

ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS- TOWARDS A TRANS-THEOLOGICAL APPROACH

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BY

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STATEMENT

As required under the university ordinance OB.9.9 (iv). I state that the present thesis entitled “*Abrahamic Religions – Towards a Trans-theological Approach.*” is my original contribution and the same has not been submitted on any other previous occasion to the best of my knowledge. The present study is the first comprehensive and critical work from the defined perspective in the area mentioned.

The literature related to the problem investigated has been cited and due acknowledgements have been made wherever the same have been used.

Place: Taleigao Plateau.

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Date: 15/10/2019

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, “*Abrahamic Religions – Towards a Trans-Theological Approach.*” submitted by Mr. Henrique D’Souza for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy is based on his original studies and critical reflection carried out under my supervision. The thesis or any part thereof has not been previously submitted for any other degree or diploma in any university or institution.

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PREFACE

The modern world is filled with stories of religious hatred and wars. Religious bigotry is the order of the day, from every nook and corner of the true world one can hear about the atrocities committed in the name of religion. The religion which was meant to make humans holy and god-like has turned humans against themselves, ready to kill the other at the least provocation. Religious wars have replaced the ideological battles of the last century. There is a rise in religious fundamentalism and extremists are threatening world peace, and religious conflicts are increasing in frequency. When conflicts are linked with religious terms/beliefs, they get transformed into value conflicts. The value conflicts tend to become mutually exclusive as they entail righteous judgments of what is right and wrong. Therefore, parties tend to believe that there cannot be a common ground to resolve their differences. With the increasing polarization of religions, any talk of reconciliation is deemed as an exercise that is bound by failure. Although it appears that the time is not ripe to bring out an agreement between religions but any attempt to reconcile the diverse views is a step in the right direction.

Various attempts have been made to bring about an understanding of the different Abrahamic religions; however, they failed to bring about any reconciliation. Although religions believe in similar things, the fact of the matter is that they do not teach the same thing. God may be the same, but it is not identical in all religions. Each religion interprets doctrines differently and tries to posit the fact that theirs is the right interpretation, and they are closest to the Truth. Minor differences and misinterpretations by leaders have brought about immeasurable pain and suffering in the world. Today religion has left the narrow confines of the church, temples, mosques, etc., and has entered the public space in a new avatar. It has metamorphized and embraced violence, and this is why Christian theologians like Hans Kung believes that peace in the world is directly proportional to the peace among religions. Some scholars who were intoxicated on the triumphant march of secularization had dismissed religion and written its obituary. But religion staged an astonishing come back; therefore, there is a challenge to understand the critical role played by faith.

The study of religion cannot be done in the classical sense, therefore to achieve this goal, there is a need to understand its potential influence on philosophy, literature, art, architecture, economics, politics, science and technology. The impact of religion requires to be seen beyond its visible boundaries. This journey has to begin at the centre and fulcrum i.e. God or the sacred who is at the centre of most religions. The hermeneutical interpretation developed by Richard Kearney provides excellent help. He presents two rival ways of interpreting the divine: Onto-theological and the eschatological. The eschatological interpretation allows us to view God as one who possibilizes our world from the future that we hope for, the eschaton. The trans-theological approach has been adopted here, and it has proposed the God of Peace to bring about peace and harmony in the world.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE NOS.
I	INTRODUCTION	1 - 23
II	A QUEST FOR THE GOD WHO WILL BE	24 - 35
III	TOWARDS A ‘GOD AFTER GOD’	36 - 46
IV	THE COMING OF GOD OF PEACE	47 - 57
V	FIGURING OUT THE FIGURAL IN THE GOD OF PEACE	58 - 68
VI	THE POWER OF (DIS) ARTICULATION	69 - 77
VII	CONCLUSION	78 - 80
APPENDIX	PAPER ENTITLED <i>Is Synthesis of World Religions Possible?</i>	81-108
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	109-116

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Is a reconciliation among Abrahamic religions¹ possible? A question of this nature is both critical and relevant in this world ridden with violence and terror. While humanity has made progress by leaps and bounds in the area of science and technology, yet when it comes to religions, it appears that there is a moral slump as violence and terror is being used by religions to foster their agenda. The violence and terror that is emanating from Abrahamic beliefs become the hermeneutics of facticity² that provides for a platform for researchers to seek novel approaches towards the understanding of the Abrahamic and the revision in God thinking. Facticity characterizes the way Abrahamic beliefs are ‘there’ (da)³ in the world. All humanity, cultures and religions exist in a factual situation and hermeneutics that explicates this human condition is hermeneutics of facticity. Facticity lays out the human plight of being ‘thrown’ into the world⁴ and it opens up various possibilities. The facticity of Abrahamic religions manifests its state of fallenness. Hence, the hermeneutics of facticity of the Abrahamic faiths offers different ways of approaching them.

The hermeneutics of facticity that has been adopted as an epistemic location in the context of this study is not a Platonic escape⁵ in the other world, but rather a

¹ The Abrahamic religions refer to three sister monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) that claim the prophet, Abraham. They are called Abrahamic religions because they all trace their genealogy to Abraham. Abraham is the spiritual ancestor of three world religions who profess faith in the One True God.

² Hermeneutics of facticity is the way in which the faithful of the Abrahamic religions interpret and understand how God exists and presents himself in this world.

³ Heidegger’s understanding of being ‘there’ as famously expressed in the word ‘Dasein’.

⁴ Daniel O. Dahlstrom, (2013) *The Heidegger Dictionary*, London: A & C Black, p.212.

⁵A. S. Ferguson, (1922) “Plato's Simile of Light. Part II. The Allegory of the Cave (Continued)”, *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol.16, No.1, pp.15-28. According to Plato's philosophy of the ideal world, the present world is nothing more than an illusion, and hence, all his philosophy returns and refers to the ideal world. Our existence in this world he says is bondage. If we were to escape our bondage miraculously, we would encounter another “realm,” a place incomprehensible because, theoretically, it is the source of a higher reality than the one we have always known; it is the realm of pure Form, pure fact. Escaping from this experience to another world which one may deem to be true shall only hinder the redemption of our thinking from inquiring into what we are on a constant look out for in our study of the Abrahamic religions.

critical call to an authentic worldly existence⁶. The epistemic location helps to understand the being of Abrahamic religions in time. Hence, the facticity of the Abrahamic faiths is not some timeless, ahistorical object that presents itself to a detached observer from ‘nowhere’ in the world. This zero point epistemology⁷ of a neutral static subject looking at a static object has been discredited. Thus, the being of Abrahamic religions allows them to be experienced as being ‘there’ in the world, while being among them and not from the perspective above them. The understanding of the being and becoming of the Abrahamic religions occurs within the hermeneutical horizon⁸ that allows one to reach a fusion of horizon⁹.

1.1 NEED OF THE STUDY:

The being of the Abrahamic religions out ‘there’ in the world presents itself in a mode of not-being-at-home. This uneasy sense of being-in-the-world of the Abrahamic faiths emerges from their links with violence and terror in the world today. The being of not-being-at-home is cleverly used by the some of the fundamentalist leaders who brainwash their victims and lead them to commit acts of violence and terror in search of a reward in the heavenly home located out of this world. Abrahamic faiths are chiefly encountered in their fallen mode in several places in the world, however it is not to suggest that there is nothing good in these religions. What is of a great concern is the violent abuse of beliefs, and this can be traced throughout their

⁶ In contrast to the Platonic escape into the ideal world, Heidegger's philosophy acclaims reality of this world and acknowledges the present as the reality and not what could be, what has been or even what should be. He considers the moment as the real, unlike Plato who said that the real is in the ideal world and what we experience is just a copy.

⁷ All previous knowledge is abandoned and we begin anew from zero. Although much data is available concerning the beliefs and history, etc. of the Abrahamic religions, such knowledge is disregarded in order to come to an unbiased understanding of the God of Abrahamic religions. This thought of abandoning all that is previous and other than essential for the present, to begin with, is a Heideggerian approach that takes them as they show themselves to us.

⁸ Understanding concepts in its entirety has a subjective element even although we may understand the meaning of it, we interpret every bit of knowledge in our subjectivity. And our understanding, interpretation and expertise have bounds of certain limitations to which we have had exposure and experience. Therefore, we come across a variety of hermeneutical horizons in every aspect of life and people.

⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, (1997) *Truth and Method*, New York: Continuum, p.302. The concept of ‘situation’ is defined by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence the essential part of the idea of situation is the concept of “horizon”. The horizon is the range of view that includes everything that is seen from a particular vantage point. A person who has no background is a man who does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. On the other hand, “to have a horizon” means not being limited to what is nearby, but to being able to see beyond it.

history and in our days in a profoundly significant way. This condition of being out there in the world in a state of fallenness¹⁰ becomes an epistemic location that opens up to their hermeneutics of facticity. It is in this state of fallenness that the possibilities of a trans-theological approach that is attempted.

The hermeneutics of facticity has been taken as the starting point, and between essence and fact, fact has been chosen.¹¹ This inquiry, therefore, is not directly concerned with the dogmatic, ritual, legal character of the Abrahamic religions. Most significant differences are rooted in the creed, code, and cult that become dogmatic, ritual and legally binding. However, to arrive at the hermeneutics of facticity as the starting point, they are needed to be kept in a bracket. This makes room for a hermeneutical analysis of the being of the Abrahamic religions in the mode of ‘being there’ in the world. They are looked at in their primary way of being in the world, in the mode of giving. The mode of giving brings to the forefront of their giveness or their thrown mode of existence. With all their strengths, they are found in the mode of being out there; the Abrahamic religions exist in a state of fallenness. Hence, this state of fallenness and falling becomes a site to seek new ways of approaching them. It is not just an aim at the individual awakening of each of the Abrahamic religions but rather for a collective resolution. A new understanding that is sought needs to be reflexive and reciprocal that would bring about an inward renewal in each of them.

