest to the atheists who infer the non-existence of God from His apparent non-appearance, it must be said that, ultimately, both are mistaken. The former because they want to join *That* which alone is, so that their quest defeats what they wanted to do, reinforcing the duality they seek to undo, unknowing they are Who they are searching for. The latter is because they make the worldly illusion a reality and the One Reality an illusion.

But while the first follow the path of the One and prepare themselves for awakening, the latter, on the other hand, in the shadow of the Principle, seem to succumb to *hybris* by establishing the appearing duality as a self-sufficient reality: ignoring the world as the appearance of the universal Self, it is the Self which is now seen as a mere appearance[72]. Certainly, who cannot say as Heraclitus "I looked for myself»[73]—ignoring the *Gnothi Seauton*-, cannot be taken seriously when he speaks of Reality.

Ignorance is the ultimate negation as a negation of our Self and double negation as it ignores ignorance. But it is the strange beauty of this paradox that the negation of the Absolute, inherent in the relative, exists only to affirm the Absolute.

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## Notes

1 This article is based on a talk given in July 2021 on the status of negation in the light of *gnosis* at the Annual Conference of The Mystical Theology Network and The Association for Continental Philosophy of Religion, "Thinking about Nothing: Negation, Philosophy and the Mystical" at Liverpool Hope University. Our warm thanks to Dr. Simon D. Podmore for welcoming our contribution.

2 It is a question of understanding negativity on the one hand as it refers to the absolute transcendence of the One—beyond the essence and multiplicity of the second hypostasis, the Intellect-, that is, to what, unqualified and irrepresentable, requires an apophatic *logos*, and on the second hand to the "art of negation", the suffering subjectivity. For the first aspect, we refer the reader to the study of Victor Béguin (2013, pp. 553–69). For the relationship between apophasis and supra-dual experience in the mystical writings of various traditions (Neo-Platonism, Christian mysticism, and Sufism), see (Sells 1994; Davies and Turner 2002). For the second point, Podmore (2013).

3 This distinction serves to clarify the meaning of negation—especially in the Neo-Platonian and Christian tradition of negative theology—as it stands beyond dualism and representation. On the logical status of negation beyond contradiction, see Tokuryû (2020, p. 41).

4 The Husserlian reduction, which consists of the suspension of the natural attitude, i.e., of the understanding of the world in terms of "external" reality and of the identification of consciousness with the psychophysical intramundane self, is also qualified as "modification of neutrality" (Husserl 1983, § 109).

5 In the quest for the Absolute, the opposing logic that structures human Understanding (*Verstand*) must be transcended. German idealism, which aims to overcome the opposition between me and the world, between finite and infinite, between thought and being, requires the passage from the conditioned (subject-object duality) to the unconditioned which, according to a common play of words, *Un-bedingt*, cannot be of the order of things, *Dinge*. In other words, the unconditional is the subject. See (Schelling 2008, p. 67). See (Tilliette 1987, pp. 13–25; Schlanger 1966).

6 The integration of the thinker in the thought he deploys- or self-thematization of the subject—serves as a guiding thread for those wanting to complete the system of Kantian criticism. No discourse on "reality" can ignore anymore the status of the *one who speaks*. To do so would be to succumb to the "performative contradiction". Cf. (Fichte 1988, pp. 87–135).

7 For an in-depth study of the structure of representation from the Fichtean point of view, see (Thomas-Fogiel 2000, in particular, the first chapter on the aporia of representation, pp. 17–33); for a genealogy of modern metaphysics at the threshold of the fourteenth century, see (Boulnois 1999).

8 This is the "problem of the finite", of existence (*ek-sistere*) or what Schelling called the "exit from the Absolute", in other words, the passage from Oneness to Twoness. Either this passage is real and overcoming separation means reuniting what has been separated and originally stems from the ontological Division (*Urteil*) of the Principle. Either existence is an *appearance*, there is nothing strictly speaking but the One, twoness amounting to metaphysical ignorance, i.e., a "bad vision" or "spiritual cataract". The first corresponds to the emanationist system of Neo-Platonian Henology. The second to eastern metaphysics, of which the Advaita Vedanta is one of the most beautiful jewels. *Acosmism*, such is the idea that the world has no "real" reality and that the

supreme reality is that of the non-manifested Absolute. However, to argue that the world is an illusion, *māyā*, does not mean that it is unreal, but that it is not what it seems to be. There is a reality of manifestation, but it is *relative* to what it is precisely the manifestation of. See (Chenet 1998a, p. 91).

