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The Quest for the Universal Global Science

PROLOGUE

A powerful moving force in the evolution of thought has been the drive to clarify and articulate the Primal Principle of all life and existence—the quest for First Philosophy. Whether in the discipline of ontology, the quest for primary being, or in the foundations of logic, the quest for the primary laws of thought, there has persisted through the ages across diverse traditions a relentless striving to decode the ultimate grammar of *What-Is-First*—the grammar of thought and being. Certain thinkers have suggested that there has been an ongoing tradition of "perennial wisdom" in classical traditions of thought, converging in a consensus of universal truth and knowledge. It would be good to begin these meditations by reflecting critically on this narrative of perennial philosophy as one approach to this quest for First Philosophy. Here it would be helpful to focus on the perspective of Seyyed H. Nasr, who has been an eloquent and a forceful voice for the primordial wisdom of the perennial traditions. This will help us get a better sense of prior attempts as well as afford us an opportunity to see that something vital is still missing in the emergence of Global First Philosophy (GFP). In Part 1 we shall scrutinize Nasr's vision, while in Part 2 we shall suggest that the Primal First Discipline is yet to be developed in its global form. Part 2 seeks to meditate our way more deeply into the missing GFP.

In these reflections, I focus on central themes from Nasr's *The Need for a Sacred Science* and *Knowledge and the Sacred*. These two intimately related works present a comprehensive, integrated vision of Nasr's mature thought. I will focus especially on his narrative of the need for a Sacred Science. I find here a deep convergence with findings in my own quest over the past three decades to clarify the missing primal science of Logos.

Perhaps it would be good to begin with a summary review of some of the main themes and concerns raised by Nasr to help set the context for this exploration.

PART 1: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON NASR'S VISION OF PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE NEED FOR A SACRED SCIENCE

Nasr's Vision of Sacred Science

Nasr's thesis in *The Need for a Sacred Science* is a unifying theme that brings together a range of insights and concerns running throughout his thought. In its most simplified form, his thesis is that there exists a Primordial Tradition that flows from an Absolute Truth that has been expressed in diverse ways through the ages. This tradition has been articulated in various formulations in the evolving school of *Philosophia Perennis* (a philosophical tradition that holds that there is a fundamental common ground of wisdom and truth recognized in a vast diversity of worldviews through the ages).

This school of Perennial Philosophy is connected to a view that there is a primal science, a sacred science, based on a universal metaphysics of this Ultimate Truth. It is held that diverse authentic cultural (religious, spiritual, philosophical) traditions through the ages have recognized, formulated, and embodied this Eternal Wisdom in diverse ways. One main point stressed by Nasr is that the diversity of these sacred traditions is important, even in recognizing that they flow from a common foundational Unity. One important common factor is that these sacred traditions are grounded in the Primordial Truth, flow from a common sacred science of metaphysics, and are thus grounded in a sacred view of reality and the possibilities for human life.

A central theme stressed by Nasr is that with the rise of the modernist worldview in Europe since the seventeenth century, there has been an increasing eclipse of the sacred traditions and a tragic loss of the Perennial Wisdom and Sacred Science that they involve. The modernist worldview, he finds, is based on a secular humanism and materialism that moves away from the Primal Spirit that is the ground of the sacred traditions and of Perennial Wisdom.

He finds that this development of secular modernism has resulted in tragic consequences for the human condition. It has resulted in all sorts of pernicious fragmentation in cultural life and has placed modern cultures on a course that he claims is not sustainable and is devastating for human flourishing and for the ecology. The secularization of modernism has severed human life from its authentic grounding and connection to reality and Primordial Spirit, which is the source of human flourishing. His main finding is that contemporary human cultures desperately need a return to the sacred traditions and to the Perennial Wisdom that flows from the power of Sacred Science. This is the most urgent priority in the human condition today.

Apparently Nasr sees this return to Sacred Science and Perennial Wisdom as vital for all aspects of human life and essential for the advancement of

the sciences as well. He insists that the diversity of the wisdom traditions should be respected and honored, and that in authentically living the inner truth of an authentic sacred tradition, one lives and embodies the perennial truth being expressed differently in all sacred traditions. In this way, the return to tradition in this perennial spirit of Sacred Science can resolve one of the most profound challenges facing the modern world—that of honoring the diversity of religious and cultural forms while achieving consensus and unity in truth and reality.

Before raising some critical questions for this line of thought, it would be helpful to further texture the complex ideas expressed here by looking more closely at the actual words of Professor Nasr on these themes. The following excerpts are taken from *The Need for a Sacred Science*.

1) What Is Sacred Science?

> There is first of all the Supreme Science or metaphysics, which deals with the Divine Principle and Its manifestations in the light of that Principle. It is what one might call *scientia sacra* in the highest meaning of the term. It is the science which lies in the very center of man's being as well as at the heart of all orthodox and authentic religions and which is attainable by the intellect, that supernaturally natural faculty with which normal human beings . . . are endowed. This principal knowledge is by nature rooted in the sacred, for it issues from that Reality which constitutes the Sacred as such. It is a knowledge which is also being, a unitive knowledge which transcends ultimately the dichotomy between the object and the subject in that Unity which is the source of all that is sacred and to which the experience of the sacred leads those who are able to reach the abode of that Unity. (pp. 1–2)

Note: This key passage makes clear that there is an ultimate Reality that is sacred and is the unifying force in all humans and in diverse authentic religions and traditions. Humans are endowed with a natural capacity to overcome the fragmentation and reach the primal Unity of this Reality.

