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**IN SEARCH OF
THE NORTH STAR:
REDISCOVERING
“METAPHYSICAL
ANTHROPOLOGY”
IN AN AGE OF
UNCERTAINTY**

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::ABSTRACT

THE KNOWLEDGE OR SCIENCE of “metaphysical anthropology” of different religious traditions explores the subtle, spiritual, non-physical dimension of the human mind and body, as a precondition for the mystical experience, unification or realization of the one, nondual reality. This paper explores some examples of this traditional knowledge, focusing particularly on specific streams within Western and Islamic traditions. It attempts to show how a theory of the spiritual dimension of human nature and the living spiritual traditions of different cultures are relevant and epistemologically valid in the modern “age of criticism”.

Key words: subtle physiology, nonduality, spirituality of light, Sufism, Western Mysticism

POVZETEK

ISKANJE ZVEZDE SEVERNICE: VNOVIČNO ODKRITJE “METAFIZIČNE ANTROPOLOGIJE” V DOBI NEGOTOVOSTI

Vednost ali znanost “metafizične antropologije” različnih religioznih tradicij raziskuje tenkočutne, duhovne, nematerialne razsežnosti človekovega duha in telesa, ki so predpogoj za mistično izkustvo, zedinjenje ali udejanjenje ene, nedvojne resničnosti. Članek razišče nekatere primere tradicionalne vednosti in se osredotoča predvsem na določene tokove znotraj zahodne in islamske tradicije. Izpostaviti skuša pomen in epistemološko relevanco teorije duhovnih razsežnosti človeške narave in živih duhovnih tradicij različnih kultur za današnjo “dobo kriticizma”.

Ključne besede: tenkočutna fiziologija, nedualnost, duhovnost svetlobe, sufizem, zahodni misticizem

::1. THE TRANSCENDENT DIMENSION OF THE HUMAN BEING ACCORDING TO RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

It could be claimed that the spiritual traditions of different religions transmit a type of knowledge about the nature of being human which consists, at its core, of the experience that a human being is more than the physical, material (and therefore mortal) body, brain and its facilities. Human beings are more than their limited cognition and body. From this perspective, it is a

core element of the “memory space” of religions that the essential dimension of human nature – and reality as a whole – is precisely beyond the physical. There exists an element in humankind which transcends the physical and is one with the origin and principle of being as such. This reflection of the spiritual streams within religious traditions about the nature of human beings could be called “metaphysical anthropology”; in each of these spiritual knowledge-systems it is articulated in the form of specific concepts and terms. Thus, the exceptional rank and dignity of human beings is anchored in their representing a link between the transcendent and the cosmos, the uncreated and the created, the metaphysical and the physical. It is an element of ancient and Christian anthropology that humans are “a bond that connects God and world”.¹ They are a “third cosmos” (*tertius mundus*) which unites the invisible reality of the true light and the visible physical world.²

In the Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – this concept is based on the idea that man is created in the image of God.³ In the tradition of Western mysticism, this biblical idea was connected with the Platonic notion of *homoiosis tò theô*, the “likeness/ similarity [of man] to God”⁴ as the central idea of a religious-philosophical program of education in antiquity. The idea that man is made in the image of God, and the goal of her/his religious and philosophical path is the *homoiosis* to God, the realization of the divine presence in human beings, shaped the development of Christian mysticism in manifold ways (see Haas 2014: 218ff). In a different way, certain Asian spiritual traditions such as Advaita Vedānta, the nondualistic tantric Shaivism of Kashmir, Buddhism and Daoism, focus on the notion of nonduality (Loy 1997). Particular lines within both streams of spirituality, in the East and in the West, correspond in many respects. They differentiate between everyday, empirical (‘objective’) reality on the one hand, and the “Real” on the other, between limited cognition and the realization of truth. They explain the fact that this actual reality, the oneness or nonduality (Sanskrit *a-dvaita*) – in

¹“*Homo nexes est dei et mundi*”. Albert the Great (d. 1280) ascribes this expression to Hermes Trismegistos. The human being is above the world because he or she is endowed with a twofold form of cognition: the sensual (*physica*) and the abstract (*doctrinalis*) which enables human reason to reach his/her perfection (Albert, *Metaphysica* 1.1.1, ed. Col. XVI, page 2,4-15; quoted from Resnick 2013: 336).