9 In the above sense of *Unbedingt*, no-*thing*.

10 (Vallin 1987, p. 80.) Negative theology is much more than a doctrine, "more than a matter of language or dialectical convenience. It is a radical attitude both intellectual and existential in the face of the problem of Transcendence." Defining it by apophasis, i.e., the purification of the mode of expression (the "*via remotionis*" of St. Thomas), is not enough: it is the relationship to the form, and the openness to the supra-essential Nothingness of the Principle—the darkness in-itself of the Absolute, the Night of the Sun—that is essential. Negative theology is essentially a "mystical theology", a liberating spiritual experience.

11 Hence the nihilistic interpretation which disfigures the essence of nothingness (*Śūnyatā*) by opposing it to fullness, not seeing that the forms *are Nothing*. Cf. (Droit 1997).

12 The distinction between *that* and *what* W. James draws in his work, from his *Principles* to the *Essays of Radical Empiricism*, refers to the difference between what is indeterminate and as such unspeakable and what is determined and of the order of object. It is also found in the context of the metaphysics of the East. See the use in the *Upanishads* of *that* to refer to the true Reality/God/Self (*Tat Tvam Asi*, you are That).

13 Neutrality, in reference to its etymological meaning *ne-uter*, designates the process of neutralization of opposites and of the duality between the terms. Neutrality, in the perspective opened up by Barthes, Blanchot, and Bataille, indicates *that* which is unclassifiable, indeterminate, and unconditional. Cf. (Perrin 2009).

14 (Jung 1991, pp. 21–22). "The meeting with oneself is, at first, the meeting with one's own shadow. The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well. But one must learn to know oneself in order to know who one is. For what comes after the door is, surprisingly enough, a boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently no one inside and no one outside, no above and no below, no here and no there, no mine and no thine, no good and no bad. It is a world of water, where all life floats in suspension; where the realm of the sympathetic system, the soul of everything living, begins; where I am indivisibly this and that; where I experience the other in myself and the other-than-myself experiences me".

15 By counter-intentionality, we mean the movement by which consciousness, freeing itself from noematic correlations, that is, from its centrifugal intentionality, returns to itself. In other words, intentionality or object consciousness is secondary to pure consciousness or nondual objectless consciousness. But while intentional consciousness is structured by the double polarity of the subject and the object, consciousness returned to itself—beyond the constitution of the different levels of objectivity, namely the world—prior to the division between self and non-self. Cf. Carfantan (2015).

16 The egological understanding of interiority—related to Descartes's *res cogitans*—has been heavily criticized in the 20th century in terms of a "myth of interiority". On this topic, see (Bouveresse 1976). For another conception of interiority, decoupled from I-ness and opened in Greco-Roman Antiquity to the impersonal, see (Aubry and Ildefonse 2008; Ildefonse 2022).

17 Ravaisson spoke of "cosmic interiority", referring to the ontological link between the different levels of reality, to universal sympathy (See Lurson 2022, pp. 33–62). The interiority that we call transcendental proceeds from the deconstruction of its empirical understanding as soon as the self has been nullified and, more deeply, from the reversal of the natural conception of reality as a reality "external" to consciousness. It is in a nutshell a philosophy of the *absolute in-itself* or absolute interiority.

18 *Enstasis* is the term used by Mircea Eliade to describe the yogic process of "entering into our Self", as opposed to ecstasy which, as its etymology indicates, refers to the dynamics of "going out from oneself". Cf. (Eliade 1975). The ecstasy of God hints at the enigma of existence, or, according to Heraclitus's expression, the *Hen diapheron heauto*, the transition from Oneness to Twoness.

19 The Absolute, which cannot stand the objectifying light of the concept, is meditated at the twilight of reason. About the night of Being that Gregory of Nyssa had qualified of "Tenebrae", see (Daniélou 1944, p. 190).