2) What Is the View of *Philosophia Perennis*?

> By *philosophia perennis*—to which should be added the adjective *universalis*—is meant a knowledge which has always been and will always be and which is of universal character both in the sense of existing among peoples of different climes and epochs and of dealing with universal principles. This knowledge which is available to the intellect, is, moreover, contained in the heart of all religions or traditions, and its realization and attainment is possible only through those traditions and by means of methods, rites, symbols, images and other means sanctified by the message from heaven or the Divine which gives birth to each tradition. (pp. 53–54)

Note: It should be noted that this tradition of universal wisdom is claimed to be situated in the heart of all religions or traditions and is theoretically attainable by individuals through the power of the intellect, although Nasr stresses that the "norm" is such that "attainment of this knowledge depends upon the grace and framework which tradition alone provides" (p. 54). This helps explain why he repeatedly emphasizes the primary importance of honoring our sacred traditions and of gaining access to perennial wisdom through the particularity of our traditions. Note also that this perennial wisdom running through our traditions is based on "universal principles" (ostensibly valid for all worldviews).

3) The Metaphysical Ground of *Philosophia Perennis*:

> The *philosophia perennis* possesses branches and ramifications pertaining to cosmology, anthropology, art and other disciplines, but at its heart lies pure metaphysics, if this latter term is understood . . . as the science of Ultimate Reality, as a *scientia sacra*. . . . Metaphysics understood in the perspective of *philosophia perennis* is a veritable "divine science" and not a purely mental construct which would change with every alternation in cultural fashions of the day or with new discoveries of a science of the material world. This traditional metaphysics, which in reality should be used in the singular as metaphysic, is a knowledge which sanctifies and illuminates; it is a gnosis if this term is shorn of its sectarian connotations going back to early Christian centuries. It is a knowledge which lies at the heart of religion, which illuminates the meaning of religious rites, doctrines and symbols and which also provides the key to the understanding of both the necessity of plurality of religions and the way to penetrate into other religious universes. (p. 54)

Note: It is clear in this passage that there is claimed to be a pure universal metaphysics—a divine science—of ultimate reality at the heart of perennial philosophy. It is noteworthy that Nasr stresses that it is a singular science, which of course suggests that it gets at the fundamental reality between diverse worlds. It should be remembered that this is a sacred science, since it is grounded in the universal Divine principle. This will be important for us in the subsequent discussion. Nasr is at pains to distinguish this "school" from other versions of "universal wisdom" by insisting that the tradition he has in mind stresses orthodoxy. "If there is one principle which all the traditional authors in question repeat incessantly, it is orthodoxy. . . . They are orthodox and the great champions of universal orthodoxy" (p. 55). We will explore this theme shortly when we take a critical look at the "tradition" of pure metaphysics and inquire into its "global" potential.

4) The Global Potential of the Sacred Science

> According *to philosophia perennis*, reality is not exhausted by the psychophysical world in which human beings usually function, nor is consciousness limited to the everyday level of awareness of the men and women of present-day humanity. Ultimate Reality . . . is beyond all determination and limitation. It is the Absolute and Infinite from which issues goodness like the rays of the sun which of necessity emanate from it. Whether the Principle is envisioned as Fullness or Emptiness depends upon the point of departure of the particular metaphysical interpretation in questions. (pp. 55–56)

> The school of philosophia perennis speaks of tradition and traditions. It believes that there is a Primordial Tradition which constituted original or archetypical man's primal spiritual and intellectual heritage received through direct revelation when Heaven and earth were still "united." This Primordial Tradition is reflected in all later traditions. (p. 57)

Note: This passage makes an important distinction between everyday consciousness (and the everyday worldviews that flow from that level of awareness) and the direct encounter of Ultimate Reality, which is beyond all determination, and beyond the worldviews of everyday life. It also is noteworthy that this primal Reality, expressed in the Primordial Tradition, admits of different interpretations and expressions. We will explore this "global" potential of perennial wisdom later.

5) Ultimate Reality as Sacred: God Is Reality

> God as Ultimate Reality is not only the Supreme Person but also the source of all that is, hence at once Supra-Being, God as Person and the Godhead or Infinite Essence of which Being is the first determination. . . . God as Reality is at once absolute, infinite and good or perfect. In Himself He is the Absolute which partakes of no relativity in Itself or in its Essence. The Divine Essence cannot but be absolute and one. . . . God as Reality is also infinite, the Infinite, as this term is to be understood metaphysically. . . . Ultimate Reality contains the source of all cosmic possibilities and in fact all possibilities as such even the metacosmic. . . . Metaphysically, He is the All-Possibility. (pp. 8–9)

Note: These excerpts are striking in presenting reality as God. Here it is clear that Nasr has entered into the perspective and language of pure universal metaphysics. In this language of reality, pure metaphysics presumably is presenting a universally binding narrative for all worldviews. The "God as Reality" thesis would be binding even for those who do not countenance "God"

and who reject "God talk." These passages stress that whatever one's worldview, it owes its possibility to the Absolute Divine Principle. Presumably, if all people understood this "pure metaphysics," then they would recognize the global truth of this "God talk": "There would in fact be no agnostics around if only it were possible to teach metaphysics to everyone" (p. 9). Of course, this raises sensitive issues, which we will address later when we explore the "global" potential and scope of perennial wisdom and Sacred Science.

