Many Selves, Many Realities: The Implications of Heteronymy and the Plurality of Worlds Theory for Multiple Religious Belonging

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ABSTRACT
If the universe is a polyverse, then are we not also polyverses? Reviving the ancient occult ideas of "as above, so below" and the human as a microcosm we propose that all realities coinhere in every human. It would then not be unusual, in fact would be expected, that each of us should not only be able to belong to more than one religion, that is, to inhabit more than one Weltanschauung, but that we should find each of these Weltanschauungen welling up from within us, as semi-autonomous beings. This appears to be what is happening to many of us in post-modern reality.

PRELUDE
"What we need is imagination. We have to find a new view of the world."
"For any speculation which does not at first glance look crazy, there is no hope."

These quotations from prominent, hard-nosed (as we might imagine) physicists, give us courage to challenge the paradigm of what religions, philosophies, and ideologies are, how many of them there might be at once, and, most importantly, what it means to say that any one of them, or all of them, are absolute.[1] I quote physicists because, at this moment in history, we have exalted the physicist to a level approximating that of the theologian of the past. Reality, we have come to believe, is matter, with mind added, and since physicists have classically dealt with matter as if it were the nature of reality (the Greek *physis* means nature, natural qualities, the constitution or condition of a thing or person) they are assumed to be dealing with reality as it truly is.

This is a strange belief, relatively recent in its genesis. Materialists there have always been, but that a whole culture, indeed the entire planetary culture, should be in thrall to materialism—this is new. But now the belief is losing its support precisely in those areas which have included its strongest advocates, and we are awakening from what William Blake called "single vision and Newton's sleep."

Materialism could not have been so triumphant as an ideology if we had not previously decided that, when all is said and done, there is one Truth, one Absolute, one Reality. Have not all the philosophers told us this? Do not the very definitions of Truth, Absolute, and Reality preclude all competitors? So then, the only question remaining is, which truth is the true Truth? If Christianity is not, as we used to be told, the true Truth, then it is pushed to the side as a relative truth while center stage is taken by, as it has transpired, mathematics (promoted as a language both universal and univocal) and physics (of the Newtonian sort). But, now that it has been discovered that the truth of mathematics is dependent upon its presuppositions (so that 2 plus 2 is not always 4) and that what is observed to occur in physics is dependent upon what is being looked for, the absolutism of these ideologies is breaking down. Some people have reacted by proclaiming that everything is relative, and attempting (perversely) to seat Relativity on the throne of the Absolute. Many other people however, even (especially even) academics, surrender their right to make a decision and, when the question of Truth comes up, change the subject. "Well, I don't know anything about God, I'm a specialist in the Hellenistic precursors of the Wisdom Literature. Yes, the texts do occasionally

[1] The quotations are from, respectively, Richard P. Feynman and Freeman Dyson, quoted in *Space-Time and Beyond: Toward an Explanation of the Unexplainable* by Bob Toben in conversation with Jack Sarfatti, Ph.D. and Fred Wolf, Ph.D. (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975), page 125.

mention God, but the meaning of *ho theos* is disputed, you know."

A state of ideological confusion, of, indeed, ideological collapse, is a mark of an intermediate state (a *bardo*, as Tibetans might say) between paradigms. To move on, we have to be bold, creating the path as we tread it, risking making fools of ourselves in the eyes of later generations. Since I have now attained the honorable and impotent rank of Professor Emeritus, from which there is no expulsion save death, I am in a position to be both bold and foolish. Let the reader judge for herself what to take and what to leave from what follows.

The problem is simple. If there is one Absolute in one Reality then there must, in theory, be one true religion, philosophy, or ideology, i.e., one true Weltanschauung, to which all other Weltanschauungen stand as relative or partial truths. However, despite the output, across time and space, of a great deal of energy of persuasion, pleading, threats, and outright terror, no one Weltanschauung has ever commanded universal acceptance, and each time a Weltanschauung is advanced as a candidate for universal acceptance it fails to fulfill its promise.

But, like the silkworm (as the Chinese say) we have cocooned ourselves—in the silken threads of our own logic. We have told ourselves that there must be, *by definition*, one Truth, one Reality, one Absolute.[2] The italics are significant. What does *experience* teach us? The discovery of many competing Weltanschauungen challenges the notion of "absolute". We should have noticed this, but we did not because, until recently, the various Weltanschauungen existed "out there", they were the phenomena of the Other, of persons not perhaps quite human and certainly not very bright—savages, barbarians, heathens, etc. Someone has called the Crusades a history of misunderstanding. Christians accused "Mohammedans" of worshiping the gross idol Baphomet while Muslims characterized Christians as polytheists. Thus, mutual extermination was justified. No Weltanschauung can claim immunity from this etic disdain, which Edward Said has taught us to call Orientalism. It was the product of pervasive ignorance about the Other. Today, when anyone with a few dollars can pick up clear and learned surveys of any of the great religions and, increasingly, meet practitioners of that religion living in their own city, there is no excuse for such ignorance or for the claim that the

[2] I do not include everyone in that one word "we", but those who have not subscribed to this view have usually been regarded as eccentric or insane.

Other is "out there" or subhuman. As we come to know them accurately, each Weltanschauung is found to be as profound, subtle, and potentially adequate, as any other.

Now, Weltanschauungen are not only jostling each other at the supermarket checkout counter, they are starting to cohabit in single individuals. This brings the question of the plurality of religions, quite literally, home. We can no longer ignore it. We are forced to consider that our understanding of Absolute as unique may be naive. There may be many Absolutes existing simultaneously in many universes, and the person with multiple religious loyalties may be living, seriatim or concurrently, in more than one universe and possess, or exhibit, more than one personality. We may not know how this can be, but the data seems to demand that we assert it as the case and then search for a way to understand it. This is how paradigm shifts occur.

A paradigm shift is not achieved by logical argument. Gödel's theorem informs us that "all consistent axiomatic formulations of number theory include undecidable propositions".[3] Despite the flurry of excitement over Gödel's theory, his formulation is not really a surprise. Restricting himself to mathematics, Gödel demonstrated that any mathematical system rich enough to comprehend arithmetic will have undecidable propositions. In other words (since such systems in practice have finitely many axioms) no finite set of axioms will suffice to decide all propositions expressible in the system. This theorem is a sibling, or at least a near relative, of the truism in logic that nothing really novel can be demonstrated by a deductive argument, for everything is already there, concealed in the premisses. The deductive syllogism merely draws out the implied consequences.[4]

So, I will tell you a story. It is true, but it never happened. It may change your mind.