²John Scottus Eriugena (9th c. A.D.): *Vox Spiritualis*: sermon on the prolog of the Gospel of St. John, XIX, 290-298; English translation: Eriugena 1988; see Haas 1966; Haas 1996: 221-247. In his *Periphyseon*, Eriugena writes: “The highest dignity for human nature is that it uniquely mirrors transcendent divine nature. Only of human nature can it be said that it is made in the image and likeness of God. Not even the angels are accorded that honor, so in a sense man is greater than the angels. Human nature may even require the application of affirmative and negative propositions: Man is an animal and man is not an animal” (*Periphyseon* IV.758b; Sheldon-Williams and O’Meara 1987).

³Genesis 1:27: “God created man in his own image” (cf. Gen 5:1; 9:6); Hadith: “God created Adam in His form”.

⁴Plato: Dialog ‘Theaitetos’ 176a.

monotheistic terms the nonduality of God, cosmos and human being – is hidden and veiled. They explore the ways in which to realize and reveal this deep dimension of the differentiated, manifold reality, and of the human person. Of course, there are fundamentally different conceptual answers as to how the manifest, differentiated, plural, phenomenal world – our world of everyday perception and thinking – is related to this nondual, “highest” reality. The same applies to the Indian philosophical traditions: while Advaita Vedānta, e.g. the Āgamaśāstra (“Treatise on Sacred Tradition”) represents an absolute monism, including the unreality of the phenomenal world (see Torella 2011: 112), the Trika school of nondualistic Shaivism of Kashmir, especially Abhinavagupta (c. 960-1020 CE) developed a “supreme nondualism” (*paramādvayavāda*): the “highest” (*anuttara*), “the Real”, the one absolute light contains both plurality/differentiation and unity/oneness as modes of its self-representation (see Furlinger 2009: 12, 145, 157, 250). The consequence is that this Tantric tradition does not devalue the differentiated world, the human body, the senses and sensory impressions, emotions, and sexuality (see Furlinger 2006), but rather views them as powerful means for attaining the recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of one’s own essential nature. This essential nature is one/identical with *anuttara* and at the same time with the whole universe. From the Trika perspective, this is one’s own highest full identity (*paripūrṇasvātmakam*). Utpaladeva, the grand-teacher of Abhinavagupta in Kashmir, simply remarks, about this state of ultimate absorption (*samāveśā*), that it is “a state which is very difficult to achieve” (Īśvarapratyabhijñākārikā 1, commentary; Torella 2002: 85).

Spiritual traditions of different civilizations use different terms and concepts for this act of realization – “illumination”, “liberation”, *nirvāṇa*, recognition, etc. – and also for the person who has realized this oneness with the “highest reality” during his or her lifetime.⁵ For example, Islamic theologians speak of “the perfect human being” (Arabic *al-insān al-kāmil*) whose prototype is the prophet Muhammad. In Sufism, attaining perfection is not restricted to Muhammad alone. Perfect human beings cognize and experience the fun-

⁵This statement should not be understood in the sense of perennialism (see Gellman 2014). It does not overlook or ignore the differences between spiritual traditions and individual spiritual experiences. These differences could have to do with the connection between certain spiritual “events” or experiences and a certain spiritual “line” or tradition. At the same time, I do not support a strictly constructivist approach to the mystical experience. The influence of particular concepts, existing patterns or expectations on spiritual experience in general does not exclude the possibility of spiritual “events” or experiences which are completely unexpected and not part of one’s own cultural or religious systems (e.g. European, Christian), but known by a spiritual-philosophical system within a different culture (e.g. non-European) and religion. By “spiritual event” I mean sudden experiences within the subtle, non-physical (or metaphysical) dimension of the human body which is connected with the physical body, i.e. organs, senses.

damental “unity of being” (*wahdat al-wujūd*). This human potential is an essential part of creation: human beings are created in the form (*ṣūra*) of God, the Real (*al-haqq*), who placed in Adam the traces of all the divine names. Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165-1240), one of the foremost Sufi philosophers, concluded that:

“Hence everyone in the cosmos is ignorant of the whole and knows the part, except only the perfect human being. For God *taught him the names, all of them* [Q 2:31] and gave him the all-comprehensive words, so his form became perfect. The perfect human being brings together the form of the Real and the form of the cosmos. He is a *barzakh*⁶ between the Real and the cosmos, a raised-up mirror. The Real sees His form in the mirror of the human being, and creation also sees its form in him. He who gains this level has gained a level of perfection more perfect than which nothing is found in possibility.” (*Futūḥat III* 398.16)⁷