Martin Heidegger’s hermeneutics of facticity and his analysis of being there in the world in a state of fallenness becomes the basis to trace the being ‘out there’ of the Abrahamic religions. However, his resolution cannot be followed because it is of an individual dasein. Gadamer’s communitarian resolution of the crisis is more useful in this context. Gadamer shows that one can move from an ‘I to We’ through the mode

¹⁰James J. Di Cenzo, (1988) “Heidegger's Hermeneutic of Fallenness”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 56, No. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 667-679.

¹¹ The reason why there is a diversion towards fact over essence is that essence virtually defies what the reality is. The reality (i.e. the fact) is distinct from what it is meant to be or what it should/is supposed to be. The Platonic metaphysics of the ‘Ideal’ is accepted over the existential reality faced in day-to-day phenomena and thus, Aristotelian philosophy is utilized wherein the fact of the present world itself is the reality and not something hidden or veiled elsewhere to be discovered. It is only through knowing/knowledge of the fact (that which IS) that we can attempt to find appropriate means to a possible solution regarding existing and uprising crisis. The essence remains far from the grasp of the present situation (the fact).

of conversation. This movement of belonging together of the 'I and We' occurs through the participation in the life of a community. Gadamer locates the becoming of the self in the belonging of the person through language. He maintains 'we speak to each other therefore I am' and not 'I think therefore I am'.¹² Following the above discussion, it is noticed that it is in the conversation within as well as without that constitutes the Abrahamic religions. It means that it is in the belonging together that each of the Abrahamic faiths become what they are. It is primarily through the discursive holding onto one God, one Book and one Prophet that Abrahamic religions co-constitute each other.

Each of the Abrahamic religions has their uniqueness. In their belonging together, there is a trace of distanciation. The way the Abrahamic religions exist in a factual situation is marked by uniqueness, and hence, they simultaneously stay linked and distanced. Therefore, the hermeneutics of facticity that is taken as a starting point manifests this character of the Abrahamic religions. It belongs to the being out 'there' (da) of these religions. This identity and differences are visible in their discourses and beliefs in one God, one Book and one Prophet. This triad marks the closeness and the distance between them. In the context of this research, the notion of one God is taken up and reflected deeper as such a reflection is vital to bring about a new approach towards understanding the Abrahamic religions. The Heideggerian task of overcoming ontotheological thinking that afflicts the entire God thought has been adopted. The ontotheological thinking of the Abrahamic religions can be viewed as the chief reason of their fallenness. To overcome this uneasiness, a primordial thinking of God is necessary to illuminate the different theologies that are grounded in ontotheological thinking is proposed. It allows the thinking of a primordial God that promises peace and harmony to humanity.

There is circularity operating in the belonging together of the Abrahamic religions. Their past, present and future are intertwined, and this is why the deconstruction of ontotheological thinking can bring about a corresponding change among these religions. In this sense, hermeneutically, their prior understandings are

¹² Martin Heidegger, (1999) *Ontology-Hermeneutics of Facticity*, Trans J.V. Buren, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p.16.

linked with the future aspirations that make the present meaningful for the Abrahamic faiths. The fallen present, along with their dynamic past and the promised future of peace, makes up the hermeneutics of facticity of the Abrahamic religions. Within this circularity, the rethinking of God beyond the ontotheological captivity has been introduced. Such de-ontotheological thinking¹³ brings about emancipation both within and between the Abrahamic religions. It is also hoped that de-ontotheological thinking would become a new fertile ground for trans-theologies that would bind Abrahamic religions as well as other religions and therefore bring about peace.

The emancipative options are sought in the God thought, and therefore there is a need to move towards the eschatological while setting aside the ontotheological. Such a move allows the thinking of God as one who possibilizes the world from the future that is hoped for, the eschaton. This thinking through eschatology is deconstructive of ontotheology as it thinks of the final emancipative promise of God and this can become a common ground for a profound dialogue among the Abrahamic religions. The key figures that exemplify hermeneutico-phenomenological method are Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur.

Phenomenology describes what is given to us in the immediate experience without being obstructed by pre-conceptions and theoretical notions. Therefore, there is a need to bracket all presuppositions, and to grasp an understanding of the phenomena as it reveals itself. Heidegger doubts whether it is possible to do pure phenomenology and argues that one cannot bracket all presuppositions as they are bound by language. He approaches hermeneutics to understand words and language and evolves hermeneutico-phenomenology by combining both hermeneutics and phenomenology. Hermeneutico-phenomenology illuminates the lifeworld or human experience as it is lived by way of words or language. Hermeneutics does not limit to the theory of understanding and interpretation of linguistic expressions but also embrace non-linguistic and symbolic expressions as it deals with human existence. Following the teachings of Richard Kearney, the hermeneutical-phenomenological method is adopted. Therefore, there is a need to bracket their specific scriptures,

¹³ De-ontotheological is contestation and deconstruction of ontotheological mode of thinking.

theologies, codes, ethics and rituals and deal only with how they show themselves as being-in-the-world, and hence they are approached in their being-in-the-world.

The Abrahamic religions manifest themselves as being fallen from their true self as they are engrossed in violence and terror. The attempt to arrive at a new understanding of God, by adopting the trans-theological approach, is to ask them to be authentic to their true self, such a notion can act as a bridge that would bring about this process of renewal both within and between them. Therefore, the critique of ontotheology and the works of thinkers like Kearney become profoundly crucial for this task. As Kearney's thought moves into the realm of the possible through the God who will be, there is a possibility to arrive at a thinking of God through the eschaton. This re-imagination of God has a promise to transform the being-in-the-world of Abrahamic religions and thus build peace and harmony for humanity. God of the eschaton is a God of promise, the hope of salvation to the entire human race. This inquiry attempts to anticipate the benevolence of this commitment and actualize it beforehand, so that ethics can be developed which will enable humanity, particularly the followers of the Abrahamic religions to become bearers of peace.

The process of thought that has been adopted here is a border crossing exercise which leads to the trans-theological approach. It opens the Trans or beyond space shared by the Abrahamic religions. It is an attempt to overcome the shackles that onto-theology imposes on our God thinking, by engaging in this approach. It allows the setting aside of the specific theologies of Abrahamic religions and lets us embrace a meta-theological approach that is called trans-theologies. This approach assists in setting aside conceptual idolatries of each of the Abrahamic faiths. Merold Westphal states, "We have immersed ourselves in traditions where onto-theology is at work, and we have listened as Heidegger has thematised and named a practice whose purest but by no means only forms are those of Aristotle and Hegel."¹⁴ Hence, overcoming of onto-theologies will open new emancipative ways of God thinking that will open modes of peaceful co-existence in our world. In some way, the trans-theological approach takes up the tasks of Heidegger to de-ontotheologize the sway of Greek ontology on our God thinking.

¹⁴ Merold Westphal, (2001) *Overcoming Onto-theology: Towards the Postmodern Christian Faith*, New York: Fordham University, p.3.

Heidegger found a great ally in Soren Kierkegaard in his project to overcome onto-theology. “Kierkegaard helps us to see that the onto-theological gesture consists not in positing a God who differs radically from us by satisfying the requirements of Hegel’s Logic and Philosophy of World History, who sees the world synchronically as a system and diachronically in terms of a grand metanarrative. It consists in positing such a God as an excuse for claiming that we can occupy the divine perspective on the world, or at least a peek over God’s shoulder. Spinoza let the cat out of the bag when he acknowledged that philosophy needs to see the world *sub specie aeternitatis*. There is all the difference in the world, the difference, say, between Kierkegaard and Hegel, or Pascal and Spinoza, between affirming that there is such a point of view and claiming that...Perhaps onto-theology consists of the pride that refuses to accept the limits of human knowledge.”¹⁵ This is why the trans-theological approach is a humbling of triumphant theologies. John de Caputo is right when he says, “Cast in a deconstructive slant, God is . . . not the eternal but the futural”.¹⁶ We can sincerely and humbly speak of God as futural. Eternity is eternity only for the Eternal while for an existing person who in the process of becoming the Eternal can make sense only in so far as it relates to the futural. This is why the trans-theological approach that is taken up is futural and belongs to the not-yet dimension of the existing theologies of the Abrahamic religions. It overcomes logocentric representational thinking and opens us to wait for the manifestation of God at the ultimate level of victory. It does not close the notional character of God with Greek ontological closures but stays humbly open to the coming of God’s victory. Such a simple theological approach can be the springtime of global peace.

The trans-theological scenario that is in the not-yet zone is poetically beautifully expressed by Blanchot “Now, in this night, I come forward bearing everything [le tout] toward that which infinitely exceeds them all. I progress beyond the totality that I nevertheless tightly embrace. I go on the margins of the universe, boldly walking elsewhere than where I can be, and a little outside my steps [mes pas]. This slight extravagance, this deviation toward that which cannot be, is not only my own movement leading me to a personal madness but the movement of the reason that I bear

¹⁵ Ibid, 6-7.

¹⁶ Ibid, 6.

within me. With me, the laws gravitate outside the laws, the possible outside the possible. O night, now nothing will make me be, nothing will separate me from you. I adhere marvellously to the simplicity to which you invite me. I lean over you, equal to you, offering you a mirror for your perfect nothingness [néant], for your shadows that are neither light nor absence of light, for this void that contemplates. . . . I am the origin of that which has no origin. I create that which cannot be created.”¹⁷

1.2 A BRIEF OF THE CHAPTERS:

This study has been divided into seven chapters. In the first chapter, “Introduction”, the ontotheological thought is set aside by embracing a hermeneutics of eschaton that helps to illuminate the God who will be. Hence, the study tries to understand the different starting points, journeys of the religions. The hermeneutical approach allows one to look at God who will be from his final futuristic triumphant revelation. Such a vision of God from the hindsight can be enabling and can provide a theological insight that will bring about a new theological understanding that promises the resolution of differences among them.

The second chapter, “Quest for the God who will be,” deepens the understanding of the after God. Looking at God from behind¹⁸is different from looking at God from the front. When God is viewed from the front, it is through the onto-theological paradigm, while, when God is looked from behind it is examined from the perspective of the eschatological paradigm. Hence, de-ontological thinking leads to the adoption of de-eschatological thinking of a macro eschaton.¹⁹ Most religious

¹⁷ Maurice Blanchot, (1973) *Thomas the Obscure*, trans. R. Lamberton, New York: David Lewis, pp.107–8.