6) Sacred Science of the Self: Moving Beyond the Ego

> In order to reach the Ultimate Self through the expansion of awareness of the center of consciousness, man must reverse the cosmologic process which has crystallized both the variations and reverberations of the Self within what appears to be the cosmic veil as separate and objective existence. And this reversal must of necessity begin with the negation of the lower self. . . . The Ultimate Self in its inner infinitude is beyond all determination and cosmic polarization. (p. 16)
>
> The contemplative disciplines of all traditions of both East and West insist in fact on the primacy of the awareness of the self and its nature. (p. 18)
>
> The traditional science of the soul, along with the methods for the realization of the Self, a science which is to be found in every integral tradition, is the means whereby self-awareness expands to reach the empyrean of the Ultimate Self. This traditional science is the result of both intellectual penetration and experiment with and experience of the self by those who have been able to navigate over its vast expanses with the aid of a spiritual guide. (p. 19)

Note: These excerpts are quite important, because they stress that in the universal metaphysics/Sacred Science there is a vital difference between the everyday ego-self and the Ultimate Self, which is in direct communion with the Primal Reality. Nasr makes clear over and over that this fundamental truth has been articulated across the vast range of sacred traditions through the ages. Note here that the true inner Self has an infinite structure that is beyond all determination and polarity. In this respect, Sacred Science yields universal knowledge/realization of the Self across worldviews. We will explore this theme later.

7) Unity and Diversity in the Human Condition

> While truth is one, its expressions are many, especially for modern man who lives in a world in which the homogeneity of the traditional ambience is destroyed and in which there is on the one hand acceptance and in fact

> "absolutization" of secular man and the humanism based upon man conceived in such a manner, and on the other hand the presence of diverse sacred traditions whose reality can no longer be neglected. Consequently, if one is to address the human condition today, one must not only assert the unity of the truth and the oneness of the Spirit, but also the multiple reflections of the world of the Spirit in the human ambience. (p. 45)

Note: This recurring theme stresses that truth is one, while its expressions are many. This is Nasr's archetypical model for Sacred Science, which seeks to bring out the fundamental truth while honoring the diversity of manifestations of this truth in the human situation. Here he opens the diagnosis and critique of the modern secular worldview. Nasr continues:

> The one spirit somehow evades modern man, leaving in its wake a multitude of contending egos, of feuding families and of general social disintegration. (p. 47)
>
> The oneness which people of good intention seek cannot, however, be achieved save through contact with Spirit, which is one in itself and many in its earthly reflections. . . . No contact with the Spirit is possible save through the dimension of transcendence, which stands always before man and which connects him with Ultimate Reality whether it be called the Lord, or Brahman or sunyata. (p. 47)
>
> The human spirit as understood in the humanist sense is not sufficient unto itself to serve as basis for the unity of humanity and human understanding across cultural and religious frontiers. (p. 47)

Note: Here we see the recurrent theme of the fragmentation in modernist secular culture and the suggestion that the way to reach true Unity is through the power of Sacred Science, which brings us into true communion with the unifying power of Infinite Spirit. Nasr continues:

> The great role of religions today should be not to placate the weaknesses of modern man by reducing themselves to one or more "ism" or ideology to compete with the many existing ideologies which man has spun around himself over the past few centuries. Rather their task is to hold before men the norm and the model of perfection of which they are capable and to provide the channels for that contact with the Spirit which alone can show the myriad colors and hues of the human spirit to be not sheer multiplicity and division but so many reflections of Unity. Their task is also to present to the contemporary world the sacred science and wisdom which they have guarded in their bosom and within their inward dimensions over the millennia. (p. 49)

Note: This passage further develops the diagnosis of the modernist secular worldview as broken into contending ideologies in a fragmented pluralism. We see again that the traditional wisdom traditions have guarded the seeds of Sacred Science, which the contemporary world desperately needs for its well-being.

8) The Global Scope of the Primordial Tradition

> Each tradition is marked by a fresh vertical descent from the Origin, a revelation which bestows upon each religion lying at the center of the tradition in question its spiritual genius, fresh vitality, uniqueness and the "grace" which makes its rites and practices operative. But because the Origin is One and also because of the profound unity of the human recipients despite important existing racial, ethnic and cultural differences, the fact there is both the Primordial Tradition and traditions does not destroy the perennity and universality of the *philosophia perennis*. The anonymous tradition reflects a remarkable unanimity of views concerning the meaning of human life and the fundamental dimensions of human thought in worlds as far apart as those of the Eskimos and Australian Aborigines, the Taoists and the Muslims. (p. 57)

> The conception of religion in the school of the *philosophia perennis* is vast enough to embrace the primal and the historical, the Semetic and the Indian, the mythic and the "abstract" types of religions . . . to cross frontiers as difficult to traverse as that which separates the world of Abraham from that of Krishna and Rama or the universe of the American Indians from that of traditional Christianity. (p. 58)

Note: In these revealing excerpts we see that the perennial tradition purports to be global in scope across religious worldviews. It would be interesting to inquire, as we do later, whether it finds expression in worldviews that are not religious. Does the universal metaphysic of the perennial tradition have jurisdiction over all worldviews? It also is important to note here that Nasr hints at the Primordial Tradition as "anonymous," and this raises interesting questions. Has this tradition been latent and silent and subliminal and unnamed? Is there in fact an articulated worldview or ontology running through diverse traditions, or is it an unspoken tradition that has only manifested itself in particular "authentic" traditions?