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[3] Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1979) page 17.

[4] For assistance in understanding Gödel's theorem and how it is not the same as, but might relate to, logic, I am indebted Andrew Porter (personal communication, July 31, 2002).

A Weekend Away

"In the beginning there was no beginning, and in the end it will never end."

Without further explanation, Professor Saint-Hilaire rose from the table, turned on his heel, and with a spring in his step remarkable for a man his age, disappeared towards the Abbesses Métro. I ordered another mineral water. Ignoring the tourists blindly seeing Sacré-Coeur, I pondered the strange events of the past weekend.

Friday

I had come to Paris for a conference on Ethology, the behavior of animals. It had been surprisingly boring, even for an academic conference. The presenters of papers with interesting titles had not shown up and the stalwarts I had known since my student days at the Royal Veterinary College rehashed old theories and said nothing new. Dissatisfied with the superficiality of my associates in large animal practice I had moved into academic research, hoping to expand my mind, but I found that I had merely exchanged one set of puzzle solvers for another. My university colleagues were unable, or unwilling, to question the suppositions of the discipline. "That is for *philosophers*" they said, making the word sound vaguely obscene. I left the conference early for a weekend in the country before returning to England. A friend of a friend had told me of a château in the Morbihan district of Brittany that was isolated yet had modern plumbing and (of course, being French) excellent food, and which accommodated guests. I decided to go there to rest and reflect.

The concierge who welcomed me was reserved and formal, of indeterminate age, and dressed entirely in black. She was the only occupant. I saw no other staff, and all the guest rooms except mine, which commanded an excellent view of the bay, were empty.

"You will no doubt wonder about the name, Monsieur?" she said, anticipating my question. "Concours-des-Fleuves. The river you see is not alone. It joins another, underground. So they say. You will dine at eight."

I slept soundly, without dreaming. Or so it seemed.

Saturday

"Ah, you are awake! Come, come, sit with us. We are speaking English."

I was beckoned to a table where three men and one woman were already eating breakfast. The large dining room was full.

"Miss Helen Rhys-Jones, Mr Cornelius Yang, Dom Gregory Hinsdale, and, here is my card." Professor Georges-Michel de Saint-Hilaire, it read, Institut Borges. There was a telephone number but no address. "It is not really in Paris, it is outside the *ceinture*" he said, apologetically.

"You all arrived last night?" I enquired.

"You jest, of course! But then, we are always arriving, are we not?" said the Professor.

Indeed I felt that I already knew these people whom I had never met, that we had always been together.

Saint-Hilaire was immaculately turned out. Unlike British academics, he did not ignore his appearance. He claimed to be a specialist in the Occult Science of Rudolf Steiner which, he said, was much admired at the Institut Borges. (He pronounced the Argentinian writer's name to rhyme with *forge*.)

Helen Rhys-Jones, rounded and comfortable, pressed my hands and announced "You are a healer. I can help you." She was seeking, she volunteered at once, a connection between the dolmens of Carnac and those of her own village of Llantecwyn in Wales. The structures had puzzled archaeologists, but she thought she had uncovered their secret. She gazed at me a long time, as if expecting me to comment.

“Hi! Call me Corey” said Cornelius Yang. “Cornelius was my mother’s idea of a really Western name. She grew up in China. I’m from San Francisco, in the States.”

Dom Gregory, in open-necked shirt and slacks, did not look like a monk. Weren’t they supposed to wear long robes and hoods? He had an English accent, although he had lived for many years in a small community on Vancouver Island, Canada.

Over the course of the weekend I was to get to know these people whom, as I have said, I already felt I knew, in all their profundity, diversity, and individuality, as well as, or perhaps even better than, I know myself. Those few days seemed like a lifetime, or many lifetimes. I want to recount everything that happened, but I am too close to the events, they were so powerful, and they are all jumbled together. All I can do now is record impressions and highlights. Some day, perhaps, I will have the energy and the clarity to write the many volumes which the events of that weekend deserve.

After a morning walking by the one river, which was said to be two, and doing nothing in particular, I joined the others, who had invited me to a picnic lunch on one of the islands in the Gulf. “You will see something” Helen promised.

The megalith was a so-called passage grave. Helen said it wasn’t a grave, but it *was* a passage, a passage to another reality, what the ancients called the Other World, a reality existing in parallel to ours, but invisible to it. “The world of myths, *illud tempus*, ‘once upon a time’—it has been lost to us” explained Saint-Hilaire.

Helen smiled and began to sing—long, nasal, undulating notes without words, like the cries of gulls or the plaints of the *bombarde* and *biniou*, the local versions of shawm and bagpipe. I began to feel light headed, and I think I fainted, although the others said I did not. But what I then saw must have been a dream. The stones lining the corridor glowed, and swayed like dancers, then the stone at the end of the corridor lost its solidity and we passed through it. The place we entered was warm and nurturing, there was no sense of evil. Everything was as it should be. The meadow, more green than any meadow I had ever seen, the lush flowers I did not recognize, the sparkling stream in which we saw ourselves young and vibrant. “This” said Helen (was it Helen?—her voice was deep and masculine) “is the world as it was before the Christians came, with their lies about sin and their sermons on hellfire and the need for redemption. Here, all is one—the physical, mental, and spiritual worlds are continuous, they flow into each other, like the northern sea under a grey sky, embraced in mist—the horizon is a line drawn in the imagination, merely for convenience, a tool for navigation in the human world. *This* is always here. It has not, as you see, gone away. It is indestructible. The black robed priests could not kill it.”

“More wine?” Saint-Hilaire enquired.

“No, thank you, one glass is sufficient. But perhaps a little more of that excellent paté” I heard myself saying. I had never tasted food so delicious and varied. Was it the air, warmed by the sun glinting off the waves, or was I still dreaming?

I needed to be by myself again, and after we had returned to the mainland I went for another leisurely walk. What had I seen? What had happened to the physical world? Was it really as fluid as that? At the microscopic level, perhaps—I had read something about quantum mechanics, although it is not my field and I could not follow the mathematics—but what had happened (if it had happened) had happened at the macroscopic level. I had wanted to expand my mind beyond the platitudes of normal science, but this was ridiculous. I had no explanation other than to say that it was only a dream. But dreams, perhaps, are also reality? Why would they not be?

At dinner that evening I expressed all these doubts. Helen simply laughed. “You don’t believe it because you don’t believe it! It’s the triumph of theory over experience!”