¹⁸ Looking at God post-eschaton is viewed in this context as looking at God from behind. It is seeing God post-victory of the eschaton. It is this sense the God of eschaton can be called as a God who is yet to come. Being free from the onto-theological blinkers, we can call God as ‘after God’. In this sense, de-onto-theological thinking of God who is yet to come can be viewed as a God of promise. This study attempts to think of God of promise and harmony as God of Peace. Peace is yet to come cannot be fully logocentrically represented. It always remains in a mode of excessive harmony and joy. Hence, God of promise is God of Peace in the most integral sense. It offers hope and lead us to performative actions for peace. Thus, the God that is sought in this inquiry is an ‘After God’, a God who can be only be seen from behind at the limits of the phenomenological horizon. To encounter this God, there is a need to pass through the cloud of un-knowing and to abandon the habits of onto-theological thinking.

¹⁹ By de-eschatological thinking the privileged mode of thinking of the eschaton from the locus of final coming of God/ final victory of God alone is set aside. The thinking of the micro-eschaton is embraced, wherein God’s ever coming and victory is viewed in a mystical mode in our everyday life. Final eschaton

triumphalism, violence and fundamentalism `emerge from eschatological theologies and are threatening global peace and ecumenical dialogue among religions. To remove the theologies from stains of violent abuse of eschatological thinking, there is a need to abandon all shades of onto-theological thought that is afflicting eschatological interpretation of most religions today, and this is done by interrogating the theologies of fulfilment. Hence, there is move towards the emancipative theologies that have their locus in the micro-eschaton and try to arrive at the God of Peace.

The third chapter, “Towards a ‘God after God’,” makes use of the eschatological hermeneutics of God as it has the power to bring about a new awakening within the Abrahamic religions. The God of Peace poses a challenge to interrogate and abandon the mimetic desire that has brought about God as a resolution of mimetic rivalries. The de-ontotheological thinking deepens in this context as one cannot empty the God of his mystery (which would be idolatry). Several substitutes mimic this idolatric possession of God.²⁰ These mimicked alternatives stay within onto-theological frameworks, and this is why the ontotheological thinking of God is at the heart of all religious violence today. The de-ontotheological ideology that is embraced here attempts to purge the ontotheological trace on the God thought and strive to open the image of God of Peace that would enable one to understand how to refigure the disfigured and usher in peace and harmony.

The fourth chapter, “The coming of the God of Peace,” reveals the ontotheological thinking that legitimates violence in our world. Thinking of God through a privileged micro-eschaton opens the possibility of experiencing a God of Peace. It is a God of Promise who promises harmony and healing to a world broken apart by religious violence.

In the fifth chapter, “Figuring out the Figural in the God of Peace,” the God who is proposed is the God of the eschaton that is attempted to think in post-onto-theological terms and who is also a fruit of the figural nature of discourse. The figural nature of the

is given to us in an every manifestation of God’s victory in our daily life. This already and not-yet dimension is emphasised here.

²⁰ God is a mystery and hence, remains beyond our thought and expression and stays in an ineffable zone. God cannot be fully mirrored by our thought. We cannot dispel God of his mystery.

images of God allows the rupture of the reigning images and to think of God in ways that are true to what is called the micro-eschaton.

In the sixth chapter, “The Power of (dis)articulation,” the (dis) articulatory power²¹ of discourse is adopted and applied to God thinking and God-talk that is grounded in the ontotheological thinking. The unbound God of Peace is attempted to be shown as the ground for a reconciliation of Abrahamic religions and can inspire a drive for a fuller life in the fullness of the divine. The present manifests that the death of onto-theological thinking is an emancipative event. It has the power to (dis)articulate the reigning theologies that are grounded in onto-theological thinking and make way for new theologies or trans-theologies.

In the conclusion, (dis)articulatory powers of discourse and theology have been relied upon to deconstruct and dismantle every shade of de-ontological thinking that afflicts the theological vision of the Abrahamic religions. The de-ontotheological thinking that has been embarked upon tries to bring forth the (dis)articulatory powers of thought and discourse. This effort to (dis)articulate reigning discourses and theologies make room for Trans -theologies that can bring peace and harmony in our conflict-ridden world.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

In this attempt towards a trans-theological approach of understanding the Abrahamic religions, hermeneutics is found to be a useful tool as ‘being there’ in the world of the Abrahamic religions, and this ‘being there’ is bound to an ethical call for responsibility. Therefore, the hermeneutical method is employed here following Martin Heidegger’s, *Being and Time*,²² A new understanding of time is stepped into, and the linear understanding that takes a universalist historicist mode of knowledge

²¹ All discourse has surplus power. It does not just say but it also leaves several things unsaid and several things remain unsayable. Discourse remains within its relations to other discourses as well as texts. It is inter-textual. It has relations with others discourses and opens us to the meanings that can be derived from it. There is a surplus meaning in a discourse that can be deciphered by different people at different times. This means a discourse (dis)articulates itself as well as (dis)articulate other discourse. This deconstructive power of discourse is demonstrated through the notion of Chora in the 5th chapter.

²² Martin Heidegger, (1996) *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press.

production is set aside²³ along with the Kantian transcendental critique that dwells into the condition of production of knowledge.²⁴ The ‘being there’ makes the factual condition. Hence, the researcher does not wish to stand from ground zero and then arrive at a point where he is right now. The start is from where he is, and this is starting point has been christened as the hermeneutics of facticity.²⁵ It is primarily the phenomenological analysis that concerns with the way of the ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic religions which shows itself to us. This analysis is profoundly dialogical and will take us to ‘being there’ of the within as well as the between of the Abrahamic religions. This analysis of ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic faiths presents their not at-homeness to their teachings. Today, they are encountered in a fallen condition. The violence and terror that afflicts humanity globally has mainly erupted through Abrahamic religions. The eschatological approach is used to overcome the destitute present and to find a basis for their violent abuse of beliefs as a participation in the realization of the eschatological future promised by God at the end of times. Hence, a distorted eschatological vision of God stands at the point of convergence of the Abrahamic religions. God is taken as an axis that could help to bring about a new understanding among the Abrahamic faiths. God then becomes the privileged access point to understand and analyze the fallen ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic religions.

1.3.1 *Ethical Openness*

The ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic faiths is a ‘being with’. This ethical relationship of ‘being with’ is a reflection of God through the privileged vantage point of the eschaton. Such thinking would be a departure from the ontological, particularly ontotheological and leads to the ethical reasoning that manifests the being as being for the other. Although Heidegger introduced the moral dimension of being with, he quickly moved to the ontological where he is concerned with the unity of being. He presents humans as engaged with the world as beings-in-the-world and their relation

²³ What is local puts on the mask of universal. This investigation does not accept the monarchical sites of knowledge production that takes away the agency of humans situated in their specific time and space. Hence, in contrast to these hegemonic universal modes of thought the pluriversal vistas are opened. The monopoly of one verse is rejected and the play of multi or pluri verses is opened. This is a pluri-topical hermeneutics. We see and think from various *topoi* or locations and not from a singular monadic locus.

²⁴ Kant’s transcendental method deals only with condition of possibility only through the rational prism and does not view the trans-rational or irrational dimension that influences humans.

²⁵ Martin Heidegger, (1999) *Ontology-Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. Joan van Buren Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

to it is one of care rather than disinterested regard. Heidegger remains lost in his ontological concerns and fails to answer the ethical questions in his analysis of dasein in the world. He reasons that being-with is primarily being for-the-other but it is just this condition of being-for-the-other that one has to overcome to live an authentic life. Heidegger views this condition as one that subjects dasein to the other and therefore proposes that the conscience calls dasein to an enlightened individual existence. Gadamer tries to recover the lost ground, and maintains that authentic life is a return to community life and not one of sublime individual isolation.²⁶ The real issue lies in the Heideggerian positioning of metaphysics as first philosophy which he called the fundamental ontology. Fortunately, ethics was positioned as first philosophy by Levinas.²⁷ He tried to replace fundamental ontology with fundamental ethics where the relationship of one-for-the-other is not one of an ontological defect. The return of the ethical is vital to the analysis of the Abrahamic religions that are haunted by terror and violence today. In their ‘being-with,’ the Abrahamic beliefs are challenged to face the other and come to a realization that one is for the other.

1.3.2 *Fusion of Horizons*

Understanding the other with its differences always has critical demand for a self-change, and this event of understanding challenges the habitual modes of thinking and leads one to become open to other ways of being which arise out of the encounter with the other. Hence, there is a need to admit that the relation to the other is not merely one of cognition,²⁸ or it is one of co-habitation or one of interaction at the logical plane alone, and this is because, in the understanding of anything, one is always in a position of being addressed. Understanding this is not directed towards a self-possession and possession of the world. Levinas asserts that understanding has an Abrahamic dimension. It is an event that calls for departure without return and reward like Abraham who was called by the absolute other for a time and world that he will never experience. It is for this reason why the ‘for’ of the one-for-the-other is

²⁶ Brad Thames, seminar paper for “*Gadamer and Charles Taylor*”, Fred Dallmayr, Fall 2004.27 April 2005.

²⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, (1989) *The Levinas Reader*, Trans. Sean Hand, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers.

a total self-giving without any self-interest. The self in the encounter with the other cannot become a ‘Cogito’ or ‘pour soi’ but one that always exists and is answerable to and for another. In the context of the violence and terror, the Abrahamic religions are invited to have a responsibility to each other and the entire humanity in their encounter with each other. This openness or responsiveness is before and above the self, it is this openness and receptivity that pulls the Abrahamic religions to the point of convergence. This is why in a shared being-with (which more than just being alongside) the other Abrahamic religions like every different cultural formation are naturally disposed to bring a convergence that is a result of a fusion of horizons.