20 We remember the words of the preface of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*: truth not only as "substance" but as "subject". In our discussion, the experience of "God" makes little sense, except to construe the expression from the viewpoint of the *subjective genitive*, i.e., as God's experience by and of oneself.

21 (Breton 2011, p. 9). "The meditation on the Principle is the very principle of philosophy". For a study of the logical viewpoint of unity, see (Priest 2014).

22 As Proust's *Search of Lost Time*, philosophy is the "search of lost meaning", according to Wolfram Hogrebe's beautiful expression (Hogrebe 2015, p. 9). The crisis of the notion of truth is related to philosophy's oblivion towards its own essence. See (Cambier 2019).

23 *Viveka* refers in Indian thought to discernment, i.e., the distinction between reality and appearance. It is closely associated with *vairâgya*, detachment. See (Herbert 1972, p. 207). This concept, central in the Advaita Vedanta Tradition, lends its name to Adi Shankara's work, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, commentary by Swami Chinmayananda, Chinmaya Mission Trust, 2006.

24 On the one hand, there can be no knowledge of the One, it is necessary to go beyond intellect. Indeed, if being is determined and thinkable, the Principle, indeterminate, is unspeakable and unthinkable. The discourse seems to have no other resource than to say what it is not, opening up to the supra-predicative and supra-rational presence of the first Principle. However, while

Plotinus points towards the limits of conceptuality—hence the massive use of images and *muthos*-, and that philosophy appears as the propaedeutic stage to union (*epistrophé*, *henosis*), another interpretation can be offered. See (Lavaud 2008, pp. 251–69). Namely: the experience of the One is a condition of philosophy. Indeed, Intellect desires to know the One and desire appears as the original form of intellection, prior to being and multiplicity, in which there is a form of union, of abolition of the disjunction between the lack of desire and the fullness of union. "The desire to see is vision".

[25] The decentered soul, lost in the world, is represented by Narcissus, as opposed to Ulysses who represents the soul on its way to its native Ithaca, i.e., to the One from which it proceeds. Cf. (Jerphagnon 1991, pp. 46–50). The truth is thus inseparable from the lifting of the veil on oneself, the "vision" including the self-revelation of the subject who, mere shadows for having drunk the water of oblivion (*Lethe*) is being restored to his solar nature. See (Néria 2019).

[26] (Plato 1955, p. 67e): "in truth, those who practice philosophy correctly practice dying".

[27] (Plato 1952), which celebrates philosophy as a manifestation of the desire of the One.

[28] This discrimination coincides with the awakening to philosophy. See the opening of De Spinoza (1955).

[29] The main proofs in the history of positive theology are briefly as follows.

- Teleological proof: there are certain phenomena in the world whose nature supposes an intelligent cause: one goes back from order to the act of ordering, from the effect to the final cause.
- Cosmological proof or *ab contingentia mundi*. Since the world could have been non-existent or other than the way it is, that it is therefore contingent, reason requires that its existence be based on what is necessary. If the world, then God.
- Ontological proof: the idea of God is that of a perfect being; but if my existence is contingent because I am a finite being, the idea of perfection implies its necessary existence. In other words, the idea of God envelops his existence. I cannot conceive of a perfect being that would not exist, just as a mountain cannot be conceived without a valley, a triangle without angles: it would be an internal contradiction to the concept of God.
- Proof by the idea of infinity, of cartesian origin. I have in me the idea of infinity. But it is an idea that I cannot obtain by the senses or by imagination. I cannot obtain infinity by the addition of the finite. There is consequently an innate idea that as such can only come from an infinite Being. Primitive idea, infinity allows me to become aware of my being in its finitude and lack. To become aware of oneself, as imperfect, one must have the idea of being more perfect than me. It will be noted that this set of "proofs" is based on the duality between the idea of God as the infinite foundation of the world, and the imperfect and limited "me".

[30] The question on the supra-conceptuality is different from the duality which structures the questioning itself and which here raises the issue of the absence of self-thematization. Cf. (Nef 2018, pp. 193–202).

[31] Descartes, here referred to as "useless and uncertain", had however demonstrated that God, just as the union of the soul with the body, bypasses the limits of our understanding. They form an exception in the system of reason. Integral rationalism will be represented by Leibniz and Spinoza. See (Boulnois 2023).