The “perfect (or perfected) human being” in Islam could be compared with the notion of the “god-man” in the ancient Christian traditions. Despite differences in terminology and between the two specific religious concepts, it is possible to understand them as “homeomorphic equivalents” (Raimon Panikkar), as symbols which occupy the same or similar functional place in distinct religious or cultural systems, and which therefore build a unique relation brought about by this correspondence.⁸

::2. THE PROCESS OF REALIZING NONDUALITY

In some spiritual traditions, the concrete process of the realization of nondual reality is often described as an ascent from the state of darkness to the experience of light, that is, the uncovering of the “light-nature” of man/of everything. Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism and of European mysticism (204/205-269/270 A.D.), reflects, in his philosophy, on the universal founda-

⁶The Arabic, *Barzakh* means “barrier, hindrance, isthmus” and in Islamic eschatology, it denotes the intermediate state of the deceased between individual death and the “Last Day”.

⁷Ibn al-‘Arabī: *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* (“The Mekkan Openings”). Quoted after Chittick 1998, 249.

⁸The philosopher of religion Raimon Panikkar (1918-2010) defines homeomorphic equivalents as “functional equivalents” or “a kind of functional analogy of the third order” (Panikkar 1993: 55). “Homeomorphism is not the same as analogy; it represents a functional equivalence discovered through a topological transformation” (Panikkar 1978: xxii). With this conceptual instrument, Panikkar wants to do justice to the specificity of each religious configuration and at the same time, to create the possibility to explore the deeper correspondences between these different configurations. The correlation of functions within belief systems (e.g. Christ and Išvara) permits points of encounter, without stating a simplistic equality of different concepts or symbols in different religions.

tion, the One (Greek τὸ ἕν).⁹ It is said to be the ultimate principle and origin of existence: “It is by the one that all beings are being” (*Enn.* VI.9,1; Plotinus 2003: 303) and at the same time, it is beyond “being” (III.8,10). Humans are different, but not separate from It, since the ground of the human soul touches the Divine. It is one with It, “established” in It (cf. V. 1,11). It is this deep dimension of the human person which opens up a path to the One. According to this particular perspective, there is at the center of the spiritual path the discovery of the reality behind the phenomenal empirical world, the realization of the nonduality of everything and the ascent towards unification with the One. Plotinus clearly describes the process based on personal experience. He turns from the outer things to “the Self”, the “interior man” (V.1,10), enters into the Self and “becomes one with the Divine and established on its fundament” (IV 8,1).

A well-known passage of *Ennead* VI.9 (“On the Good or the One”), about the state of union, the unification with the Divine, which is characterized as the “primarily beautiful”, “formless”, “a great Light” (VI.7,33), reads:

“But ‘whoever has seen, knows what I am saying’, that the soul then has another life and draws near, and has already come near and has a part in him, and so is in a state to know that the giver of true life is present and we need nothing more. But quite otherwise, we must put away other things and take our stand only in this, and become this alone, cutting away all the other things in which we are encased; so we must be eager to go out from here and be impatient at being bound to the other things, that we may embrace him with the whole of ourselves and have no part with which we do not touch God. There one can see both him and oneself as it is right to see: the self glorified, full of intelligible light – but rather itself pure light – weightless, floating free, having become – but rather, being – god; set on fire then, but the fire seems to go out if one is weighed down again.” (VI.9,9)¹⁰

It is obvious that this state of nonduality – becoming one with the “great light”, or realizing one’s own ultimate identity with it – is only possible within a trans-rational, non-discursive dimension, when the usual, limited, space-time form of human cognition is transcended, as Plotinus asserts:

⁹On the philosophy of Plotinus, see Beierwaltes 1985; O’Meara 1993; Hadot 1993.

¹⁰Plotinus: *Ennead* VI.9,9; quoted in Plotinus 2003: 339 (transl. Armstrong). Armstrong renders the expression “*theòn genómenon*” as “become a god”, thus weakening the statement of the author. I have therefore changed “a god” to “God”, in line with the clear and lucid German translation by Ermin Döll: “... wie man Gott geworden, vielmehr Gott ist” (Döll 2014: 21f).