Corey was more helpful. Although he denied that he was a Buddhist (“My family is Chinese” he said, as if that answered my question) he had studied Buddhism with a teacher from Taiwan who had a large following in the San Francisco Bay area, and for a few weeks he had lived as a monk.

“Any object which is observed is dependent upon that same object in consciousness. They arise together and are in fact a single entity. We went along with what Helen was doing and we created the Other World, but it was not a fantasy or hallucination. The Other World also created us. When you do what you call science, or rather when your colleagues, whom you say are just solving puzzles, do what they call science, science is what arises. They create it, and it creates them."

"Oh!" I said, with mock seriousness, "That solves the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen Paradox!"

"It may help to understand it," said Corey "but only as an analogy or metaphor. Buddhism is experiential and, to an extent, experimental, it tries to find out what's really there and to map the investigation so that it is reproducible. So it is scientific, I suppose, but it is not science. You can't convert the Heart Sutra into a series of mathematical operations, except as a kind of high level Zen joke."

"It bothers me that there was no sin" Dom Gregory said, gently but firmly.

"There was no suffering, either" agreed Corey.

Helen rolled her eyes. "Can't you accept what the universe gives you? Why do you have to grub around looking for problems?"

"Here we have an irreconcilable difficulty" observed Professor Saint-Hilaire. "You see that religions are not all the same. Helen is on one side of the Axial Shift, Corey and Dom Gregory are on the other. Is the universe a *cosmos* which we celebrate or a *chaos* from which we seek to escape?"

"Under the surface, behind the dogmas, they are all one and the same" said Helen, "the rest is just word games."

"Word games are my profession. I see their limitations, but I do not discard them" responded Saint-Hilaire. "If everything is said to be the same at a level at which nothing can be said, how is it that we are able to say that everything is the same or not the same? *That* is the word game!"

“That’s why we speak of Emptiness. It’s not a viewpoint” said Corey.

“But Nagarjuna had, as you say, the tongue in the cheek. His vigorous attempts to refute all viewpoints imply a viewpoint which is very strongly proposed. It’s just not a viewpoint you can *hold*. Emptiness slips through the ideologue’s fingers, but it is still a viewpoint, it is absolutely Buddhist. You can’t edit the Bible so as to have passages like ‘And it came to pass that the Emptiness of Israel spoke and said. . .’ Although it is a viewpoint, Emptiness is not a thing nor even a Nothing, like the Non-Being, the *Wu*, from which, as the Taoists say, *You*, Being, arises. Emptiness is the absence of something that never was, like tortoise fur or rabbit horns, so it cannot either do or not do anything. And again, on the other hand, you cannot go through the sutras replacing *Emptiness* with *God*. It is nonsense to say, of the Biblical God, ‘God is Form and Form is God’. Even the most thoroughgoing Vedantin could not say that, just like that, of Shankara’s ‘God’, the Nirguna and Saguna Brahman.”

“I have been very impressed by the Tibetan monks I have met” said Dom Gregory. “We had three Gelugpas stay at The Grange for an entire liturgical year. It was clear to all of us that they keep their vows. You know, we can *smell* a monk who breaks his vows. But God was a sticking point. They seemed to think we believe in a kind of Santa Claus. They could not see how God is both *logically* and *ontologically* prior, that he is ‘the ground of our beseeching’ as Mother Julian says, so that we do not, we *cannot*, argue for the existence of God. He *is* before anything *was*.”

“If everything is caused and conditioned by everything else,” responded Corey, “there is no place for a creator God. In a universe of interdependent arising, God is either an illusion, he does not exist, or else he exists but he is deluded, he thinks he is omnipotent and omniscient, but actually he is a finite, suffering being who will eventually be reborn as, well, perhaps a professor.”

“An evil rebirth, indeed” Saint-Hilaire said, laughing. “We are, I am afraid, a society of childish, minor megalomaniacs.”

“So,” Corey concluded, “theists are either stupid children or God is a stupid Child. Excuse me, Father, for being so direct.”

Dom Gregory smiled. He had heard all this before, though not put quite as bluntly. His Tibetan visitors, on finding themselves among theists, had quickly switched the topic of conversation to love and compassion, something on which everyone could agree. Buddhist atheism (as he called it, although he was not sure if that was quite the right word) troubled him, but he did not know how to respond. Had God not spoken to the Buddha? Why did the Buddha not hear? And if God had *not* spoken to the Buddha. . .but, that was unimaginable.

"Well," said Saint-Hilaire, as we finished our meal, "I will attempt to illumine all this at my lecture after dinner tomorrow. You know we have programs here. People come all the way from Paris for them."

Sunday

It was another brilliantly sunny day, encouraging us to go out. We decided to attend Mass at the local church, have lunch at *Au Pied du Cochon*, which had been recommended to us by the concierge, and visit the Tibetan center in the afternoon. My mind was going to be expanded, willy nilly. Was this a tour organized by Wonderful Worldview Weekends?

Notre Dame du Concours was a small church, and of some antiquity. Tradition said that it went back to pre-Christian times, and that it was on a hill where there had been human sacrifices. Helen said that was nonsense, it was just a shocking story invented to justify the Christian suppression of the rival religion. "It was a shrine to the Goddess" she confidently asserted. "There is the spring, most of the copse is still standing, and the Madonna inside the church is the giveaway—she's black. The Earth, Mother Gaia, incarnate in and for this particular place. The Goddess still lives."

"The statue is black because of the soot from the votive candles" I said, reading the brochure.

"Of course. And the soot is very careful to land on the facial features and hands only, avoiding the whites of the eyes and all of the clothing! No, she's black because she's the *Mother*" Helen insisted.

"So, what did you see?" asked Saint-Hilaire after we had ordered our food at the bistro.

"A lot of lace, and getting up and down. I couldn't follow it" I said.

"It was very mixed up" said Corey. "There was a lot of calling on deities, or perhaps just *the* Deity (are the saints deities? they sort of are in Buddhism), inviting them to appear, like a Taoist ceremony. The middle part seemed Buddhist—Tantric Buddhist, really, not regular Buddhism. The deity manifested in the vase, then entered the practitioners. But of course there might have been nothing there, and it was all about ritual. That's fine. Confucius said 'Worship the spirit as if the spirit were present'. It didn't matter to him whether the spirit actually existed or not. (He didn't say *exist*, he said *present*—some people miss that; Confucius might have been an agnostic but he wasn't an atheist.) The important thing to him was the reverential attitude, practiced in the temple as worship and put into effect in everyday relationships as human heartedness."