[32] Pascal himself remains subdued to the duality between finite creatures and divine infinity. For an introduction to Self-knowledge in a monistic framework see (Deutsch 1969).

[33] See (Ricoeur 2004, pp. 38–50). The absence of God can be interpreted in two ways. 1/The withdrawal of divinity (*tsimtsoum*) as a condition of creation in the Jewish tradition. See (Wolfson 2019, p. 137). 2/ Atheism which concludes of the apparent absence of God to its non-existence. See (Horowitz 2023).

[34] This is not about the soft and consensual atheism, unwilling to reflect upon itself, which forms the overwhelming religion of existential limpness. We speak of a reflective and reasoned atheism, which has weighed its other. Free atheism so to speak, is not conditioned by the sole outer circumstances, though it still depends on the unexamined dual idea of God. Cf. (Gilson 2014).

[35] This is precisely the common ground between the believer and the unbeliever, and that on the contrary mystical theology puts at the center of its spiritual process: the unbreakable link between the negativity of the Principle—its incommensurability and absolute transcendence—and the negativity and emptiness of the self, the inseparability of the divine "who" and the subjective "who".

[36] See (Vallin 1987, p. 82) on "the irreducible duality between the Creator and the creatures", i.e., the ontological duality between the Principle and Manifestation. "The religious man as such only considers the Principle according to his own ontological reality of creature". Already "humanist", he "reduces the *essence* of man to his condition". By proclaiming his nothingness before God, the religious man determines the Principle by limiting it from the vantage point of his unquestioned belief in the reality of the world and the finite. Hence the theme of the sinful creature is its "hyperbolic, sentimental, individualistic and passionate affirmation" (pp. 96–97). On the contrary, the non-dual perspective does not see according to the Twoness but to Oneness: so that manifestation, taking the reflexive form of *self*-manifestation, is no longer the Other of God but the manifested Self. The question is, as the author indicates, whether one wants to justify and lay the speculative foundations for finitude—or really transcend it.

[37] The unhappy consciousness, which lives in the infinite gap between the finite and the infinite, originates in a dualist theology experienced as the kingdom of lived antinomies. In other words, the religious soul identifies with the creature, needing the finite, construed as ontologically subsistent, to orient itself toward the Absolute. But in doing so, as G. Vallin writes, "it can only attempt to surpass its finitude by imposing limits on the Infinity of the Absolute." (Vallin 1959, first part).

[38] The idea of man as the image of God participates in the idea of an anthological superiority, but it also includes the exclusion of the essential Identity with God. See (Pétrement 1946).

[39] The sociological approach obviously puts at the forefront this dimension of systemic organization of beliefs and practices within a community. Cf. (Durkheim 1995).

[40] (Bentounès and Solt 1996). For a study of Al-Hallah (2010) as well as Hatem (2012, p. 41).

[41] *Hridayam*, Grace in the cave of the Heart. Heart is another name for Reality. Cf. (Sri Ramana Maharshi 2015). For the process of *Atma-Vichara*, self-inquiry, the path of non-dual devotion (*Bhakti Yoga*) is in this respect the same as the path of non-dual knowledge (*Jnana-Yoga*).

[42] The bipartition between esoteric and exoteric must not be forced to the point of separating them watertight from one another: these are two aspects of religion that originate in a difference of orientation. In the Bergsonian lexicon, one focuses on obligation, belief, prohibition, and prescription (closed religion), and the other stirs the cold ashes by placing himself at the point where the Source springs. It's about getting to the heart of the fruit. On the Mysteries see (Caratelli 2003, p. 61). For a perspective anchored in Cultural Studies, (Bisson 2016; Launay 2003, pp. 245–59).

[43] Kant, "If taking something to be true is only subjectively sufficient and is at the same time held to be objectively insufficient, then it is called believing" (*KrV A822/B850*).

[44] It is at this exoteric level that all the criticisms addressed to religion are located. The relevance of the classic criticism of Feuerbach, Marx, or Freud stops where the process of neutralization of the idea of God and the idea of me begins (Preus 1996).