9) Traditional versus Modernist Worldviews

> For several centuries, and in fact since the Renaissance, Western man has extolled the human spirit while de-sacralizing the whole of the cosmos in the

> name of the supremacy of man, only to end now in a situation which for the first time in history threatens man with truly infrahuman conditions on a scale never dreamt of before. Clearly the classical humanism which claimed to speak for man has failed, and if there is to be a future for man, there must be a profound change in the very concept of what man is and a thorough re-examination of the secular humanism of the past few centuries in the light of the vast universal and perennial spiritual traditions of mankind which this humanism has brushed aside with the claim of giving man freedom. (p. 45)

Note: In comparing and contrasting the traditional worldview with the "modernist," Nasr sees in classical humanism an increasing secularization (and hence desacrilizing) of the human condition and of our ecology. He does not explicitly call this secular humanism "egocentric," but it is clear that this ideology places the human at the center and displaces the sacred worldview, which places Infinite Reality at the center of the human condition. The farther the human condition is broken from Ultimate Reality, the greater the dysfunction and pathology. This secularized, "homocentric" worldview is found to be responsible for devastating, pernicious consequences in the human condition. He continues:

> The current concept of man as a self-centered creature not responsible to any authority beyond himself and wielding infinite power over the natural environment cannot but end in the aggression of man against himself and the world of nature on a scale which now threatens his own existence. (p. 46)

Note: Here Nasr stresses that the "hierarchical" structure of the traditional worldview places the Primal Principle first and higher and the human condition as dependent and accountable to this higher reality. Again, he sees this desacralizing of human life as the primary cause of violence of all sorts.

10) Sacred versus Secular: The Need for Sacred Science

> One can speak of sacred and profane science in distinguishing between the traditional and modern sciences. From the traditional point of view, there is of course no legitimate domain which can be considered as completely profane. The universe is the manifestation of the Divine Principle and there is no realm of reality that can be completely divorced from that Principle. To participate in the realm of the Real and to belong to that which is real also implies being immersed in the ocean of the sacred and being imbued with the perfume of the sacred. . . . The main difference between the traditional sciences and modern science lies in the fact that in the former the profane and purely human remain always marginal and the sacred central, whereas in

> modern science the profane has become central and certain intuitions and discoveries which despite everything reveal the Divine Origin of the natural world have become so peripheral that they are hardly ever recognized for what they are despite the exceptional views of certain scientists. (pp. 96–97)

Note: This contrast between traditional sacred science and modern science makes clear that from the worldview of Sacred Science, all reality is pervaded with the sacred, and all nature and the ecology are the domain of the sacred. This implies of course that modern sciences are situated in this universal field of the sacred, which contextualizes all human efforts. The "profane" is situated in the all-encompassing field of the sacred. We will pursue this point later.

> The traditional sciences of all traditional civilizations agree on certain principles of the utmost importance which need to be reiterated in this age of forgetfulness of even the most obvious truths. These sciences are based on a hierarchic vision of the universe, one which sees the physical world as the lowest domain of reality which nevertheless reflects the higher states by means of symbols which have remained an ever-open gate towards the Invisible for that traditional humanity which had not lost the "symbolist spirit." The psycho-physical world, which preoccupies modern science, is seen in the traditional perspective as a reflection of the luminous archetypes. (p. 97)

Note: Here again we see that there are certain universal principles of Sacred Science that are recognized in diverse traditional worldviews and that have vital importance for our contemporary world. We will have to look closely at Nasr's insistence that the traditional worldview expresses a "hierarchical" vision of the universe.

QUESTIONS THAT NATURALLY ARISE FOR NASR'S NARRATIVE

The aforementioned selected excerpts from Nasr's book are intended to help us focus on key themes, which we will address in Part 2. Some critical questions to keep in mind as we explore these important ideas from a global perspective follow.

1. ***Philosophia Perennis*** alleges that there are perennial truths that are universal, eternal, and valid for all worldviews. Or, more specifically, that there are great traditions that authentically express the Primordial Truth that holds for these traditions. If it claims to be global in scope for all possible worlds,

then what is the source of the validity for all worlds? Does this tradition establish why this must *be* so, or that it is so? Is it one united tradition, or is there diversity within in? Could there be alternative accounts of perennial truth?

Does this "school" assume or assert that "perennial" is (means) "global"—valid for all worldviews—or, rather, that certain "authentic traditions" have expressed a consensus truth from their perspective? Does it claim global scope and power? For example, Nasr insists that Ultimate Reality is God. This means of course that all worldviews, secular and sacred, must arise from this universal God. But has it been shown that worldviews that do not countenance "God" (such as the world of modern science) must come to recognize God as their true ground? How has it been established that there is global truth across vastly diverse worldviews and languages of reality? We will now critically explore the possibility of a global narrative.