"It was all about the Goddess" Helen averred. "People couldn't wait for the Mass to finish to go and light a candle to her. . .so that she could have more soot on her" she smirked.

"I had some difficulty with the French," said Dom Gregory, who had concelebrated, "but the Abbé is a good priest, he is obviously a man of prayer, and he guided me through very graciously. But of course, the main thing is that Christ was made present here again, enfleshed, or rather en-breaded and en-wined, to bring us up to his divinity by our reception of the Elements. At one point in the Mass, as we prepare the gifts, we mix a little water with the wine and say 'By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.' It seems that in France you say 'As this water is mixed with the wine *for the sacrament of the Covenant*, may we be united to the divinity of him who took our humanity.' The French for covenant is *alliance*, which, I think, can also mean *marriage*, is that so?"

"*D'accord*." agreed Saint-Hilaire.

"So, this echoes Athanasius, who said that God became human so that humans might become divine. We Catholics call this *sanctification*, but the Orthodox are more bold and call it *theosis*, divinization. That is what Christianity is all about. The marriage of divinity and humanity in Christ brings about the marriage of heaven and earth."

"Something we already had before Christianity" said Helen.

"But there was a divorce. We call it sin" Dom Gregory objected. "Before the resurrection, there must be the Cross."

Péma Chöling was occupied and staffed mainly by lay people. Most were young, less than fifty years old perhaps, and some were married and had small children. There was only one monk, Lama Thubten. He spoke English better than French, and was pleased to have Anglophone guests.

"There she is again" said Helen, pointing to a thangka of Green Tara, "the Earth Mother".

"The female embodiment of compassionate mind" said Lama Thubten. "She is more approachable than Chenrezig, the male embodiment. We find he is a little more distant. You see how Tara's right foot is stretched out. She is stepping off her throne, out of the painting, always ready to come to help us. She is very near, very accepting."

"You have met her?" I asked.

"Yes. Why not? It is the natural result of the practice. We are introduced to her, we feel her personality, we share her laughter as she throws down the *maras*, the obstacles."

"So, then, you believe that she really exists?"

"What do you mean, *really exists*? Do *you* really exist?" countered Lama Thubten. "If so, how, and where?"

It seemed like a silly question but the more he pressed the issue, asking me to point myself out, the less certain I became that I existed at all.

"I'm just an illusion? There's really nothing?"

"No, that is not what you have discovered. Of course you are here, but you have failed to discover yourself as an *essential* self which, until a few moments ago, you thought you were. And you thought you had to protect that self, with greed, lust, arguing and fighting. You were like a crazy person who kept his hand clenched, insisting that he held the most important thing in the world. Now your hand is open, and you see that your palm is empty. You feel lighter now, yes?" Yes, I supposed I did. "And that is how Tara exists. And all the other deities you see, in statues on the altar, in pictures on the walls."

"It is so richly pagan" Helen enthused.

"On the other hand" said Dom Gregory, "I am reminded of the stories of the Catholic missionaries who mistook Tibetan Buddhism for a form of Eastern Christianity—perhaps, they thought, something to do with Prester John. I can see why. Rosaries, images, incense, bowing, even clothing that resembles the cope and miter, and monks chanting in rows facing each other, like a Benedictine choir. But when the truth was known, opinion was divided as to whether Buddhism was a forerunner of the Gospel or a deception of the Devil, disguised as an Angel of Light."

"Excuse me" replied Lama Thubten, "it is not perhaps very polite to say so, but in Buddhism we debate, in a similar way, whether your religion is a primitive form of Buddhism or the work of a wrathful deity. On the one hand, Jesus gave his life for others, like a Bodhisattva. Yet he seemed to believe in God. How could a Great Bodhisattva be so mistaken? Was it an *upaya*, skillful means to allow him to speak to theists, or was he a minor Bodhisattva, deficient in wisdom? Then again, theists are always at each others' throats. Look at Jerusalem. Surely the deity who stimulates such conflict is what we call an *asura*, a powerful but warlike deity. I requested His Holiness the Dalai Lama to send monks to the Middle East to perform *sadhanas*, which are a kind of liturgy, to exorcize, or tame, that wrathful god, to convert him into a Protector of Dharma, just as our teacher

Padmasambhava tamed the local deities of my country, but His Holiness thought that the time was not ripe."

The events of the day had worn me out and, after dinner, the food and wine had their effect. I dozed off a few times during Professor Saint-Hilaire's lecture, and only made a few notes. It is all on tape, however, and later I hope to transcribe it. The essence of his talk was somewhat as follows.

It was entitled "Many Selves, Many Realities: The Implications of Heteronymy and the Plurality of Worlds Theory for Multiple Religious Belonging" and it approached the question of the plurality of religions from a personal standpoint, that is, what it means for us to find ourselves in a plural religious matrix and how we are taking on the plural features of that matrix. At first, I could not see this as a problem. There are many religions, they are all guesses, and they are all more or less wrong. To me, "superstition" and "religion" meant about the same thing—that's why I am a scientist. However, the events of the weekend, especially the dream-like moments in the megalith, had made me doubt that science was, after all, the final answer. I was pulled up sharp when Saint-Hilaire argued that science, especially when it ceases being an open ended and evolving set of methods of investigation, and freezes into a dogma which he called Scientism, becomes another absolute. Trying to resolve the problem of many religious absolutes by downgrading them to relative truths, it has actually compounded the problem by proposing itself as the real and final Absolute. How does this differ from the claims of the religions? To the many existing absolutes it has added itself. How can we choose between them? Is science also relative? Is there, then, no absolute truth at all? Do we just allow the human experiment to dissolve into nihilism, antinomianism, hedonism, drug addiction, and shopping? Are we locked into the futility of Sartre's *Huis Clos*, talking endlessly to keep ourselves from realizing the hopelessness of our situation?

Even Vedanta, or Helen's New Age, Neo-Pagan Monism, is not the solution. On the surface it sounds perfect: all religions are ultimately one, so there is no problem. But, what does "one" mean? The one, apparently, of the speaker. Vedanta says that all religions are ultimately Hinduism. The Muslim who denies that Allah is an aspect of Brahman, or the Buddhist who denies that there is any Ground of Being at all, even a formless one, is, according to Vedanta, only relatively right, but ultimately wrong. So, again, a third term, intended to resolve the antinomies, ends up compounding them. An apparent tolerance is actually another variety of paternalistic triumphalism.