[45] The Latin term *absolus* means "detached from". We translate by "un-bound", in that to say it is "detached" or "separate" is already to say too much. The problem of the existence of the relative world of finite forms arises from such a dual and separatist understanding of the absolute. While the term "un-bound" insists on the fact that it is not bound, tied up, or submitted; not on its opposition to the relative, which in reality it integrates as its multiple self-expressions.

[46] This difference is only meaningful in relation to the principle's nature. See (Cantwell Smith 1998).

[47] The distinction between immediate knowledge and mediated knowledge intersects that between heart and mind. See the lexical field of "taste" used by Ghazâlî (1991).

[48] Yoga aims, as its name indicates, to "unite", i.e., the ascension of the levels of manifestation towards the unmanifested source. The horizontal union of all the dimensions of our being (physical, psychic, emotional, psychological) is only the springboard for the vertical union "with" God (Silburn 1983).

[49] Nicholas of Cusa, who is one of the first in Germany to integrate the Neoplatonic philosophy of the One, designates God as a "coincidence of opposites", considering that God is all things in a state of *complicatio*, of union, while the world is all things in a state of *explicatio*. The principle of contradiction must in this respect be transcended in order to think that which stands higher than any opposition. See (Trottmann 2005, pp. 67–85; Dastur 2016, p. 123; Pasqua 2016, pp. 113–24).

[50] Deriving from Proclus and described by Dionysius the Aeropagite in his *Divine Names* and *Mystical Theology*, as the deconstruction of all cognition and concept of God. It is central to the mystical theology of John Scotus Eriugena, Meister Eckhart, and Nicholas of Cusa, in opposition to the *theologia kataphatika.* Cf. (Mortley 1982, pp. 429–39).

[51] Metaphysical ignorance is the translation of the Sanskrit term *Avidyā*, the absence of *Vidya*, i.e., of the true and fundamental knowledge. It designates the mode of occultation by which everyone lives in the shadow of oneself, separated as self-consciousness from the self of consciousness. It is an illusion that coincides with the very emergence of individuated existence. It is not an illusion that I have about myself, but it is this "me" itself, established as *fons* and *origo* of all meaning and all value, which is the very illusion. See (Hulin 1994; Couture-Mingheras 2023, pp. 101–12).

[52] Neo-Platonic lexicon re-invested by Dionysius the Areopagite. See (Théologie mystique 1943, p. 177): "It is indeed in Silence that we learn the secrets of this Darkness of which it is too little to say that it shines with the most brilliant light in the heart of the blackest darkness." For the paradox of a knowledge of the unknowable—the very purpose of *gnosis*—see (Bonardel 2002, pp. 50–52).

[53] *I.e.* the duality between subject and object. The notion of intellectual intuition plays an important role in Fichte and Schelling's idealism as it gives access to unconditioned knowledge. See (Tilliette 1995).

[54] God-realization = Self-realization.

[55] The *docta ignorantia* is based on the incommensurability and non-proportionality between the transcendence of God and human knowledge (Nicholas of Cusa 1981). The One must deny everything that denies it, *negatio negationis*, a negation of the negation. But in this approach, the limits inherent to creatures are highlighted in the sense of a "metaphysics of separation". See (Pasqua 2006; Greisch 2015).

[56] The God of positive theology appears as an obstacle to the understanding of the "Deity" in its radical infinity, free from any attribution in general (justice, goodness, intelligence) and determinative qualification (in terms of absolute cause of creation of a world thought to be "outside") to the point of going beyond its very name. See (Maître Eckhart 1942, p. 258). "Therefore, I pray to God to free me from God".

[57] The name *Al-Insan* is given to man in the 76th sura of Quran. See (Dye 2019).

[58] To use one of B. Russell's (2016) expressions. The ethical critique of the *ego* takes place in the broader context of the deconstruction of the idea of a substantial *ego*. See in modern Vienna Ernst Mach ("das Ich ist unrettbar").

[59] (Saint John of the Cross 1979, pp. 19–23); 'The Dark Night of Suffering & the Darkness of God: God-forsakenness or Forsaking God in Gospel of Sufferings & St. John of the Cross', In Perkins (2005, pp. 229–56). But the Night here described, of suffering and anguish, remains dependent on an irreducible dualism between the emptiness of the finite and the infinite positivity of God. The negation of the created turns out to be partial, unable to integrate the created and the finite by going beyond them. Hence the inner quartering experienced between finitude and the desired infinity.