1.4 TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICS OF FACTICITY

Hermeneutics of facticity is a horizon of the present study of the Abrahamic religions. It becomes the starting point that enables an analysis of the ‘being there’ of Abrahamic faiths. It opens the mode of actualization of the factual possibilities of being with them.

Facticity is not just a point of departure of philosophy but is the very object. This factual analysis is arrived at via hermeneutics of facticity of Heidegger. The word ‘fact’ has a long lineage, and it can be traced to the Latin ‘factum’. Factum was primarily associated with human activity and production. Since the world is regarded as the production of God, factum lost its sense of creation and objective truths about the world. These objective truths were regarded as empirical facts that has become the data of modern scientific inquiry. Kant gave another meaning of factum. Kant grounded morality into the transcendental fact of reason which cannot be demonstrated by reason but forces upon us. For Husserl, facticity becomes passivity and alterity that resists reduction. Heidegger uses facticity to capture the fact of thrownness itself in its finite constitution and individuation. For him, hermeneutics is not a theory of interpretation; it is a mode of interpreting that takes the interpreters to their own being as that which is to be construed. Heidegger interprets it as *dasein* (being there). Therefore, the factual is considered as the starting point. Following Heidegger, the being of the Abrahamic religions is understood as they are there in the world. Their being there in the world opens us to a factual horizon that enables us to understand them.

Merleau Ponty states that facticity is the starting point of the understanding of humans²⁹. The turn to facticity is significant because it challenges to what is called the substance ontology: The view that holds that which is real is sub-stantia, what stands under and remains continuously present throughout all change. Plato's forms, Aristotle's substance or Kant's noumena and the like can be placed along with this mode of thinking. Heidegger tried to overcome this way of thinking which he calls the ontotheological thinking, through the primordial way, a being shows up in the flux of things in the world. He reasons that 'being there' is the horizon in which the being becomes intelligible. The hermeneutics of facticity reveals the mode of 'being there' of the Abrahamic religions. The 'being there' of the Abrahamic faiths brings a sense of uneasiness as it is not at home in the world today. This sense of anxiety arises primarily from being part of violence and terror that afflicts the global community. The global threats to peace have been clearly described by Samuel P. Huntington in his work, *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of the World Order*.³⁰ The clash of civilizations that he refers to is nothing but the conflict of the Abrahamic religions. Somehow the 'being there' of the Abrahamic faiths exhibits their fallen state, and this is seen as a move towards an inauthentic existence as they employ their eschatologies that are ontotheological to move towards these goals. Hence, there is a need to de-ontotheologize these eschatologies and draw them to an authentic way of being-in-the-world.

Heidegger claims that hermeneutics is a means of analyzing facticity as it allows the interpretation of facticity and leads to understanding of the possibilities of being. The actualization of the opportunities arising from facticity is not linear but is circular. There is a trace of the hermeneutical circle³¹ operating in the actualization of factual possibilities as the past experiences and future expectations are continuously drawn to illumine the present possibilities of being. It is because the 'being there' has a constitutive temporal dimension as the being there is for a while and at a particular time. The factual possibilities become the immanent pre-understanding that guides

²⁹ Shaun Gallagher,(2010) *Merleau Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception*, Springer Science +Media B.V.

³⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Making of the World Order*, New York: Simon Schuster.

³¹ Jean Grodin,(2016) 'What is a Hermeneutical circle', *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (eds.) N. Keane and C. Lawn, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 299-305.

the actualization of ‘being there’ in the world. Their facticity conditions the ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic religions. This investigation is concerned with their being there in the present time and this has already discerned as being fallen. Though fallen, the Abrahamic religions are actualizing their factual possibilities that are rendering them to be abused by forces that champion violence and terror in the world. In this context, theologies of eschatology have a leading role in the Abrahamic religions. Unfortunately, the pre-understanding that becomes the hermeneutical circle leads each of the Abrahamic faiths to their factual possibilities of viewing each as ontotheological, and this is why there is a need to adopt de-ontotheological thinking.

1.5 ETHICAL CONCERNS

The ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic religions exists in a fallen mode because it lacks critical distanciation and ethical concerns. Their aesthetical orientations guide their historicization or living out.³²

Facticity enables the analysis of the ‘being there’ of Dasein in a ‘while’ of a temporal particularity, and it means that the ‘being there’ of Dasein is not only in its temporally particular ‘there’, but it is ‘there’ for a while. It allows the understanding of the ‘being there’ in and among the Abrahamic religions as this will enable one to stay open to the everyday absorption of each of the Abrahamic faiths in the world and their living out from there. Therefore, it is possible to live out today by the hermeneutics of facticity in such a manner that is characteristic to the ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic religions which is rendered visible. This exercise becomes successful only when the visible is temporal which is the fundamental phenomenon of facticity (existential) as it allows one to enter an ontological character as a ‘how’ of facticity (existence). Therefore, one is enabled to register the how of the ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic religion and join their historizing or living out in the context of today.

The process of historicization consists of receiving its ‘giveness’ and ‘giving’, and this is mediated by distanciation. The being in the world finds the world given to

³² The Abrahamic religions are primarily influenced by likes and dislikes in their fallen state. This is the aesthetical mode of living. The fallen mode of the Abrahamic religions is mainly rooted in their aesthetical orientations and not in their ethical ones. Ethics is about good and the right. The good and the right in the fallen condition is generated by the hegemony of their aesthetical orientations.

it, but everything that is presented is not received indiscriminately. It is obtained through a process of distanciation. Besides, receiving is for the sake of giving, which is again mediated by distanciation depending on the context. Hence, an ethical concern guides the receiving and providing through the mode of distanciation. There is a hermeneutical circle between receiving, giving and distanciation.

1.5.1 *Distanciation*

Humans exhibit the ability to stand apart from what they have received, and to examine this from a relative distance and vantage point, even though it may not be possible or even necessary to assume a completely independent point of view. This critical ability is not being used effectively. Paul Ricoeur made the use of the term ‘distanciation’ in the specific context of the exercise of textual interpretation, wherein one needs to enter a moment of looking at the text from afar, rather than merely engaging in a Gadamerian ‘fusion of horizons’³³ between a reader and a text.³⁴ While Gadamer is reluctant to allow for rigorous, systematic scrutiny, he adopts a more aesthetic rather than a scientific approach to textual or cultural interpretation, Ricoeur, is influenced by the French structuralist school, he seemed more at home with textual depth analysis. Besides structuralism, there are numerous historical-critical methods used in the study of literary, legal and scriptural texts. All of these enable one to explore the background of the texts, to explore the genesis of their formulation and their subsequent interpretations. It seems technical and abstract, but, is essential when it comes to its application in revising perceptibly violent expressions in the present. There is a rigorous distanciation in Ricoeur, and it exists in Gadamer as the aesthetical orientation, and in Ricoeur, there is an ethical orientation. This way of thinking enables the understanding of how the ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic religions is historizing or living out in the present in the mode of aesthetic concern that forgets the ethical concern. The trans-theological approach hopes to insert the ethical concern in a mode of distanciation in their ‘being there’ in the world.

³³ Hans Georg Gadamer, (2006) *Truth and Method*, pp. 301-306.

³⁴ Francis J. Mootz III and George H. Taylor, (2011) *Gadamer and Ricoeur: Critical Horizons of Contemporary Hermeneutics*, London: Continuum, pp. 43-59.

1.5.2 Giving

If receptivity represents the pole of human passivity, then giving represents the pole of activity. Similarly, if receptivity has its locus in the past, then giving has its locus in the future. All giving is aimed at bringing about some change in the order of things. Those communities which encourage and even reward distanciation are typically more creative, efficient and sophisticated, not only at the material and technological levels but also when it comes to the development of moral, cultural and social norms and customs. In traditional societies, on the other hand, reproduction or repetition of the past is affirmed and rewarded, and critical thinking and creative contributions are not typically considered to add value to public life. In such societies, original work of whatever genre, especially those which feature a departure from the norm or dissent often become arduous and subject to mindless blame and bureaucracy. Such societies run the risk of becoming regressive and decadent. One can discern how the ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic religions shows them as those that do not reward so much distanciation and are unable to contribute fruitfully for the progress and harmony bonding of humanity. The absence of distanciation in the mode of criticality has significantly disabled their being there / historicization/ living out their promise to humankind today. They seem to be engaging a manner of distanciation that is conditioned by aesthetical rather than ethical concerns.

1.6. FUSION OF HORIZONS

This investigation being profoundly hermeneutical seeks to open the circles of fusions of the horizon at work in the Abrahamic religions which have led them into their fallen condition. It is an attempt to return them to their authentic ways of ‘being there’ in the world, hermeneutics of suspicion³⁵is used to contest the ontotheological thinking that is afflicting them. The hermeneutics of suspicion is aimed to bring about a hermeneutics of magnanimity³⁶ that will try to keep the Abrahamic religions in an embrace of peace.

³⁵ Hermeneutics of suspicion works against hermeneutics of trust. It calls for critically questioning the given-ness of things and arrive at a critical understanding.

³⁶ Hermeneutic of magnanimity is the opening of the mind to other ways of thinking and being and holding every other mode of thought and being in an embrace.

1.6.1 Being-with, Being- true and Being- for

Humans live in the-world as ‘beings-with’ the other. They always stand within an unfolding tradition, and it is in the differential space of inter-subjectivity wherein they become unique individuals in dialogue with the traditions and community. The unfolding tradition bears a force that affects everyone differently, and this is why Gadamer speaks of historically affected consciousness.³⁷ The Abrahamic religions are also becoming and actualizing themselves within an unfolding inter-space that they hold together to be and become their truth. Gadamer reasons that the historically affected consciousness develops in each one differently. It means that each of the Abrahamic religions encounters history as an undetermined ongoing source rather than a medium or sealed container of the occurrences of the past that merely has a residual effect. Hence the ‘being-with’ and the drive for truth (being true) and the ‘being for’ of the Abrahamic religions shows their ‘being there’ in the mode of estrangement from their truth. Therefore, there is a need to discern the philosophical reasons for this estrangement as they are deeply embedded in the habit of ontotheological thinking. This research takes upon itself the task of understanding the Abrahamic through a trans-theological vision of God and this revision in God thinking could bring about emancipative transformation in the being-with, being- true and being-for, of the Abrahamic religions.