The only way out of the closed circle, according to Saint-Hilaire, is to take the evidence seriously—to be, as it were, Galileo refuting Aristotle by looking at nature as it is, not speculating about nature as it should be. And so we find that there are many absolutes, many religions, philosophies, and ideologies, each in their own way more or less adequate explanations of reality, but all of them conflicting, some gently, some aggressively. Christians, Jews and Muslims agree that there is One God, yet they have killed each other, and members of their own traditions, over the details of that belief. China and Japan have tried various ways of blending the traditions that they have developed or imported, but, as on the Indian Subcontinent, tolerance (when it has worked, which it often has not) has produced its own triumphalist absolutes.

What we need, then, according to Saint-Hilaire, is a new way of seeing, a new logic, a meta-absolute which has room for all other absolutes without degrading them to relativities. He proposed the term *symperichoresis* for this logic, and said that we live, not in a universe with one absolute, but in a *polyverse* of *symperichoretic absolutes*. The term was, he said, an adaptation of the Greek word used to describe the relationship between the divine and human natures of Christ, and subsequently the relationships between the three Persons of the Trinity. For many centuries it was debated, often hotly, how the divinity and the humanity were conjoined, and whether one had precedence over the other. After the Council of Nicea it was decided that, although perhaps it was incomprehensible, it was the Christian experience that both natures were equally present, each containing the other, with no separation, division, or hierarchy. Jesus had said, according to the Johannine tradition, that he was in the Father, the Father was in him, he was in his disciples, and his disciples were in him. The Nicene Creed uses the term *homoousion*, "of the same nature", for this relationship. When the discussion was broadened to the question of the mutuality not only of the natures within Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, but between all three Persons, the term *perichōrēsis*, a Greek word that meant the alternation of the seasons, was proposed by a gentleman mysteriously known as Pseudo-Cyril, who re-interpreted in its more literal sense of mutual enfoldment. At first used as a more precise alternative to *homoousion* it quickly became the standard term for the interpenetrating of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was translated into Latin as *circumincessio* or *circuminsessio*. In English, it came to be called coinherence. Meister Eckhart said that coinherence was like having water in a tub and the tub in the water, both at the same time. Impossible in the physical world, he said, but normal in the spiritual world.

In Buddhism, there was a similar debate over the connection between samsara, rebirth in cyclic existence, and nirvana, final liberation from samsara, and Nagarjuna had proposed a similar solution—samsara and nirvana are coterminous, not even "the subtlest something" comes between them. Had he spoken Greek, he might have used the term *perichoresis*. The Chinese Buddhists expanded on Nagarjuna and used the term *xiangru*, mutually entering, for the relationship between pure, unconditioned mind and everyday reality. *Xiangru*, Saint-Hilaire claimed, is a fairly good translation of *perichoresis*.

Professor Saint-Hilaire brought these notions together by pointing out their structural similarity, arguing that they differed only by being, respectively, ontological and epistemological in their focus. Then he proposed that this structure suggested a mode of relationship between absolutes, adding the prefix *sym*, together, to allow the term to expand from two to many mutually incompatible entities in relationship with each other. This, he said, was the universe, but since *uni* implies one, he preferred the neologism *polyverse*.

Such a notion, he maintained, was compatible with the many-worlds interpretation of quantum physics, which seeks to resolve some observational paradoxes by asserting that, each time an observation of an event occurs which can have one of two possible outcomes, the universe splits so that both outcomes occur, but in parallel worlds. Saint-Hilaire stressed that he was not a physicist, that his theory was not an adaptation of quantum physics, and that it was not really important whether the many-worlds interpretation was true or not. Just the fact that it had been proposed as a serious scientific hypothesis was enough to indicate that it was worth considering the possibility that the universe is a polyverse. The supporters of the many-worlds interpretation appear to accept an ever-expanding set of physical worlds, splitting off into infinity, and it is not clear where *we* are in all that. Saint-Hilaire's philosophy of a symperichoretic polyverse is not concerned with physical worlds, but with world views or Weltanschauungen, so it is not, he held, quite so bizarre.

If this is the nature of reality "out there", what of us, who live in this symperichoretic matrix? To address this question, Saint-Hilaire had recourse to, as one might expect, the fiction of Jorge Luis Borges, but also to the poetry of Fernando Pessoa. Borges plays with time and many universes, and his characters move back and forth in them. Pessoa went beyond inventing characters, finding them alive in himself, as semi-autonomous beings he called heteronyms. He did not always agree with his heteronyms (insofar as we can identify a *he* who is Pessoa-himself) and they had conversations with each other to which he was little more than a witness.

If the universe is a polyverse, then are we not also polyverses? Saint-Hilaire borrowed the ancient occult ideas of "as above, so below" and the human as a microcosm to propose that all realities coinhere in every human. It would then not be unusual, in fact would be expected, that each of us should not only be able to belong to more than one religion, that is, to inhabit more than one Weltanschauung, but that we should find each of these Weltanschauungen welling up from within us, as semi-autonomous beings. This, he told his audience, is what happened to a few of us over the past two days.

There remained the question of how these beings, whom we are pleased to call our selves, arise, and how they arise in different universes. "Experimental presuppositions", he said. Just as in the famous case of light behaving as a particle or as a wave, but not as both, depending on how the experiment is set up, Saint-Hilaire claimed that when, for instance, we approach reality as if there were something behind it, such as a God of the Abrahamic type, a universe appears which either contains that God or is empty of precisely that God (atheism not being a neutral term, there must be a specific deity in which the atheist expresses disbelief). On the other hand, if we approach reality as if it were sufficient unto itself, some sort of monistic universe, or the Buddhist universe of interdependent arising, appears. And so on.

Wishing to be more precise, for he had learnt from Rudolf Steiner that the knowledge and attainment of higher worlds was not a haphazard process, Professor Saint-Hilaire concluded by summarizing his remarks as a complex series of mathematical operations, which I unsuccessfully tried to copy down.

Monday

I breakfasted alone. “This is a very quiet time of year” complained the concierge. “Monsieur is, as you see, the only guest.”

“Professor Saint-Hilaire? The guests at his lecture? Last night?” I queried.

“Yes. Monsieur l’Abbé speaks of him. Maybe he will visit one day.”

I returned to Paris, and started to pack my bags. On an impulse I went to see the Church of Sacré Coeur, wanting to act like a tourist. It was not to my taste. I prefer the English gothic style. Sitting over a mineral water in a nearby café I heard a familiar voice and looked up to see Saint-Hilaire.