[60] Saint-Augustin, *Confessions*, livre III, 6, 11. Cf. (Chrétien 2014a, pp. 57–74).

[61] While *Māyā* is the principle of illusion and suffering, *Lila* represents "creation" as a divine game. The second aspect has a meaning for the one who has lifted the veil covering up his supra-essential identity with the Absolute. On the status of the cosmogonic manifestation of the Absolute, see (Chenet 1998b, pp. 307–39).

[62] The problem of pantheism comes from the identification of the absolute with the set of *finite and determinate realities*. See the *Pantheismusstreit* initiated by Jacobi's publication in 1785 of *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* which concerned the interpretation of pantheism as nihilism and atheism. As for panentheism, it refers to the fact that "all is in God" (*pan-en-theos*), therefore emphasizing both the transcendence of the principle and its absolute immanence in the manifested. Cf. (Griffin 2014).

[63] The illusion is about the realist apprehension of the world in terms of reality external to consciousness. For a contemporary critique of the realist and materialist position within the framework of analytical idealism, see (Kastrup 2019, part II "An idealist ontology", pp. 51–122).

[64] For a masterful presentation of the *Tattvas*, i.e., the "levels or principles of reality" which correspond to the external self-projection of divine interiority, see (Wallis 2012, pp. 124–49).

[65] The dynamic of retreat, of the ascension of the soul out of the world, is followed by a dynamic of descent by which the world itself appears this time seen with non-dual eyes. If the Absolute excluded the relative, the infinite the finite, in other words, if the world was treated only as an appearance, non-duality would be burdened by an underground duality. Instead, non-duality *includes* duality itself, the One—in its original sense—*preceding* the division between unity and multiplicity. One excluded, the finite is later on reintegrated as the *symbolic reflection* of the Principle. For a study of this second movement at the crossroads of Neo-Platonism, theurgy and the non-dual Indian traditions of Kashmir Shaivism, see (Shaw 2024; Vallin 1987, p. 86): "Metaphysical negation is therefore not so much a *negation of exclusion* as a *negation of integration*, or, in other words, the integral transcendence of the Principle is correlated to its radical immanence in the manifested. (. . .) Negation here is only the removal of the veil which illusorily separated the manifested from its Essence or its Foundation".

[66] (Dattatreya 1884, § 56, p. 27). "O mind, why do you weep? You are truly the Atman. Be one with It. Drink, O my dear, the supreme nectar of the boundless ocean of nondual Brahman".

[67] It should be neutral, "It" or "That". Furthermore, see (Vallin 1987, p. 95): "Also the Transcendence of the One remains relatively incomplete and abstract in Plotinus who, although he recognizes that it is by returning to itself that the soul goes back to reality "beyond the essence", nevertheless conceives the spiritual experience of the One as an *ecstasy* by which the soul tears itself away from itself, not in order to *identify itself* with its Self, but to *unite* with the Principle which ultimately remains essentially distinct from itself".

[68] Hence non-duality or *neutral monism*, which refers to a monism *beyond* the opposition between monism and pluralism. See (Counet 2021).

[69] (Vallin 1987, p. 158): "The Void of Non-Being requires indeed, by virtue of its integral Infinity, that the negation of the Infinite which seems posited and crystallized outside of itself in the multiplicity of separate forms, exists in some way *at the level of the Absolute itself*. The Void of Over-Being demands, by virtue of its internal limitlessness, its own negation or manifestation." For a non-dual interpretation of the Tree of Knowledge (Daat) of good and evil, i.e., the very status of duality, see (Chaim Smith 2015, p. 134).

[70] The image of the ocean and the wave, like that of gold and ornaments, is common to the classical texts of Advaita Vedanta. It allows us to overcome the opposition between the finite and the infinite by showing that form is not separated from the supra-formal. For the Buddhist notion of emptiness, see (Silburn 1977, p. 99).

[71] *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad*, I.4.10.

[72] Since the beginning of the twentieth-century philosophy is indeed at war with the notion of "subject".

[73] Behind the universal movement hides a motionless Self. See the translation and non-dual reading of Jean Bouchard d'Orval (2007).

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