2. **What is the scope of Sacred Science?** Is it a complement for what is now called "science"? Does it apply to all everyday life? Is it to be a replacement for the secular worldview in all of its forms? Must the secular or profane sciences self-revise to truly encounter the Real? Can there be a universal global science that incorporates what is valid in the modern sciences and fulfill the ideals and vision of traditional Sacred Science? Is there a universal or global worldview or "first philosophy" that grounds all worldviews—sacred and secular? Could it be that the traditional perennial philosophy itself is in evolution and development and needs to mature to full global status? Could it be that traditional wisdom is in evolution and self-development?

3. Nasr sees the modernist secular development as the main reason for the loss of this Sacred Worldview, and he envisions a return to tradition (in the appropriate spirit) as the way to recapture the sacred perennial lifeworld. He recognizes of course that the "perennial tradition" is sacred in its own right, but he emphasizes realizing the perennial truth within the particularities of each tradition. One question here is: Is there a global way, a universal praxis, that runs through the diverse traditions? Are there, for example, global norms, and a global ethic that the diverse traditions confirm and embody? Have the global scope and power of Sacred Science/*philosophia perennis* been established?

Is there an alternative account, an alternative diagnosis, that might capture the desirable ends of leading cultures into a higher form of life that is faithful to the highest and best in the sacred traditions, yet self-evolves into a global form that speaks to our future evolution? Is there a way to honor and recognize the sacred traditions of the past that would build on these by moving forward beyond modernism, postmodernism, and secularism to realize a higher global perennial way? Must perennial wisdom be lodged in the past and in tradition, or can it be in evolution and development and global maturation? We will now explore these themes in Part 2.

PART 2: MY EXPERIMENTS IN DEVELOPING THE GLOBAL PERENNIAL LOGOS TRADITION: THE MISSING LOGOS SCIENCE

In the spirit of creative dialogue with the themes from Nasr's narrative, I now present in a summary sketch some highlights of my journey throughout my career to clarify the Ultimate Principle of all life and experience. In my own experiments I find remarkable convergences with Nasr's findings and with the perspective of *philosophia perennis*, all the more remarkable, because in a real sense my experimental journey took an independent direction that nevertheless brought me to a profoundly analogous result. Still, as we shall see, there are possible important differences in my articulation of the Ultimate Science and of the deep diagnosis of the source of human cultural pathologies and of the preferred prescription for the most potent way to move the human condition to well-being and human flourishing.

This is where I find the greatest potential for a significant critical dialogue with Nasr's thought. As we shall soon see, I discovered early in my career that something profound and vital was still missing from human discourse. Although I instinctively gravitated to the intuition of a perennial philosophy and knew in a prearticulated way that there had to be an ultimate primal principle, an ultimate science of *What-Is-First*, I nevertheless found that the language, technology of mind, and narrative for this were still missing. The nascent perennial narrative was still semidormant and needed to be brought to mature global articulation. One remarkable disclosure was that the Primordial Truth that was seeded in diverse traditions was alive, growing, evolving, and maturing in the global evolutionary process.

It was clear in my journey through different philosophical and cultural worlds, East, West, and other, that there had to be a fundamental logic, a primal ontology, a global primordial tradition at the heart of all worldviews. However, with close critical scrutiny, I found that this was still a presumption, and in fact more deep work had to be done to tap the missing fundamental logic of natural reason, to decode the ultimate grammar of existence and experience, to bring to full global articulation the intuition of a perennial philosophical perspective, and to develop the language and narrative of the Unified Field of diverse worlds. We shall see that these innovations and results vindicate the vision of *philosophia perennis* and bring to more explicit articulation the missing Primordial Tradition in a global context. So I now review some of the highlights of my adventure, speaking directly to the central themes of Professor Nasr.

The themes and findings I summarize here have been developed in great detail in my essays and books, which present my research over the past three decades. Two companion volumes present the heart of my quest for the

fundamental missing science of Logos: *Meditative Reason: Toward Universal Grammar*, and *Between Worlds: The Emergence of Global Reason*. The first appeared in 1993 in the *Revisioning Philosophy* series of Peter Lang Press, and the second appeared in 1997 in the same series. These findings are presented in a simplified narrative in a book designed for the general reader, which will appear soon, *The Awakening of the Global Mind*.

Is Perennial Philosophy Possible?: Logic and Ontology

Over three decades ago in my early career as a logician and an ontologist, I encountered polarization, fragmentation, and dualism at the deepest levels of research. As a logician, seeking the ultimate logic of reason and language, I found a primal polarization in the grammar of thought as I traced the evolution of logic from Socrates through Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Quine, Sommers, and Derrida. The Aristotelian tradition of logic, which shaped the cultural space of European thought over the centuries, was in deep tension with the radical innovations introduced by Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Quine, and others as they developed the new mathematical paradigm for the logic of language that launched the analytical revolution in the twentieth century.

If logic is the formal science of thought itself and articulates the grammar of human reason, then the polar tension I found between the classical logical paradigm of Aristotle and the modern mathematical paradigm of Frege leads us to a split in reason itself. My early quest for the fundamental logic of thought and language led me to an apparently irreconcilable split and incoherence between the classical and modern paradigms of logic in the European tradition.

What made this a disturbing crisis is my finding that both paradigms captured fundamental features of the logic of thought and language. Neither could be dismissed, nor was there an apparent way to mediate them and bring them together. They appeared to be mutually incompatible and yet mutually complementary at the same time, but each claimed to give a comprehensive and universal account of the grammar of thought, and since the science of logic purports to articulate the deep structure of reason, if logic itself was polarized into incommensurable paradigms, this did not bode well for the ultimate coherence of human reason. So my career began with this crisis of reason. If human reason, which purports to ground in meaning, truth, and rational coherence, is itself ultimately polarized and yields dualism and incoherence, then the very foundation of the human condition appears to be fractured and unintelligible.