“Did you enjoy your rest at that château my secretary told you about? In Brittany somewhere, I think?” he asked.

“Your secretary? Er, yes, it was…very different…from Paris” I replied, searching to make sense of his question.

“Good. You will excuse me, I am somewhat pressed, as we say. I look forward to meeting you again. But remember, in the beginning there was no beginning, and in the end it will never end.”

Tuesday

Back in the cold damp of Manchester I rang the number on Professor Saint-Hilaire’s card. I wanted to ask him to fax me his mathematical proof of the symperichoretic polyverse. Fred, I was sure, would know if it worked or not.

The number had been disconnected. There was no record of l’Institut Borges, either inside or outside the *ceinture*.

Postlude
The Melody

The Professor, of course, as professors always do, gives the game away and takes the fun out of the story. In his lecture he reveals that this essay is an exercise in heteronomy, in allowing aspects of myself to emerge as semi-autonomous characters and act out a drama on the stage of my imagination.

Born into an English Free Church family (today we would say United Reformed) my parents and I attended, as often as the difficulties of World War II would allow, various so-called Nonconformist churches. I started to go my own way at about the age of sixteen. I read up on religion as best as I could. I had no guides, and the local public library had very few books on religion of any kind, so I ordered Penguin books through the mail. Influenced by what I had learnt of Gnosticism and the western occult tradition I invented my own Weltanschauung, heavy on hierarchies (mutually invisible because they vibrated at different frequencies) and light on ethics. Amongst the established religions I was most strongly attracted to Buddhism, less strongly, but still significantly, to Hinduism and Islam. As I studied, it seemed as if I entered into the religions, one at a time. I did not convert to them, but I lived in them as one might live in a novel. My room became the battlefield of Kurukshetra and I saw Lord Krishna and his thousand mouths; in my imagination I circumambulated the Ka'ba; a tree under which I read the Dhammapada became the Bodhi Tree.

After experiencing the presence of an entity which I could only call God (since it kept manifesting during, and only during, Anglo-Catholic Masses which I was attending out of curiosity) I returned to Christianity, which I had previously decided was philosophically untenable. Since I thought of myself as a scientist (I had attended the Royal Veterinary College before moving on to King's College, London, to read Theology) I decided that the experiential data demanded that, whatever the intellectual difficulties, I take the existence of the Triune God seriously. In time I concluded that there was enough evidence to warrant my seeking acceptance into the Roman Catholic Church, but I retained my strong attraction to Buddhism, going on to the Ph.D. program in Buddhist Studies at the

University of Wisconsin-Madison. I wanted to be both Christian and Buddhist simultaneously, but I could not see how this was possible unless I invented my own Buddhist-Christian religion—but then I would be neither Buddhist nor Christian. The conundrum, or koan, was solved for me when I realized that I was asking the question wrongly. It was not "How can *I* be both Buddhist and Christian?" but "Why do I think there is only one, particle-like, *I* which has to choose which way to go?"

On the strength of this insight, I read, at the first international conference on Buddhism and Christianity, held in Honolulu in 1980, a paper entitled "The Mutual Fulfillment of Buddhism and Christianity in Co-Inherent Superconsciousness" in which I introduced *perichoresis* as a possible logical matrix for the co-existence of incompatible Weltanschauungen. The paper was published in *Buddhist-Christian Dialogue: Mutual Renewal and Transformation*, edited by Paul O. Ingram and Frederick J. Streng (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), pages 115–136. Over the years I have expanded and refined the suggestions in this paper, which I currently regard as my foundational position statement. Following the conference I flew to Wisconsin and "became Buddhist" (if one can say such a thing) by formally taking refuge with Geshe Lhundup Sopa of the Gelugpa lineage.

Now there were (at least) two of me—Catholic Christian and Mahayana Buddhist—but I did not know what to do with my selves until, at a Shin Buddhist conference in Oxford, England, in 1998, a paper by Rev. Gustavo Pinto of Brazil introduced me to the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa and his heteronyms.[5] This, I thought, was me. How many of me were there? When I discussed this with friends, I found that they often had the same question about themselves. It seemed I was not alone, and perhaps if I wrote of my experience of my selves I would gain some clarity on the issue and at the same time encourage others to allow their heteronyms to speak, without fearing incipient insanity. We only suffer from multiple personality disorder, I am told, when our heteronyms do not know each other. This is not my case. The heteronyms, and the orthonym (Pessoa's name for Pessoa-himself) who narrates the story you have just read, are in dialogue. If those

[5]Fernando Pessoa, *Fernando Pessoa & Co.*, edited and translated by Richard Zenith (New York: Grove Press, 1998) is especially useful for its long introduction. Alternative translations of many of the same poems are in *Poems of Fernando Pessoa*, translated and edited by Edwin Honig and Susan M. Brown (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986).

of us who recognize our heteronyms will allow ourselves to have such dialogues within ourselves we shall at the least improve the quality of interreligious dialogue and, maybe, we will assist the evolution of the human quest.

I blush to be compared with Jorge Luis Borges, the Argentinian master of the short story which changes the reader's consciousness. My story is too prolix and too explicitly intellectual. But I do wish to bow to him, and say that it was his fiction which gave me the outrageous idea of writing an academic paper as a story.[6] Also, instead of writing short commentaries on imaginary large books, as did Borges, my orthonym herein states that he is writing a summary of a multi-volume work that is yet to be written. He is Segrob, Borges in reverse.

The structure of the story is simple: the heteronyms emerge, speak, enter into dialogue, and then fold back again into the orthonym. All of them, the heteronyms and the orthonym, say what they wish to say. I exercised no particular control over them. I (who am, apparently, different even from my orthonym) identify with all of them, most strongly with Saint-Hilaire, least of all with Helen. Perhaps this is because I self-identify as an intellectual and I am uncomfortable in the presence of persons who are strongly connected to their feelings. Nevertheless, Helen exists, and she brings me back into my body when I get too professorial and lose my heart.

Professor Georges-Michel de Saint-Hilaire will not allow me to escape without adding references. I consent to give a brief list of sources, but I will not accede to his request to compose footnotes which are, after the French manner, longer than the text. His name, by the way, resonates with that of the famous pioneer French Buddhologist, Jules Barthélemy Saint-Hilaire (my apologies to any of his descendants who may feel I have taken his august name in vain) but it also refers to my mother's decision to have named me Hilary had I been born as a girl.