“...but seeing and that which is seen are not reason, but greater than reason and before reason and above reason, as is that which is seen. (...) So then the seer does not see and does not distinguish and does not imagine two, but it is as if he had become someone else and he is not himself and does not count as his own there, but has become to belong to that and so is one, having joined, as it were, centre to centre” (VI.9, 10).¹¹

Here, Plotinus uses a very vivid language of negative theology, which expresses paradoxes (“the seer does not see”), or says what “it” is not, or describes it only as “this” without using any name or term for it. He reaches the limits of human language, which is part of the realm of duality: “For this reason the vision is hard to put in words.” (VI.9.10)¹²

The influence of Plotinus’ metaphysics and mysticism of light (Beierwaltes 1961) continued in the works of the Christian Neoplatonist Dionysius the Areopagite (late 5th century), and later in the Christian theology and philosophy of the Middle Ages (Koch 1960; Hedwig 1980: 119-150). The mysticism of light has also been an element of Sufism from its earliest times. It plays a prominent role in works such as *Mishkāt al-anwār* (“The niche of lights”) by Abū ḥāmid Ghazzālī (died 1111 A.D.) which interprets the Qur’ānic “light verse” (*āyat an-nūr*, 24:35) and the tradition of seventy-thousand veils of light and darkness which separate man and God (cf. Schimmel 2011).¹³ One of the foremost thinkers on the spirituality of light and illumination (Arabic *ishrāq*) was the Persian philosopher Shihābuddīn Suhrawardī (1153-1191), the *sheikh al-ishrāq*¹⁴ who wrote (among many other works) his masterpiece *Hikmat al-ishrāq* (“The philosophy of illumination”)¹⁵ and the treatise *Hayākil an-nūr* (“The altars of light”).¹⁶

Later, in Central Asia, Najmuddīn Kubrā (1145-1220), the founder of the Sufi order *Kubrawiyya*, elaborated extensive reflections on illumination, focusing particularly on colors as elements of spiritual experience (see Corbin 1971: 61ff; Schimmel 2011). In his main work, *Fawā’ih al-jamāl wa fawātih*

¹¹Translation: Plotinus 2003: 341. Compare Utpaladeva: “The reflective awareness ‘I’ which is the very essence of light, is not a mental construct (Sanskrit *vikalpaḥ*), although it is informed by the word (*vāgvaṇḍ*). For a *vikalpa* is an act of ascertainment (*vinīścayah*) presenting a duality (*dvayākṣepī*).” (Īśvarapratyabhijñānakārikā 6.1; Torella 2002:128). The expression “reflective awareness” (*vimarsā*) “I” (*aham*) can be understood in the sense of nondual cognition (without a duality of subject and object of cognition), “that ‘I’ whose essential state is pure awareness (*pramā*)” or “selfhood in perfection” (Lakshman Joo 2014: 85 and 84).

¹²Plotinus 2003: 341.

¹³Translation: al-Ghazzali 1998.

¹⁴On Suhrawardi and his mysticism of light see Corbin 1971.

¹⁵Edition and English translation: Suhrawardī 1999.

¹⁶Translation: Suhrawardī 1996.

al-jalāl, he reflects on the situation of man from a spiritual point of view. Man has fallen into the “well of nature” (*ābār at-ṭabī’a*) and is stuck at the bottom of the dark well-shaft (cf. *Fawā’ih*; Meier 1957: 70). Kubrā considers how human beings could be liberated, could seek and find God. In the perspective of this tradition, there is a divine element in human beings, the Self, a shining core which is normally hidden or buried by “darkness”, the physical, material nature of man: “Learn, O my friend, that the object of the search (*morād*) is God, and that the subject of searching is a light from him.” (*Fawā’ih*, §1; Meier 1957: 155). The goal of the spiritual path is for this light to ascend from the shaft and reunite with its origin. Kubrā explains this process in a metaphorical way:

“Know, there are lights which ascend and those which descend. The ascending lights are those of the heart; the descending lights are those of the Throne. Nature [existence]¹⁷ is the veil between Throne and heart. When this nature is broken through and a door to the Throne opens from the heart, like aspires toward like. Light rises toward light and light descends upon light, ‘light upon light’ (Q 24:35)”. (*Fawā’ih*, §62; Meier 1957: 117).