It was clear that in the foundation of logic something vital was missing. The long quest through the centuries to clarify the universal grammar of

thought was obviously unfinished. The dream of Descartes and Leibniz, to reach the ultimate universal grammar of reason, remained unrealized, yet more vital than ever. Frege and Husserl, in very different ways, attempted to realize this dream, but their attempts fell short.

As we will see in a moment, this perennial dream to articulate the ultimate laws of thought is driven by the intuition at the heart of human reason that there must be some ultimate ground, some unifying formal structure, that is the source of rational life, that makes things intelligible and generates thought, meaning, and truth. Over the past three decades, I remained focused on attempting to resolve this ultimate problem. It is at the core of the possibility of perennial philosophy. As we shall see, the guiding intuition that there must be a fundamental grammar of thought and reason is the moving force of the Primordial Tradition.

But this polar crisis at the heart of reason in the European tradition seems to arise in all aspects of the human condition, and on a global scale. In my early research as an ontologist, concerned with the deepest explorations into the nature and structure of reality, an analogous crisis of polarization became evident. The science of ontology, like the science of logic, sought to clarify and articulate the ultimate structure of reality—the grammar of existence. It was apparent early in the game, however, that diverse philosophies and worldviews (religions, cultures, ideologies, conceptual frameworks) presented profoundly diverse ontologies or languages of experience and reality.

What made sense in one worldview failed to make sense in another. It seems that meaning and truth, and what makes sense in experience, are a function of the worldview or universe of discourse, the ontological context in which it arises. Different worlds appear to be worlds apart and incommensurable from the ontological point of view. How is it possible for human intelligence, natural reason, to move meaningfully between worlds? Is it possible to reason and communicate between worlds, across diverse ontological languages of reality? Here was another ultimate challenge for the rational enterprise, for human relations between worlds, and certainly for the possibility of perennial philosophy.

And yet nothing seemed more natural in everyday life than the possibility of all kinds of interactions, transactions, communications, and transformations between worlds. For example, someone centered in the Christian worldview (to simplify the matter) seems to be able to enter genuinely into the lifeworlds of the Buddhist or the Hindu or the Bakongo. These are very different languages of reality, and yet it appears that human intelligence has the capacity to self-transform into alternative grammars of life and to make sense of things in diverse universes that nevertheless also seem to be mutually incompatible and even incommensurable in important ways. How is it possible for us to live and move and communicate across and between diverse

worlds? It was evident that this fundamental problem was not adequately formulated or resolved.

The vast differences between worldviews seem to challenge the very possibility of any perennial or global perspective, so this was another complex of challenges that I faced very early in my career, and it was apparent that these twin problems at the heart of logic and ontology were intimately linked. It seemed to me that the science of ontology was just as much in crisis as the science of logic, and both of these "sciences" purport to get to the deep structure of the human condition—the structure of thought/language and the structure of being/reality. Could there be a global or universal logic across worldviews? Was there any fundamental universal ontology that was the ground of diverse worlds? If there were not common structures or laws across or between worlds, and across paradigms of logic, then how could there be genuine communication and rational discourse between worlds? These issues get to the heart of the possibility of any alleged "perennial philosophy" or "primordial tradition."

The Perennial Quest for the Ultimate Principle

In the midst of this crisis I reached an important turning point. My philosophical journey took me into Eastern thought when in 1971 I took a special leave to spend a year studying and lecturing in India. This was my first trip to India and my first in-depth exploration of Indian traditions of philosophy. I had no idea when I went on this adventure that it would speak deeply to the impasse I had reached in my research in the foundations of reason, logic, and ontology.

My encounter with the powerful meditative traditions of Hindu and Buddhist thought enormously expanded my horizon and brought me into a deeper global perspective in the rational enterprise. And over the years, as I went more and more deeply into diverse meditative philosophies, certain unmistakable patterns across diverse worlds became clear. My journey into the meditative traditions opened deeper rational space and enabled me to see deep connections between widely variant worldviews, East, West, and other, that I could not have seen before. Therefore, meditative philosophy played a key role in my expansion into the global perspective and thus into the deeper common ground between worlds.

The Meditative Turn in Human Reason

Two remarkable breakthroughs arose together over the next two decades as my research and teaching expanded in a global context. The first great advance through the meditative experiments was the realization that there was such a

thing as "egocentric" minding. In my earlier research I simply absorbed the European tradition of philosophy (logic and ontology) without reflective awareness that there was a deep pattern of thinking—a technology of mind—a way of "minding" that proceeded on the foundation of the ego. But diverse meditative traditions (in this case the diversity of approaches in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions) concurred that the single most important factor in the human condition was precisely how we were conducting our minds.