The Notes

[6] The definitive collection in English is *Jorge Luis Borges: Collected Fictions*, translated by Andrew Hurley (Penguin Books, 1998). The best study I have found is *Borges and His Fiction: A Guide to His Mind and Art*, by Gene H. Bell-Villada (Austin TX: University of Texas Press, revised edition, 1999).

The statement of Saint-Hilaire "In the beginning there was no beginning, and in the end it will never end" is quite mysterious. I don't at present know what it means, but I could not prevent him from saying it.

Reports of two rivers meeting underground are common in the traditions of the Indian Subcontinent. I have taken the liberty of inventing a location in Europe. Whether under or above ground, the confluence of two rivers is recognized as a place of power. The Ganges and Jamuna meet at Allahabad, the site of the Kumbh Mela, reportedly the biggest religious festival in the world.[7] In my story, the meeting of the rivers, the people, and the religions, are all connected.

A comprehensive descriptive account of megaliths, eschewing metaphysical speculation, is *Dolmens for the Dead: Megalith Building throughout the World*, by Roger Joussaume, translated from *Des dolmens pour les morts* (Hachette, 1985) by Anne and Christopher Chippindale (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1988). It includes chapters on the British Isles and Western France. The idea that the stones are people, frozen dancers, made of light and produced by song, is found in various fringe accounts such as *The Light in Britain* by Grace and Ivan Cooke (New Lands, Liss, Hampshire: The White Eagle Publishing Trust, 1971). I have a few such books "to complete my collection". They embarrass me, but Helen loves them. The Other World, in parallel with ours, but often on a different time scale, is a staple of Celtic mythology.

Myths, dreams, mysteries, and *illud tempus* have been classically linked by Mircea Eliade. He thought the *illud tempus* had been overwhelmed by what he called History.

Corey's brief Dharma talk at Saturday dinner is a summary of the Yogachara position. There is remarkably little on this in English, compared to its companion and part rival, Madhyamika. The best short introduction is *On Knowing Reality: The* Tattvārtha *Chapter of Asaṉga's* Bodhisattvabhūmi, translated with an Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Janice Dean Willis (NewYork: Columbia University Press, 1979).

[7] For an eyewitness account see "The Kumbh Mela" in *No Full Stops in India* by Mark Tully (Penguin, 1992), pages 86–126.

The Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen (EPR) Paradox is not directly relevant to the discussion. It is very mischievous of the orthonym to tease Corey with it. In a 1935 paper "Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?" Albert Einstein, Boris Podolsky, and Nathan Rosen proposed an experiment which would solve the problem of simultaneously identifying the position and velocity of an electron. But, because of a pesky phenomenon known as action-at-a-distance, "quantum theory cannot describe such a situation."[8]

The Axial Age, or Axial Shift as Saint-Hilaire interpretively calls it, on one side of which he places Helen, with Corey and Dom Gregory on the other, was identified by Karl Jaspers in *The Origin and Goal of History*, translated from *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (1949) by Michael Bullock (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953). In brief, Jaspers noted that earlier, local, religions viewed the universe as a gift of the deities or ancestors which was to be celebrated (a *cosmos*), while later, universal religions feared or despised the universe (seeing it as a *chaos*) and tried to escape from it. Clearly there are many nuances to this insight, but this is not the place to discuss them. I have made some preliminary remarks in my "The Coming of the Dialogian: A Transpersonal Approach to Interreligious Dialogue", *Dialogue and Alliance: A Journal of the International Religious Foundation* 7:2 (Fall/Winter 1993), pages 3–17.

The radically contextual nature of words like God, Buddha, Tao, etc., and the impossibility of substituting one for the other was pointed out by Ninian Smart in his Gifford Lectures for 1979–1980, published as *Beyond Ideology: Religion and the Future of Western Civilization* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981).

Dom Gregory may have converted to the Roman Catholic Church from the Anglican Church, since he quotes the 14^{th} century English mystic Mother Julian in the language of the prayer to Julian recommended by the Anglican keepers of her shrine in Norwich, which begins "Most Holy Lord, the ground of our beseeching, who through your servant Julian revealed the wonder of your love. . ." The original is in the forty-second chapter of the *Revelations*, in which Julian reports that Jesus said to her "I am grounde of thy besyking." Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, edited by Marion Glasscoe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, revised

[8] *Mind, Matter, and Quantum Mechanics* by Henry P. Stapp (Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 1993), page 235.

edition, 1993), page 60.

Kōbō Daishi (774–735 CE) catalogues ten stages of spiritual development in his *Precious Key to the Secret Treasury* (*Hizō Hōyaku*) and places theists, who hope for rebirth in heaven, at stage three, that of "the mind that is infantlike and fearless. . .like an infant or a calf that follows its mother." *Kūkai: Major Works. Translated, with an Account of his Life and a Study of his Thought*, by Yoshito S. Hakeda (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), page 163.

Brahmā, the nearest thing in Buddhism to a Creator God of the Abrahamic type, is depicted as a deluded megalomaniac in *Brahmajāla Sutta* 2.1. At the beginning of a new cosmic cycle, a being is born, by the fruiting of karma, in the palace of Brahmā. He is lonely, and as he longs for company, another being, by the fruiting of karma, is born in the heaven of Brahmā. By the same method, other beings continue to arrive. The first being then thinks to himself "I am Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, the All-Powerful, the Lord, the Maker and Creator, Ruler, Appointer and Orderer, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. These beings were created by me. How so? Because I first had this thought: 'Oh, if only some other beings would come here!' That was my wish, and then these beings came into this existence!" The other beings, having been born there later, agree with the first being, and worship him as the Creator God. The delusion of theism is established. *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, translated by Maurice Walshe (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), pages 75f.

China Galland discusses her experiences with black Madonnas and images of Tara in *Longing for Darkness: Tara and the Black Madonna* (Penguin Books, 1990). Her travelogue is intriguing and indicates the need for an academic study. (For Tara, see below.)

Only Dom Gregory is able to enter into the Weltanschauung of the Mass on its own terms. To prepare for his concelebration he had re-read *Liturgie de la Messe* (Paris: A.E.L.F. Textes Liturgiques, 1980) which he had picked up on a previous visit to France. He quotes Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei* 54: "For [the Word of God] was humanized that we might be deified". *Christology of the Later Fathers*, edited by Edward Richie Hardy in collaboration with Cyril C. Richardson

(Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954; The Library of Christian Classics, volume III), page 107, note 79.