Islamic spirituality does not confine itself to general expressions of the human condition and man’s goal from a mystical point of view. Like other traditions, e.g. Buddhist and Hindu tantric philosophies and practices, it developed a precise empirical description of the ‘anatomy’ of the subtle dimension of the human body – let us call it the body of the ‘interior man’.¹⁸ It forms the concrete basis for this process of rising upward and entering a transformed, nondual state of trans-rational, non-discursive cognition which is denoted by terms such as “illumination” (*ishrāq*) or “vision”. This physiology can be understood as the “deep”, spiritual, subtle, non-physical dimension of particular parts or centers of the physical human body, such as sexual organs, spine, heart, forehead, etc. In Sufism this sublime physiology is called *latīfa* – “the subtle organs or centres of the man of light” or “the organs of light” (Corbin

¹⁷Corbin: “creatural being” (Corbin 1971: 72).

¹⁸See the reflections on the ‘inner man’ in Plato and Plotinus and early Christianity (Markschies 1995 and 1998; Burkert 1999). For example, Plotinus characterizes the ‘inner man’ in terms of the presence of the three foundational elements – the One which is beyond being, of being and Nous (Greek: νοῦς, Latin: *intellectus*) and of the soul – in the world, and also “in us” insofar as we are beyond the physical, sensual realm (cf. *Enn.* V 1, 10). Augustine (354–430 A.D.) uses the Latin term *homo interior* (‘inner man’) in the context of his description of the inner, ‘spiritual senses’ (see Harrison 1999). For Augustine, the truth – which can be interpreted as the access of the human being to the actual ‘Real’ or ‘One’ - resides in the ‘inner man’: “*In interiore homine habitat veritas*” (*vera relig.* 39,72; CCSL 32, 234).

1971: 64, 68). It is the shining and throbbing “spiritual energy” (*himma*)¹⁹ which rises up in one’s body and pierces its subtle centers one after the other, finally leading to the state of union. Again, Kubrā describes this process in a metaphorical way:

“The Holy Ghost in man is a heavenly subtle organ. When the concentrated power of spiritual energy (*himma*) is lavished on him, he is reunited with the Heavens and the Heavens are merged with him. Or rather, Heavens and Spirit are one and the same thing. And this Spirit does not cease to rise, to increase, and to grow until it has acquired a height higher than the height of Heaven, and transcends the Heaven” (*Fawā’ih*, §59; Corbin 1971: 70; Meier 1957: 173).

To sum up: over thousands of years, different civilizations have established and developed what might be termed a science of spiritual knowledge and metaphysical anthropology, based on empirical data of personal subjective experience and elaborated theories.

::3. MODERNITY AND THE BREAK WITH SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

The transmission of this traditional knowledge has been neglected and devalued in the context of natural sciences, with their naturalistic paradigm and empiricist methods – originating among others in the natural philosophy of Francis Bacon and represented by Isaac Newton in the early modern period (Dijksterhuis 2002). The modern scientific mode of knowledge claims that only non-subjective observations are veridical and scientifically valid.

In the West, the modern age brought with it a break with the Christian traditions of spirituality and mysticism, especially with so-called ‘mystical theology’ (Latin *theologia mystica*),²⁰ in the sense of the concrete practice of the inner path of the human soul, which, in the words of Master Eckhart

¹⁹On *himma*, see Corbin 1997. It could be fruitful to explore the reality of this phenomenon by relating it to similar (possibly homeomorphic) descriptions in Hindu and Buddhist tantrism. On nondualistic Tantric Shaivism of Kashmir, see Silburn 1988; Lakshman Joo 2014.

²⁰In a letter to the monks of the Benedictine abbey at Tegernsee, the German philosopher, theologian, and mystic cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (Nikolaus Krebs, 1401-1464) says about mystical theology: “The belief that man can reach divinity in this way is a very high knowledge in this world which exceeds every knowledge of this world.” (*Hec fides, scilicet, quod homo sic posit divinitatem attingere, est sciencia secundum hunc mundum altissima, que etiam excedit omnem huius mundi scienciam*; Baum and Senoner 1998: 94). On the *theologia mystica* see Haas 1989; Haas 2008.