1.6.2 Hermeneutics of Suspicion

Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion³⁸ is regarded as a new name for old ways of thinking. All hermeneutics have a dose of the hermeneutics of suspicion as it enables the bridging of the gap between us and our reality. Hermeneutics of suspicion takes up the task of doing away with the idols that often clog our understanding and is a medium that keeps us critically open. In other words, the hermeneutics of suspicion brings about a balance within doubt and hope. The critical power of hermeneutics of suspicion is used to interrogate the ontotheological thinking and expel every trace of it from God thinking. In the ontotheological thinking that is manifested in the fallen condition of the ‘being there’ of the Abrahamic religions, the researcher has attempted to deconstruct it by re-thinking the notion of God from the privileged

³⁷ Hans Georg Gadamer, (2006) *Truth and Method*, p.302.

³⁸ Alison Scott-Baumann, (2009) *Ricoeur and Hermeneutics of Suspicion* London: Continuum.

vantage point of the eschaton since eschatology provides for a fuller revelation of the divine. But within this choice of eschatologies, there is a need of the critical resources of the hermeneutics of suspicion to interrogate and dismantle theologies of macro-eschaton that are legitimating the violence and terror erupting from the Abrahamic religions. The hermeneutics of suspicion, when applied to the reigning theologies and eschatologies, will make room for micro-eschatologies that will open the ground for the revision of the God thinking which will bring peace within and between the Abrahamic religions.

1.6.3 Hermeneutics of Magnanimity

The hermeneutics of suspicion that has been employed here has a goal to develop a hermeneutics of magnanimity that will bring and keep the Abrahamic religions as well as the entire global community into an embrace of peace and harmony. It is hoped that the new vision of God will help to bring about several changes both within and between the Abrahamic religions. Hermeneutics of magnanimity that is used here is a hermeneutics of hope and trust. The revision of the divine, when brought in dialogue with the reigning theologies and eschatologies in the Abrahamic religions, will bring about cross-fertilization. The revision of God thinking will keep on opening up the horizons of the Abrahamic religions and the fruit of the same will bring peace to the global community. This hope has both intellectual as well as the psychological dimension. The hermeneutics of magnanimity being a hermeneutics of trust and hope has the power to transform the violent face of the earth.

1.7 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The term, ‘Abrahamic religions’ has been recently used. Abraham is the most original cultural hero in the West. He has been admired as a prototype of a religious man, a man of faith and who is acceptable to Jews, Christians and Muslims. He is presented as a wandering Aramean who rejected his parents’ idols to follow the call of one God to the land of Canaan in the Hebrew Bible and is regarded as the father of faith in the New Testament and is viewed as the friend of God in the Quran. Soren Kierkegaard calls him Knight of faith. Tracing the origin of the term ‘Abrahamic religions’ is difficult. French orientalist Louis Massignon (1883-1962), who taught Arabic in College de France orally coined the term Abrahamic religions both in his

teachings as well as in his essay on '*Abraham's three prayers*'³⁹ by 1970's the term 'Abrahamic religion' became commonly acceptable to describe Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This led the followers of these religions to claim his spiritual legacy as common children of Abraham. There are other groups such as the Samaritans, Bahia's and Mormons, who also claim to have come from the Abrahamic trunk. The term also offers what Ludwig Wittgenstein calls family resemblances that enable scholars to study all the three religions together comparing their commonalities and differences. It steadily acquired an analytical value as a category in the study of religion among scholars. Thus, the term lends itself as a vehicle to understand, classify and analyze data about the three monotheisms that have common roots with the figure of Abraham. Some scholars also contest the appropriateness of the term itself to accomplish its analytical task; they think of it as an impediment for the study of these great religious traditions.

Baruch Goldstein argues that Abraham can function as an ecumenical symbol among the conflicting heirs of his spiritual legacy. At a time when they are almost at war with each other, the paternity of Abraham can viewed as one that might bring peace to them and to our world. The legitimate differences among the three great monotheisms cannot be let to collapse into the fascinating phrase of Abrahamic religions. It is because of this fear, scholars like Aaron W. Hughes interrogates its very use. He points out that we cannot treat the three religions as primarily having the same ancestry and therefore have common structures and doctrines. One can trace the legitimate diversity and the impact of history and culture on these three religions which have to be factored in when attempting any study of these three traditions.

The critical hermeneutics that is proposed here that stays open to both the commonness and differences among these religions when these three traditions are studied under a common name of Abrahamic religions. This view allows one to remain open to localization and contextualization of data wherever necessary, thereby preventing overarching generalizations. The expression Abrahamic religions have the tendency to become ahistorical and therefore, has to be critically used.

³⁹Guy G. Stroumsa, *From Abraham's Religion to The Abrahamic Religions* <http://www.almuslih.org/Library/Stroumsa,%20G%20-%20From%20Abraham's%20religion.pdf> accessed on 1/6/2019.

Consequently, Hughes wants to avoid using the term in the Hegelian sense that somehow collects some essence that moves throughout history, manifesting itself through its dialectical logic. Thus, instead of suppressing the term, there is a challenge to use it critically by using both hermeneutics of trust and hermeneutics of suspicion.

The separation of religion and politics is thought to be essential for peace. Eric O. Hanson, in his book, *Religion and Politics in the International System Today*, proposes a post-cold war international scenario based on the interaction between technological advances, politics, military and economy systems and the increasing role of religion in the modern world. Monica Duffy Toft, an American scholar of international relations, argues that since Islam did not experience thirty years of religious wars, the Islamic world did not feel the need for secularism. These narratives blame religion for all violence and cannot be accepted entirely but also cannot be wholly rejected. Mark Juergensmeyer, a leading expert on religion and terrorism, points out that the current danger of global confrontation is a secular nationalism.

Religious differences cannot not be resolved by solely blaming religion for the escalation of religious conflict but by understanding what the religious people miss in a secular nationalism and by reviving tolerant forms of beliefs, and it is, for this reason is why it is challenging to hold religion as the sole source of violence. Faith does show itself at the visible level of the intensity, but it is more a reactionary violence to what may be called structural violence⁴⁰ that is embedded into the world system that is reigning today. This does not mean that religions are entirely innocent. They, too have their share of the blame. In this context, the clash of civilizations that Samuel Huntington has proposed needs to embrace all the Abrahamic religions and not just Christianity and Islam.

The Foucauldian genealogy⁴¹ and Deleuzian Schizoanalysis⁴² offers a way of opening the conditions for the emergence of a violent subject of religions/ Abrahamic religions. One may also arrive at a similar analysis through the critical look at the state

⁴⁰ Structural violence is where an unjust social structures and institutions cause reactionary violence.

⁴¹ Foucauldian genealogy is a method which tries to study the conditions of the emergence of mad/ civilized, criminal/ normal, sick/healthy subject in the European society. This method can be used to study the emergence of violent subject in societies under Abrahamic religions.

⁴² Schizoanalysis is a method devised by Deleuze and Guattari that studies how there are different possibilities of being a subject. This method is explored in the 5th chapter.

apparatus of Luis Althusser. Foucault states that every subject is a subjected subject and as such is a construct of discursive productions. The violent discursive formations⁴³ result in the emergence of the serious issue of religions. Such extreme discursive formations can be traced among the Abrahamic faiths. Luis Althusser calls them the state apparatus⁴⁴ that domesticates one into subject-hood. Gayatri Spivak's view in her article '*can the subaltern speak?*' can be taken up to understand how a mindless and voiceless subject of religion can become violent. Deleuze and Guattari explains that desire is not lacking any object but is always productive. The subject may be lacking and could migrate to different lines of desire and rides his/her desire. The violent subject of religions is constituted by a lack that is felt, as Lacan claims, that would lead them to chase his/her desire for justice and adopt violent methods. It is for this reason why it is essential to critically look at the subject formation to understand and respond to the emergence of the religious violence. The conditions for the development of such a subject of violence are social, economic, ethnic, political, legal and not merely religious alone.

Religion has functioned as a double-edged sword. Several times it has been a source of conflicts in many societies while other times, it has become a great resource to build peace, forgiveness and healing. The spirit of unity is present in all religious traditions. There are efforts to emphasize the common good of all humans among different religious traditions. Although the Abrahamic religions are by nature exclusive and often indulge in aggressive conversion campaigns, have lately sobered down. Hizkias Assefa, an authority on the role of beliefs in peace-building, claims that religions have enormous potentials for peace and score high above secular efforts to give peace an opportunity. The choice of Abrahamic faiths is relevant here as they are involved in several violent and terror activities, and have become a significant threat to global peace. A re-thinking of God is proposed, the joint anchor of these religions promises ways of generating modes of peace initiatives that would build peace between and within them. This rethinking of God has high potentials to bring peace not only to these religions but to the broader global community.

⁴³ Foucault explains how all discourse is constrained by social rules that underpin it. Discursive formation is a visible enactment of knowledge-power relation. Those who have the power to speak controls what can be said in different societies.

⁴⁴ State machinery.

(Un)Thinking God of the Abrahamic faiths might do a lot of good to them individually and collectively. God who is the standard coordinate, the glue that keeps all things in them together can bring radical change if there are rethink and revision of the God thought. Martin Heidegger was first to highlight the follies of the ontotheological thinking and challenged all philosophers to overcome it. Derrida tries to overcome logocentric thinking. There is a need to critically re-think of God and to free our thinking from all traces of onto-theology as well as logo-centrism. Beginning with Martin Heidegger, ontotheology has been the central concern of several philosophers. The work of the philosophers Jean-Luc Nancy, Richard Kearney, John Caputo, Colby Dickinson, Joeri Schrijvers and Merold Westphal, continue to exhibit this ontotheology. Kearney attempts to deconstruct the transcendent character within a phenomenological framework and takes up a radical eschatological view by opening a vision of God who may be. He does not try to get rid of transcendence and immanence altogether but, instead attempts to employ them in various ways through his hermeneutico-phenomenological framework to reach a profound understanding of God. Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Henry, Jean-Luc Marion and also Paul Ricoeur could be called as the progenitors of this kind of critique. Kearney, following Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics and Levinas' concept of alterity, develops a phenomenology that manifests a transcendent relationship between the self and the God who may be, a relationship that is dependent upon the self's encounter with another. In short, his hermeneutical phenomenology conceptualizes a revealing, a poetics that gathers in the impossible made possible through inter-subjective relationships, where God becomes present not as an ontos but as a posse.