The most fundamental teaching of the meditative traditions is that egocentric patterns of thought were the primary source of human suffering, human existential pathologies in diverse forms. Whether, for example, in the teachings of the *Bhagavadgita* or the *Dhammapada*, the core insight was that the egocentric way of being (of thinking, of interpretation, of world making, of self making) produces deep and pernicious fragmentations in all aspects of life and was the primary source of human pathologies. The great breakthrough of meditative awakening is that it is possible to overcome egocentric minding and living by advancing into more profoundly unitive, integrative, holistic, and nondual patterns of minding. The great experimental traditions of meditative living developed over millennia provided boundless evidence of the pragmatic force of these findings. The meditative turn in natural reason moves us to a more rationally integrated form of life.

Once I became aware of the patterns and dynamics and living reality of egocentric minding, my career, my research, scholarship, and teaching, indeed, my life as a whole, took a radically different turn. These meditative experiments opened deeper integral space in which I could see clearly why my earlier research had reached the crisis, the paradox, the impasse, the polarization, the fragmentation, and incommensurability. I saw clearly that egocentric reason was inherently incomplete, incoherent, and the source of all sorts of dualisms, fragmentations, and pathologies of life. I saw more and more clearly as I lived the meditative turn in reason that egocentric minding was an immature stage in our rational and human development. I understood precisely how and why egocentric minding blocked and undermined our rational life and would always produce polarization, fragmentation, disintegration, and all sorts of violence.

Awakening the Global Perspective

At the same time, the other remarkable breakthrough that co-arose with this meditative turn was the expansion of my thought patterns into a higher global perspective. As I experimented more expansively across the spectrum of worldview—ideologies, religious and cultural worlds, political ideologies, philosophical grammars, conceptual frameworks, disciplinary languages—and diverse forms of life in the broadest global perspective I began to see deeper

patterns and connections. The meditative technology of minding enabled me to experience deeper common ground across and between worlds and made it possible to hold together multiple alternative worlds in one synoptic consciousness. This global awakening of reason produced astounding results in recognizing how diverse formulations in different worldviews and language forms nevertheless expressed the same fundamental dynamics, insights, principles, and truths.

The Perennial Quest for What-Is-First

The global perspective, the capacity to hold together multiple alternative worldviews in a unifying dialogic encounter, opened a more profound dimension of Reality, for when we stand back from any one worldview processed in the egocentric way and enter the global perspective through the dialogic powers of meditative reason, certain striking perennial patterns emerge. As we scan the range of diverse worldviews across the spectrum of global cultures, it is apparent that widely diverse worlds gravitate to some primal Origin.

For example, in one classical Chinese tradition worldview, the primal origin is called Tao (the Infinite name that cannot be named); in the early Hindu tradition, "*What-Is-First*" is expressed as Aum (the infinite sacred sound) or Brahman (infinite being); in a certain Buddhist tradition, the ultimate is expressed as Sunyata (absolute emptiness beyond names and forms); in the Judaic grammar, the ultimate reality is indicated as Yahweh (the Infinite living God); in Christianity, one version of the primal principle is Logos (the infinite Word) or Christ (the Logos made flesh); in Islam, the Absolute is expressed as Allah (the one true God); certain indigenous cultures recognize the ultimate truth as the Infinite Living Spirit; in one African classical worldview, the originating force is called Nommo (the Infinite Name that generates all existence); in the grammar of physics, the ultimate reality is recognized as Energy (the ultimate stuff that can neither be created or destroyed); and so on.

Each worldview purports to be universal and all-encompassing of reality. Yet at the same time, these diverse grammars of reality (ontological languages) appear to be competing and repelling or displacing one another in their universal power, appear to be diverse universes of discourse, and this is where the meditative turn, with its global perspective and technology of processing reality, helps disclose deeper common ground and striking patterns between variant worlds.

The Missing Global Grammar

One revealing pattern is that diverse worlds in one way or another arise from a primal source or ground that is recognized to be boundless, infinite, and

universal. The meditative power of the global perspective helps us see that all worldviews must co-arise from a primal source or origin, that this origin must be Infinite, and that the Infinite must be the same Primal Reality of all possible worlds. Rigorous meditation on the Infinite Origin makes evident that this Unifying Force must be Integral and One-and-the-Same Principle for all possible worlds.

Here it is vital to remember that egocentric reason inherently fails to process this Infinite Unifying force field. As we shall see shortly, the egocentric mind objectifies the "Infinite" and reduces its infinite unifying power to an artificial "unity" that levels the profound important differences between diverse worlds. At the same time it artificially "pluralizes" diverse worlds in such fragmented multiplicity and differences that they remain localized and fragmented beyond the reductive and false "unity" it constructs. It fails to understand both Unity and Difference and undermines both. Either way, the egocentric mind is unable to process the Primal Principle, hence, Reality itself.

The great enduring mystical traditions have of course recognized early in the game that the Ultimate Truth must be Infinite and, hence, must be the unifying common source of all possible worlds. But even if we have a clear intuition that the diverse mystical and spiritual traditions were expressing the "same fundamental reality," these traditions remained articulated in their own localized grammars and narratives with all of their important differences and diversity. These localizing forces, East and West, suppressed and inhibited the full maturation of the global force of the grammar of *What-Is-First*.

The intuition of a "primordial truth" or a "perennial philosophy" remained presumed and latent waiting to be activated, formulated, and realized. There was no global grammar, no open generalized space or method of minding and speaking, that brought fully into the open the global scope and power of this First Principle. The profound and pervasive influence of egocentric minding in the human condition preempted and eclipsed access to the perennial force of The First. It appears that the global turn in how we mind and in the grammar of how we formulate and express reality matters a great deal, so with all of the great advances toward expressing the Infinite Origin, East, West, and other, something vital was still missing.