The others view the Mass as it were through a window of their several Weltanschauungen. Corey quotes *Analects* 3:12: "The phrase 'Sacrifice as if present' means 'sacrifice to the spirit as if the spirit were present' " (my translation) and points out the distinction between *you*, "exist" and *zai*, "be present".

For a discussion of the difference between pre-Axial and post-Axial visions of the marriage of heaven and earth see my "The Christian Mystic as *paganus redevivus*: A Hermeneutical Suggestion", *The Merton Annual: Studies in Thomas Merton, Religion, Culture, Literature & Social Concerns*, edited by Robert E. Daggy, Patrick Hart, OCSO, Dewey Weiss Kramer and Victor A. Kramer, volume 3 (New York: AMS Press, 1990), pages 203–216.

The classic study of Tara is *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet* by Stephan Beyer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973). The essence of the Tara cultus, with a short *sadhana* (liturgical meditation practice) can be found in *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama I: Bridging the Sutras and Tantras*, compiled, edited, and translated by Glenn H. Mullin (Ithaca NY: Snow Lion Publications, second edition, 1985), section five, "Meditation on Arya Tara".

Lama Thubten's questioning of the narrator on the nature of his existence is a form of analytic meditation, beloved by Gelugpas (the lineage of which H. H. the Dalai Lama is the principal teacher), based on Madhyamikan principles. The best introduction to Madhyamika is Nagarjuna himself, who is usually regarded as the originator of the system. An accessible translation of his major text, with helpful commentaries, is *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's* Mūlamadhyamakakārikā. Translation and commentary by Jay L. Garfield (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955). An analytic meditation on Emptiness by Tsongkhapa, the founder of the Gelugpa lineage, has been translated by Stephen Batchelor in *The Jewel in the Lotus: A Guide to the Buddhist Traditions of Tibet* (London: Wisdom Publications, 1987), pages 194–206.

The story of contacts between Portuguese Catholics and Hindus has been fairly well documented, but that between Tibetan Buddhists and Jesuit missionaries is yet to be told. Dom Gregory may have got his information verbally from Professor Richard Sherburne, S.J., of Seattle University, who has been working on this issue.

The vignette about an attempt to persuade H. H. Dalai Lama XIV to send a mission to exorcize or tame the presumed wrathful deity of Jerusalem is based on unsupported rumors which went the rounds of western Dharma centers some years ago.

The distinction between science as an open-ended methodology and Scientism as a closed dogma has been made by Huston Smith (personal communication).

Jean-Paul Sartre's terrifying little play, *Huis Clos*, which in many ways can be seen as a metaphor of samsara, has been translated into English by Stuart Gilbert in *No Exit and Three Other Plays by Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955).

For material on the Christological controversy and the development of Trinitarian theology see G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: Heinemann, 1936; reprint, London: S.P.C.K., 1952). Prestige attributes the choice of *perichōrēsis* to Pseudo-Cyril, but *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (third edition, 1997), sub "circumincession", assigns it to St John of Damascus. The difference may result from confusion between its earlier Christological and its later Trinitarian use: see the entry in G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

Meister Eckhart says of coinherence: "There is a difference between spiritual things and bodily things. Every spiritual thing can dwell in another but nothing bodily can exist in another. There may be water in a tub, and the tub surrounds it, but where the wood is, there is no water. In this sense no material thing dwells in another, but every spiritual thing does dwell in another. Every single angel is in the next with all his joy, with all his happiness and all his beatitude as perfectly as in himself; and every angel with all his joy and all his beatitude is in me, and so is God Himself with all his beatitude, though I know it not." Sermon 5. *Meister Eckhart: Sermons and Treatises*, translated and edited by M. O'C. Walshe (Volumes 1 and 2, London: Watkins, 1979–1981; volume 3, Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element Books, 1987), volume I, page 50. (Yes, this is the same Walshe mentioned above as the translator of the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. He may have been a dual adherent but as far as I know he did not write about that.)

The reference to Nagarjuna is *Mūlamadhyamakakārikāḥ* 25:20: "Nirvana's limit is samsara's limit; not even the subtlest something comes between the two." (My translation.) So, they are two, they are not different, and they are not the same.

The term *xiangru* is found as early as the Pure Land teacher Tanluan (5^{th} to 6^{th} century CE) but it is used most prominently in the East Asian Tantric texts (Shingon), which are considerably later.

The many-worlds interpretation of quantum physics was proposed by Bryce S. DeWitt in "Quantum Mechanics and Reality", *Physics Today*, Sept. 1970, pages 30–35. A spirited defense of the interpretation, addressed to the general reader, is offered in *Parallel Universes: The Search for Other Worlds* by Fred Alan Wolf (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988). Henry Stapp, *Mind, Matter, and Quantum Mechanics* (cited above), whose book is aimed somewhat more at specialists, objects that "The interpretation appears, superficially, to be confounding the many *possible* courses of events in a statistical ensemble of possibilities with the one course of events that actually occurs" (page 237) and offers an alternative explanation of strange phenomena such as the EPR Paradox (above) by combining Werner Heisenberg's physics with the psychology of William James.

Pessoa-himself seemed to be troubled by the existence of his heteronyms and he tended towards nihilism. One of his heteronyms, Bernardo Soares, says that, although "our fathers still had the believing impulse. . .we lost all this. . .and so we were left each man to himself, in the desolation of feeling ourselves live." (*Fernando Pessoa & Co.*, page 19). Richard Zenith says that Pessoa "prefigured—in his own person—the postmodern experience of utter dissociation. Put more accurately, he experienced what many postmodernists only talk about: the impossibility and undesirability of a whole, and a letting go of all nostalgia for a consensus of thought and feeling" (page 30f.). By proposing the symperichoretic polyverse matrix, Saint-Hilaire seems to escape Pessoa's "over-pervasion" of Emptiness, as Buddhism might regard it. See also the essays in *Healing Deconstruction: Postmodern Thought in Buddhism and Christianity*, edited by David Loy (Atlanta GA:

Scholars Press, 1996) which includes my "Idolatry and Inherent Existence: The Golden Calf and the Wooden Buddha".

Rudolf Steiner did not employ mathematical proofs but he did strive for precision in areas where others might speak vaguely of intuition. See, for example, his *Knowledge of the Higher Worlds and Its Attainment*, translated from *Wie erlangt man Erkenntniße der höheren Welten?* by George Metaxa with revisions by Henry B. and Lisa D. Monges (New York: Anthropsophic Press, 1947).