The absence of literature about any attempt at reconciling the differences in the Abrahamic religions is indeed surprising, as a lot of research and studies about inter-religious dialogue among the Abrahamic religions exists. Besides, there are a lot of synoptic studies on issues common to them. In the area of synthesis, there is an attempt by Prof. U. A Vinay Kumar who attempts to bring about a synthesis of world religions. He looks at religions as a dissolution mechanism and tries to bring about a synthesis of world religions within a privileged Advaitic locus. The aim of this research to adopt the trans-theological approach to seek an understanding of the Abrahamic religions that might bring about global peace.

CHAPTER II

A QUEST FOR THE GOD WHO WILL BE

Without understanding religion, one cannot understand the world today.⁴⁵ Religion has always been dominant, but today, it also seems to have become dangerous. Religion has left the close confines of the churches, temples, mosques, etc. and has entered the public space in a new avatar.⁴⁶ It has metamorphized and embraced violence. Almost every conflict in the world appears to be a product of religious discord. Christian theologians like Hans Kung claim that peace in the world is directly proportional to the peace among religions. “There will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. There will be no peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions”.⁴⁷ Some scholars who were intoxicated on a triumphant march of secularization had dismissed religion and written its obituary, however religion has staged an astonishing come back. Hence, there is a challenge to understand the lasting significance of religion. The study is not limited to only religion in the classical sense but strives to understand its potential influence on philosophy, literature, art, architecture, economics, politics, science and technology.⁴⁸ There is a need to track the traces of religion beyond its visible boundaries and begin this journey from the centre and fulcrum of religion. God or the sacred is the centre of most religions. The hermeneutical interpretation of God developed by Richard Kearney is of great help. He presents two rival ways of interpreting the divine: onto-theological and eschatological.⁴⁹ The eschatological interpretation allows one to view God as one who possibilizes our world from the future that all hope for, the eschaton⁵⁰.

⁴⁵ Mark C Taylor, (2007) *After God*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

⁴⁶ James Lochtefeld, (2002) ‘Avatar’ in *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, Vol. 1, New York: Rosen Publishing, pp. 72-73. It refers to the physical appearance or incarnation of a deity on earth.

⁴⁷ Samuel P. Huntington, (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Making of the World Order*, New York; Simon Schuster. Address at the opening of the exhibit on world religions at St. Clara University (31 March 2005).

⁴⁸ Mark C Taylor, (2007) *After God*, p. xiv.

⁴⁹ Richard Kearney, (2001) *The God Who May Be: An Hermeneutics of Religion*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

⁵⁰Ibid.

2.1 DECONSTRUCTING THE ONTO-THEOLOGICAL THINKING

Martin Heidegger argues that western philosophy needs to overcome the forgetting of ‘being’. He points out that ‘being’ is both a verb and the noun.⁵¹ The verb ‘being’ stands for the active and becoming aspect while the noun stands passive and static ‘beingness’. Heidegger claims that western philosophy has privileged the ‘beingness’ and thus ‘thingified’ everything and has forgotten the dynamic nature of the being. Such thinking, he has characterized as the ontotheological thinking. Heidegger wanted to overcome the ontotheological thinking and recover the dynamic meaning of being. This recovery is not just ontological but also theological according to Westphal. While Heidegger notes that God enters into philosophy, when it is ontotheologically constituted, only insofar as philosophy, of its own accord and by its nature, requires and determines that and how the deity enters into it.⁵² Hence, freeing from ontotheology, philosophy itself can emancipate theology from ontotheology. It has the power to restore the vibrant sense of God. It can transfigure all our theology, which is unfortunately based on the static ontotheological thinking.

2.1.1 *Abandoning the God of Metaphysics*

Ontotheological thinking cannot account for a living God. It presents a static and immutable God; it is a God who is perfect and happy with itself and as such is do-nothing God.⁵³ Such a God is irrelevant to humanity as his perfection does not allow him to change. If he changes, then he is not perfect, and by that logic, it cannot be God. Although such a God of the philosophers is far from the God of religions, it has not been adequately questioned by religious people. The doctrines and their scriptures present a God of promise who calls out to humanity and accompanies it to a happy future. But this belief appears to operate with a notion of a deity that resembles an old man in the sky. It almost seems that humanity has envisioned God in its image and likeness. The old metaphysically laden notions like a pure act, unmoved mover, and pure essence have become inadequate to think God in the present times. There is a challenge to think God through innovative thinking tools and having the possibility of

⁵¹ Peter S. Dillard, (2008) *Heidegger and Philosophical Atheology*, London: Continuum.

⁵² Merold Westphal, (2001) *Overcoming Onto-theology*, p.30.

⁵³ God who is immutable cannot change in response to human prayers or misery. This God becoming a do-nothing God.

recognizing God again. God is not dead but is a vibrant concern of our times. The old notion of God as a disembodied cause, an absent king, is steadily losing its explanatory power. Hence, there is a need for a novel thinking of God that may break open the space between religions, particularly the Abrahamic faiths. Such a breakthrough could provide the tools of addressing global and local conflicts that threaten the peace of our global community today.

2.1.2 *Abandoning the Logocentric Theology*

Jacques Derrida interrogates and dismantles the present-centric thinking of the west. He calls it logocentric thinking.⁵⁴ Logocentric thinking has enslaved thoughts into the exclusionary binary either/or structure. All thinking, speaking and writing seem to privilege presence over absence. Theology is also not free from its logocentric underpinning; Christian theology which is indebted mainly to Plato and Aristotle is also profoundly logocentric. Even those who have tried to abandon these seminal thinkers in the West have failed to transcend the logocentric nature of thinking taints the Eurocentric tilt of their theologies. It does not mean that humanity did not make an effort to think through absences. There is the neti- neti⁵⁵thinking or the Nirguna Brahman of the Vedanta⁵⁶ thinkers, the non-substantive thinking in Buddhism⁵⁷ similar to the apophatic theologies in the west which attempts to think of the divine through absences. This thinking through absences opens us to the God of the promises. This God becomes a future God, a post-metaphysical God. The death of the metaphysical thinking of God allows the movement beyond the moorings of theology that is ontotheological as it will enable the entry into what may be called as the post-God theology thereby trying to seal the fate of the ontotheological God. It allows one to rise into the realm of what may be termed ‘after God’.

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida, (1997) *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press p. 71-73.

⁵⁵ Subhash Sharma, (1999) *Rope*. New Delhi: New Age International, p.158. It is a Sanskrit expression which means ‘not this, not this’, or ‘neither this nor that’.

⁵⁶ Eliot Deutsch, (1973), *Advaita Vedanta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp.11-12. It means ‘without qualities’.

⁵⁷ Masao Abe, (1989) *Zen and Western Thought*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, p. 102. It is a type of theological thinking and religious practice that attempts to approach God, the Divine, by negation, to speak only in terms of what may not be said about God.

2.1.3 Accepting the God of Eschaton

Most religions invite their followers to a God of promise. God's final victory in favour of humanity is still to come. It is the ultimate salvation. This final salvation is both an individual and a collective experience for humanity. Such an eschaton can be traced in the Abrahamic religion. The God of promise reveals his /her Godhood at the eschaton, and this means that God will finally be God at the eschaton. It allows a way of thinking a gap in the becoming of God. This gap is the revelation of God that is yet to come. It is in this gap that there is space for every created thing to become. Hence, the thinking that is adopted here challenges to set aside the static thinking of the divine that views God as 'esse or fait accompli' and opens up to the thought of the divine as a posse (possibility).⁵⁸ This God, as posse is a God that is yet to come fully. The fullness of the divine is the promise of the eschaton. It leaves a room for God to come again and again until one is enabled to come face to face with him at the eschaton. Hence, an already not yet dimension of God of the religions opens one to the God that is yet to come. The future cannot be thought through the either/ or - binary logic. The future that is yet to come remains open for the fuller actualization of the divine. Such a thinking of the divine could open common grounds for dialogue among religions based on the shared future that is promised by all religions.

2.2 EMBRACING A DYNAMIC DIVINE

The divine that is envisaged is thought through what may be called dynamatology.⁵⁹ The term 'dynamatology' is derived from the Greek word dynamis, which means power or potentiality.⁶⁰ This plunge into dynamatology can help bring about reconciliation by discovering a common ground that is the quest for the middle way. The philosopher Desmond uses the term metaxology⁶¹ to articulate the middle way between absolutism and relativism. He derived his term metaxology from the Greek word, metaxy.⁶² Hence, the dynamatological theology that is attempted here has to be metaxological in order to open the shared space for dialogue among Abrahamic religions.

⁵⁸ Richard Kearney, (2001) *The God Who May Be*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p. 4.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.6.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.6.

⁶¹ William Desmond (1995) *Being and the Between*. Albany: Suny Press.

⁶² Richard Kearney, (2001) *The God Who May Be*, p. 4.

2.2.1 Embracing the Unnameable

The divine remains unnameable and apophatic that is, and it is next to impossible for one to draw a hermeneutics⁶³ between it and our finite language that is employed to mean, to understand and express it. Our language cannot capture the divine without falling into some idolatry. The divine is being full and can be seen in diverse ways, and that is why no hermeneutics of interpreting, imaging, symbolizing and narrativizing cannot exhaustively name it.⁶⁴ There is also a challenge to cognize the divine in the domain of abyssal abjection. Here the divine slips beneath the grid of the symbolic and imaginary expression back into some primordial zero-point of unnameability.⁶⁵ Several thinkers have approached this primordial zero-point unnameability. The divine in this context is called ‘monstrous’ (Zizek), ‘sublime’ (Lyotard), ‘object’ (Kristeva) or ‘an-korite’ (Caputo).⁶⁶ It can only be understood through avidya⁶⁷ (ignorance) or analogy (St. Thomas Aquinas).⁶⁸ The divine, therefore, remains utterly unthinkable, unnameable, unrepresentable and unmediatable, although it remains within the domain of the unsayable, one cannot but speak of it. There is always something which is unsaid in all that one can say about it. Hence, all that can be said is not so much into the triumphant said but in tune with the flow of the saying. There is always a surplus in the divine that our finite mind fails to capture.