(1260-1327/28), loves “to be one and to become one with God”.²¹ Beginning in the 17th century, suspicion towards and rejection of mysticism within the Catholic and Protestant Churches increased, and this continued until the rediscovery of mysticism at the beginning of the 20th century. The lines and chains of transmission of this kind of knowledge and experience were largely interrupted, even in traditional places of contemplation – Christian monasteries. The rise of capitalism and industry in the modern West was based on the development of technology and science, a development which required a certain rational, systematic way of thinking and behavior, as well as the control, modernization, and rationalization of society. It resulted in tremendous achievements and innovations in all systems of society, including religion. At the same time, it seems that this was the period when the centuries-old traditions of Western mysticism lost the culture in which they were rooted. The cultural memory of European civilization resembles a palimpsest on which the text of the ancient spiritual traditions has been scratched off and replaced by a new text, although it is still present and partially readable.

In the Islamic world, the encounter or clash of traditional societies with the modern West in the colonial era stimulated different reform movements, in particular the Islamic modernism movement, or Salafism, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (Voll 1999; Brown 1996). The traditional Islamic spirituality, based on the old Sufi orders and a spiritual worldview, was wrongly seen as an inauthentic form of Islam and a novelty (Arabic *bid'ah*) introduced only after the first generations of Muslims, as well as a kind of pre-modern irrational attitude and a hindrance to the progress of society in the rational age.²² With its scripturalist and literalist focus on the foundational texts of the Qur'an and the *hadith*, and its rejection of Sufism and traditional scholarship, Salafism – in spite of its reference to a certain idea of the early time of Islam and the pious forefathers – can be seen as an attempt to modernize and rationalize religion, and thus as a specific modern religious phenomenon. The Salafi way of rigorous interpretation of the doctrine of the Oneness of God (*tawhid*), especially its strict secession from Sufism, represents an enormous danger to Islam's diversity, richness, and spiritual depth. A rigid, literalist interpretation of the Qur'an destroys the poetical openness and aesthetic beauty of the main scripture of Islam (Kermani 2015), and turns it into a political manifesto or a legal treatise. We are currently witnessing the implications of this phenomenon

²¹Meister Eckhart: *Expositio libri sapientiae*, in: Meister Eckhart, *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, Abt. II: *Lateinische Werke*, 2, 614, 13ff, n. 282. Quoted in Haas 1996: 97.

²²See Cornell 2004. I would like to thank Professor Rüdiger Lohker, Vienna, for this reference.

on a global level politically, in different regions, and in different cultures, in a terrifying way.

Corbin, the great explorer of Islamic mysticism in the 20th century, begins his book about the “man of light” by underscoring the importance of having a point of reference: in this particular case, the North Star. For our orientation in the world, we need the “heavenly pole”, the “place of the Origin and of the Return” (Corbin 1971: 2), which can be found not on the horizontal, but only on the vertical level. The loss of the spiritual dimension, of metaphysical anthropology, results in a loss of orientation, a falling short of one’s own actual nature, a loss of understanding of who we are. Without rejecting enlightened modernity and modern sciences, we need to rediscover and recognize the traditional knowledge or science of “metaphysical anthropology” and the practice of enlightenment as cultivated in various spiritual traditions. It is more than a pre-modern concept which has been eclipsed by the progress of modern science and reason. It is more than an object of research in the intellectual history of mankind. This rediscovery should not happen as a form of escapism or as an element of the withdrawal of orthodox religion from modern secular society and science, or even as a head-on battle against them. Instead, it should take place within the framework of modernity, reason, openness, and plurality. Progress from sterile confrontation or antagonism between secular modernity and religious traditions towards real dialog requires the reflexivity and self-criticism of modernity and reason, the acknowledgment of its limits, and an open discussion with religious convictions and knowledge. At the same time, it also requires reflexivity and self-criticism on the part of religious communities, and their willingness to open up to the modern, pluralistic, scientific age.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider how we could acknowledge the spiritual dimension of human beings within the educational systems, or how we could develop an authentic dialog between modern societies, science and spiritual traditions, and overcome mutual disregard and mistrust. The efforts mentioned before would be part of the comprehensive challenge to develop a sustainable, non-violent social and economic system redirected towards the environment, justice and the common good (Schumacher 1973; Daly and Cobb 1994; McKibben 2007; Loske 2011; Rifkin 2014) which in some way reflects the divine – the shining, joyful, and beautiful, deep dimension of reality. Perhaps an orientation towards the “North Star” of the light nature of human beings could contribute to the development of an urgently-needed new civilizing model in an age of uncertainty.

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