The Need for a Global Grammar for the Infinite Origin: Logos *as a Global Name*

As my experiments matured over the decades and I advanced more and more deeply into the global perspective, it became increasingly clear that a fundamental global narrative was still absent. I noticed a peculiar and striking "recursive" dialectic at work that moved me in something like a paradoxical, reflexive, yet expanding "spiral loop" that took on a life of its own. The more

I expanded in the global perspective, the more evident the dialectical patterns across and between worldviews and alternate languages of experience became. As these deeper patterns of the Primal Origin emerged, the more I found my rational awareness and experience expanding, and the more I was able to encounter deeper common ground and detect striking recursive patterns and connections between worlds that I could not see before.

I was now able to recognize how quite diverse grammars and narratives of experience were in fact alternative formulations of the same fundamental reality, and the more this primal reality was revealed, the more the global way of processing reality, the global perspective, intensified. The net effect of this recursive dialectic—the global turn in experience—was the realization that this global awakening of rational awareness was essential in detecting and tapping the missing primal field. The global way of "minding" was the key to discerning the fundamental common ground between diverse worlds, indeed, in establishing that there was in fact a primal unified field between worlds. So in this summary sketch of my experimental clarification of the missing global "science," I shall now try to replay certain key steps in the spirit of this recursive dialectic.

The fact that we can stand back from being immersed within any one worldview and rise to the global or interworld perspective is of ultimate importance in the quest for the grammar of *What-Is-First*. This power and capacity in human awareness is a primary feature of reason, which issues directly from the fundamental Infinite Force. What is strikingly noticeable when we stand back in this way and entertain the great enduring traditions through the ages is that each seeks to express and name *What-Is-First*. As we have seen, diverse languages of Reality concur that there must be some primal ultimate origin, and "it" must be Infinite. It also has been clear that this Infinite Principle must be one and the same for all realities. This follows immediately from the sacred logic of *What-Is-First*. I have suggested that in the perennial quest to express this Infinite something vital was still missing. The diverse grammars or narratives that were developed by the traditions, including modern science, each faced a boundary of localism in its grammar and narrative.

First Philosophy still lacked a universal and global grammar to name and express *What-Is-First*. The fact that we faced a vast range of alternative languages attempting to express and name the Infinite Principle—Aum, Tao, Sunyata, God, Christ, Yahweh, Allah, Nommo, Logos, Nature, First Cause, Energy (henceforth we will refer to this open-ended sequence of primal names as "the Primal Names")—is highly problematic, since these diverse languages of reality appear to be inherently incompatible, competing, and mutually exclusive. Each universalizes its discourse and purports to a "universal grammar" of The First. Each alleges to be the primary, preferred, and

self-privileging grammar of The Ultimate. And although great mystic minds and intuitive geniuses know quite well that all authentic First Names must be naming the same Infinite Principle, this correct global intuition needs a global grammar to effectively formulate and express this Truth.

We need a global name for *What-Is-First*, a Name so powerful that it expresses and keeps before us the Infinite Force of the First. In seeking to uncover and tap the Universal Grammar of *What-Is-First* I proposed the word "Logos" as a working candidate to help us move in this direction. Let us experiment together with this: *Logos is the Infinite Word, the Infinite Name for the Primal Reality*. The latent global power of the genuine Primal Names just mentioned is released through the universal force of the global name *Logos*. Aum expresses *Logos*; Tao is an ultimate name for *Logos*; God is *Logos*; Allah is a direct revelation of *Logos*; Christ embodies *Logos*, and the Greco-European Logos also is a powerful expression of *Logos*; the ultimate substance of reality named in the physical sciences—Energy—expresses *Logos*, and so on. (Henceforth, for convenience and simplicity, we will express the global name *Logos* without italics or boldface, thus Logos.)

Logos as the Infinite Name has infinite alter-expressions. This is an essential feature of its infinitude. It is the Infinite Word. All names, all words, and all forms derive from and express Logos. Of course this is not to suggest that the Primal Names are "synonyms" or are "identical" or "say the same thing" or even "refer to the same thing." We must be extremely cautious to remember that each uniquely and authentically expresses Logos. We shall soon see that precisely because Logos is the Infinite Word, it has boundless unique alternative and authentic expressions.

I introduce the term *holonym* to capture this profound relation between the Primal Names—they are **holonymous** and thus **holonyms**. As holonyms, the Primal Names co-express each other in Logos and thus have a deep intimate connection. The sacred logic of Logos makes it clear that holonyms are irreducibly different, while they nevertheless co-express Logos, and of course each other. When the full global potential of the Primal Names is ignited and realized, this deep dialogic connection is brought to maturity.

Let us meditate more deeply on Logos. It should be immediately apparent that the introduction of this *global name* is of monumental significance, for this Infinite Name invokes and brings with it the universal grammar of the Infinite Word, and with this comes the global turn in minding. **The Sacred Logic** of the Infinite Name calls for a higher **logistic or technology of mind** beyond the localizing, finitizing, and fragmenting ways of egocentric minding. We mentioned earlier that the diverse meditative traditions all stressed that how we mind is all-important in the quality of life and experience. With all of the important differences in diverse meditative traditions, we may safely say in entering the global perspective that the meditative turn in minding requires