2.2.2 Embracing the Hermeneutics of Eschaton

There is a radical challenge to abandon the hermeneutics of religion that is tainted by the onto-theological thinking. One way this enslavement can be abandoned is by a conscious embrace of what may be called the hermeneutics of eschaton. This way of thinking the divine avoids the ontological approach to God. The eschatological hermeneutics embraces the dynamic and ethical character of God. God becomes the God of the faithfulness to his promises. The God of religions is a God of promise. The

⁶³ It is the theory and methodology of interpretation, especially the analysis of biblical texts, wisdom literature, and philosophical texts.

⁶⁴ Richard Kearney, (2001) *The God Who May Be*, p.7.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ It is a Sanskrit word whose literal meaning is ignorance, misconceptions, misunderstandings, incorrect knowledge.

⁶⁸ Ibid.p.23.

eschaton drives most religions, particularly the Abrahamic faiths. The final promised salvation as well the final revelation of God becomes an anticipatory hermeneutics that functions as a pre-understanding that guides the ethical life of the followers. Unfortunately, the projection of this hope in a future with God has not theorized adequately. Somehow the final destiny has its influence the way humans live their religious life. Hence, there is a need for a kind of kenosis⁶⁹ of divine thinking in order to resist the ontotheological thought and counter it with the hermeneutics of eschaton that is already at work among the followers of religions.

2.2.3 *Embracing an Involving God*

The hermeneutics of eschaton⁷⁰ that is proposed here enables the journey into the future with God. The future stands ahead, but God is not merely at a distance. God is accompanying his people and leads them into the future that he has designed for them. It does not mean that humans are parachuted into the future by God without any reference to their present. It only leads us to believe that future that is promised by God erupts into the present of the people. The eruption of God among the people is already a foretaste of the future that is to come. This already and not yet dimension of the promised future is the way that God involves with humanity. The human and cosmic evolution moves into the future envisioned by God. Thus, God becomes pure giving and loses himself in kenosis, and it does not mean that humanity has no autonomy to reject the future designed by God. It only means that God can fulfil his purpose even if some humans reject his design. Several religions, particularly the Abrahamic religions, speak of the will of God. The ontotheological⁷¹ mode of thinking of God thinks desire as a lack;⁷² hence, they ban all desire in God, who is seen as all perfect and immutable. Consequently, desire is also viewed as evil in humanity. From an eschatological paradigm, desire in God becomes the foundation of his promise in favour of humanity. Desire, thus, is positive, productive and salvific.

⁶⁹Literally, it is ‘the act of emptying’. It is ‘self-emptying’.

⁷⁰ Understanding/interpreting the time described in eschatological writings and doomsday scenarios.

⁷¹ It is the ontology of God and the theology of being.

⁷² Lack is a striving for the fulfilment what one does not have.

2.3 COGNIZING A DESIRING GOD

Eschatology has a relationship with desire. It holds a promise of final revelation or disclosure of God. God, who will be is God who truly is. Unfortunately, there is a great appetite for ontotheological thinking, and one tends to totalize God without realizing that infinity cannot be captured. The eschatological reflection of the divine opens up to the infinity. There is always a surplus exterior to God that cannot be summed up through the ontotheological thinking. The eschatological desire is the desire of the infinite God.

2.3.1 *Re-cognizing desire of Infinite God*

To apprehend the desire of an infinite God, there is a need to abandon the biological, psychoanalytical as well as dialectical thinking. The natural urge is ground into physiological needs of the organism, while psychoanalytical as well as dialectical thinking bases itself in the lack. The psychoanalytical thought of Freud-Lacan and the dialectical thinking of Hegel-Kojev views desire as an emptiness that wants to be filled.⁷³ Thus, Freud-Lacan views the lack as driving towards fulfilment led by the libido of the unconscious while Hegel-Kojev thinks of it as a struggle for power and recognition.⁷⁴ Emmanuel Levinas portrays the absolute otherness of desire and maintains that it entails a hope for that which cannot be seen fully, consumed and represented.⁷⁵ It entails the fulfilment of a future that is envisaged through avidya or analogy. It is the future of a God who will be. Along with God who will be, there is the future of what humans and cosmos will ‘be’ in the realm of this eschatological milieu. Levinas envisages this desire as the fundamental of all desires. It is the desire of the Good.⁷⁶ He says that such a desire does not fulfil but deepens itself. It is the ‘more’ in the ‘less’. It cannot be possessed as it is other and always remains transcendent.⁷⁷ It exceeds the horizon of our lived experience, and this is why the desire will remain a promise forever until its final fulfilment at the eschaton. It is within this unfathomable promise that one can apprehend the desire of Infinite God.

⁷³ Richard Kearney, (2001) *The God Who May Be*, p.63.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 64.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

2.3.2 *The Ethicality of the Desiring God*

The desire of the infinite God is not an endless restlessness that satisfies itself in some endless quest for fulfillment. It is the desire of the Most-High that cannot but be ethical. It is a desire of the future that is directed to give humanity and cosmos a future. It ignites a passion for the creation of the Most-high. It stands for the faithfulness of the Infinite God. This eschatological future is a future of one-with-the-other. It is a future of the Most-High with Humanity, all living beings and the cosmos. This relation of one-with-the-other is a relation of one-for-the-other; therefore, it cannot but be ethical at heart. Though the divine cannot but remain steadfast to the promised future that it will have with-the-other at the fulfilment of Eschaton, it is the ethical foundations of this relationship with the prospect of humanity, living beings and cosmos that demands God's fidelity. Thus, the God who will be, will be ultimately and fully revealed as a being-for-the-other, an ethical being par excellence. Without the centrality of the ethicality of the Infinite God, there cannot be an eschaton. Otherwise, there is a need to admit that the desiring God is infinitely evil, who takes joy in playing (Maya)⁷⁸ with his creation. Therefore, the revelation of the desiring God will be the manifestation of the ethicality of the Infinite God. Thus the desire in the Infinite God is not for self-fulfillment but is for trans-substantiation⁷⁹ of the relations of God, humanity, living beings and cosmos.

The ethical dangers of a God thought through onto-theology is clearly elaborated by Derrida when he says, "We know what happens when people actually put these 'value-free' principles into practice; we saw it only a generation ago on a horrific scale in the Holocaust. . . . At best [these people] are frivolous game-players who make a virtue of their moral irresponsibility. At worst, they are set on destroying the standards that not only make their activity possible but also enable society to survive at all".⁸⁰ He reiterates that onto-theology is not free from oppression, and an eschatological turn to theology can assist us in putting the clock back to some extent.

⁷⁸ James Lochtefeld, (2002) Avatar in *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, New York: Rosen Publishing, p.433. It connotes a "magic show, an illusion where things appear to be present but are not what they seem"

⁷⁹ Radical transformation.

⁸⁰ Michael Howard, (1994) "Facing the Monsters," The New York Times Book Review, March 6, pp. 11-12.

2.3.3 *The Fecundity of Desiring God*

The possibility of the future actualization of this eschaton points towards the fecundity⁸¹ of the desiring God. The onto-theological thinking views God as self-fulfilled and all perfect. Hence, fecundity cannot be imagined in the divine. But by thinking of the divine through the eschaton, one can find room for fecundity. This fecundity cannot be reduced to biology. It is not a matter of genealogy and genes. It is a fecundity marked by trans-substantiation of the relation of one-with-the-other. This relation of one, (the infinite one) will reach a new horizon at the fulfilment of the promised future. It is a promise of a radical other scenario. It will bring about a substantive change in the relation of the infinite God and his creation. This qualitative as well as ontological transformation of humanity, living beings and production is self-fulfillment for all-in-the-infinite God. It is a future wherein God will become all-to-all.

The eschaton is the fuller and final manifestation of the fecundity of God. It is in the fecund God that all will find their final fulfilment. It means the eschatological future will transform all in God as well as God in all. It is the ultimate fecundification of all-in-God and God-in-all.⁸² The process of this fructification is going on in an already and not yet mode in our living present.

2.4 THINKING OF A POSSIBILIZING GOD

Eschatology is a promise of the future that remains in the realm of the possible when viewed from the present. This thinking through the eschaton pushes our thoughts to the ultimate limits. It manifests the possibilizing power of our belief. When this thought is turned to God, it may be called as the theological reflection that opens up to the possibilizing God. A possibilizing God not only expansively thinks God but strives to understand how God makes it possible or possibilizes humanity, living beings and the cosmos to come to the ultimate fulfilment in him at the eschaton.

⁸¹ Fruitfulness.

⁸² Pantheism as well as panentheism. Panentheism is a belief that God is greater than the universe and interpenetrates every part of it.

2.4.1 God of the Future Anteriority

The onto-theological thinking is based on a linear understanding of time that moves from the past to the present into the future. The reasoning through the eschaton opens up the possibility of non-linear, disruptive or even eruptive view of time concerning God and the created order. The messianic time⁸³ erupts from the future. It interrupts and discloses our past and present as unfolding achronically⁸⁴ out of the future. Messianic time is fundamentally achronic. It flows from the future. It is a time powered by the divine eschaton, always surprising those who are attuned to the chronological cycle of time. The achronic time of the divine is christened as the ‘future anteriority’ by Levinas.⁸⁵ It is a time wherein God now and still to come, is at the same time. There is a possibility of thinking of the possibilizing time, and hence, one can speak of a time, before time began which holds the eternity of the divine. Thus, the eternal becomes eschatological.

The eschatological time is almost blown back from the future to redeem the past and the present. The term ‘graced time’ is used to understand the eschatological future already erupting into our present. As the horizontal possibilities of life which culminate with death are interrupted, disrupted and multiplied by the vertical landing of the eschaton into our time. The new opportunities opened up through the eschatological window opens towards a new horizon that allows the entry of eschaton into our time and possibilizes new ways of being-in-the-world for humanity, living beings and the cosmos revealing the magnificence of the divine.

2.4.2 God of the Open Eschaton

The realm of the possible opens us to the undetermined future. The future remains open and never really closed, and what is possible is not fixed from the outset. The eschaton interrupts but is respectful of the autonomy of the created order. There may not be problems to accept personal independence and freedom. The studies in

⁸³ God’s time in favour of humanity and the cosmos. See Christina Gschwandtner, (2013) *Postmodern Apologetics? Arguments for God in Contemporary Philosophy*, ‘New York: Fordham University Press, p.279.

⁸⁴ Chronical time is a linear flow of time from the past. Achronical time flows from the future into the present.

⁸⁵ Richard Kearney, (2001) *The God Who May Be*, p.82.

evolutionary biology and cosmology seem to suggest that there is an autonomy of a different order in the created world. Hence, humanity has the ethical responsibility to stay open to the unfolding of the eschaton into the living present. While the possibilizing power of the eschaton remains possible for the created order, humanity being crown of creation has the possibility of taking the entire created order into the possible futures that can be with or without God. Just as humanity has possibilities of possibilizing several futures for the created order, God has the options of possibilizing an open eschaton. The open eschaton is not closed on to a point but stays ever open to several possible closures. Thus, the God-who-will-be has a range to manifest as who-may-be at the eschaton. The God-who-may-be is a possibilizing God who possibilizes the created order and possibilizes himself ultimately at the eschaton. Hence, from this point of view, the final disclosure of God in an eschatological May-Be is still open to diverse possibilizing possibilities.

2.4.3 *Sighting God, the eschatological May-BE*

The ontotheological thinking privileges actuality over potentiality.⁸⁶ It can be traced in abundance in Aristotle. There is a need for the dualism of act and potency to think through an eschatological. For the eschatological God, the possibilizing is actualizing and actualizing is possibilizing. Nicholas of Cusa views God as the possibility to be (*posse esse*).⁸⁷ The merger of possibility and actuality⁸⁸ has limitations concerning the question of evil and God as it can lapse into mystical pantheism.⁸⁹ Hence, it allows us to stay open to the merger of possibility and actuality- a radical view that all the possible possibilities do not have to be actualized; it can remain possibilized and not actualized. The possibilized possibilities⁹⁰ stay at the virtual level and do not descend into actuality. Therefore, there is a need to look at the same as the play of

⁸⁶Potentiality and actuality are principles of a dichotomy which Aristotle used to analyze motion, causality, ethics, and physiology in his Physics, Metaphysics, Nicomachean Ethics and De Anima, which is about the human psyche.

⁸⁷ Jasper Hopkins, (1980) *A Concise Introduction to the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa*, Minnesota: Arthur Banning Press, p.957.

⁸⁸ Actuality and possibility are distinct in the sense of reality. The former refers to existent reality while the latter refers to prospects of becoming a reality. However, here the idea synthesizes the two for a greater synergy of being and becoming.

⁸⁹ Richard Kearney, (2001) *The God Who May Be*, pp.103-104.

⁹⁰ Here we make a difference between possibilities, actualities and virtualities. Possibilized possibilities remain at the virtual level because if actualised they may harm humanity and cosmos.

possibilizing possibilities. The eschatological God, by choosing to be a player⁹¹ rather than the king of creation, wants the self-emptying mode of kenosis and stays open to the unfolding results of the game. Thus, the possibilizing possibilities become co-accomplishments of God and nature.

⁹¹ Creation can be viewed as God's play or Lila.

CHAPTER III

TOWARDS A ‘GOD AFTER GOD’

The violent turn of events in recent times have put religions at the centre stage of global affairs and has transformed them from being means of theophany to kratophany⁹². This kratophany manifests a violent face of religions. This violence is grounded on the eschatological interpretation of theologies. Religious triumphalism⁹³ and fundamentalism⁹⁴ emerging from such theologies have threatened global peace and ecumenical dialogue⁹⁵ peace among religions is no longer an option but the need of the hour. The God ‘who will be’ that is attempted to be apprehend through the window of eschatology is an ‘after God’. Therefore, to arrive at this understanding, there is a need to abandon all shades of onto-theological thinking that is afflicting eschatological interpretation of religions today. There is a surplus of meaning⁹⁶ that is being lost by the violent interpretations of eschatologies that are employed by Abrahamic religions. This study tries to intervene in the hermeneutic situation that endangers religious violence. Such an intervention is like the act of receiving back Isaac which Abraham did after abandoning the violent sacrifice. Today, the Abrahamic religions need to leave this brutal sacrifice and accept the gift of peace.

3.1 INTERROGATING VIOLENT THEOLOGIES OF FULFILMENT

The hermeneutics of eschaton that is afflicting the God thought today is the violent theology of fulfilment.⁹⁷ Such theologies of fulfilment legitimate much of the

⁹² Kratos in Greek means power. Kratophany is a display of power.

⁹³ It is the conviction that one's religious beliefs are superior to other people.

⁹⁴ Religious fundamentalism refers to the knowledge of an individual or a group of individuals in the absolute authority of a sacred religious text or teachings of a particular spiritual leader, prophet, or God. These fundamentalists believe that their religion is beyond any form of criticism, and should therefore also be imposed upon others.

⁹⁵ Ecumenism is the idea of Christian unity. These dialogues often take the form of theological consultations which highlight differences and seek ways of coming closer together through new understandings, reinterpretation or correction of misunderstandings, and healing of divisions. The process of discussion itself brings people closer together and helps to break down barriers.

⁹⁶ Paul Ricoeur, (1976) *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press.

⁹⁷ Theology of fulfilment is a theology that thinks that one is fulfilling God's plan even through violence and terror.

violence and terror in the world. There is a need to employ the epoché of Husserl⁹⁸ which will enable the bracketing of the violent theologies of fulfilments that feed into the terror apparatus today. It will bring about a process of non-knowing (a-gnosis)⁹⁹ that is required to expel the theologies of violence that haunt the hermeneutics of eschaton today. This non-knowing will bring about a new recognition (anagnorisis)¹⁰⁰ of emancipative eschatologies that will bring peace and harmony to humanity.

3.1.1 *Questioning the mythic-mimetic apparatus*

The violent theologies use myths to draw their adherents to mimic them as they set them on a murderous mission. Most terrorists think they are instruments of God to bring to the fulfilment of the eschaton promised by God, and this means that the interpretation of the sacred scripture is brought to the service of terror. It opens the way for the adherents to enter the imaginary world and lead them to think that they are mimicking the divine as they surrender themselves to the violent terror networks. The religious narratives provide plots that are often enacted through violence with an anticipatory expectation of the coming of God's eschaton. Therefore, there is a need to critically examine the abuse of theologies of fulfilment and expose how they transport their followers into a space that make them believe that they are participating in God's eschaton. The fact that the terror outfits make use of this religious propaganda to trap gullible people is well known. The abuse of macro-eschatologies of Abrahamic religions is discernible. Today, the world is in the middle of a holy war,¹⁰¹ the Jihad,¹⁰² Zionism¹⁰³ and Crusades,¹⁰⁴ have legitimated sacrificial violence and the clash of

⁹⁸ To be able to suspend judgment regarding the general or naive philosophical belief in the existence of the external world, and thus examine phenomena as they are given initially to consciousness.

⁹⁹ Kurt Rudolph, (2001) *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*. London: A&C Black, p.2. Gnosis is the collective Greek noun for knowledge. Therefore, a-gnosis means without knowledge.

¹⁰⁰ Anagnorisis originally meant recognition in its Greek context, not only of a person but also of what that person stood for.

¹⁰¹ Religious war.

¹⁰² Gerhard Böwering, Patrice Crone, Wadad Kadi, Devin Stewart, Muhammad Zaman & Mahan Mirza (eds) (2013) "Jihad". *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Jihad is a struggle against one's evil inclinations, an exertion to convert unbelievers or efforts toward the moral betterment of society.

¹⁰³ It is the national movement of the Jewish people that supports the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland in the territory defined as the historic Land of Israel.

¹⁰⁴ Rene Girard, (1977) *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press. The Crusades were religious wars between Christians and Muslims aimed to secure control of holy sites considered sacred by both groups.

civilization¹⁰⁵ scenario has indeed become global.

3.1.2 Question the envisioning of the Stranger

The characterizing of the stranger as the other¹⁰⁶ where the identity of the community breaks apart has been part of the propaganda machinery of violent abuse of religions. The stranger becomes a monster that challenges the borders of the self, reminding the ego that it is not fully sovereign. As what one imagines, so does their identity transforms, thinking about what or who threatens it also changes it. Often the construction of a monster has to do with the inability to deal with the strangeness that is encountered in one's life. Monsters are created to feel safe, it is a scapegoat who can be blamed for all the ill that befalls on us. Hence, there is a necessity to examine this tendency to define ourselves in terms of the other. The violent abuse of religion that is encountered today employ this age-old strategy of humanity. Each terror group has an axis of evil. The enemy is a stranger, an outsider who is viewed as the cause of all evil. It creates black and white distinctions between 'us and them'. Besides, the divine is oversimplified into an apocalyptic image and is viewed as one who will crush these monsters. Thus, eschatological redemption is considered to be occurring here and now in the struggle to define the boundaries of the self and its other.

3.1.3 Questioning the Taming of the Scripture

The sacred scriptures are normative texts for most religions. The Abrahamic religions are the religions of the book. The Bible (for Jews and Christians) and Koran (for Muslims) contain all authoritative teachings, beliefs and practices. Often a literal reading of these sacred texts has been used to motivate, instigate and legitimate a mindless response of adherents of the religious groups. Since God is thought to be speaking through the texts, no one can challenge the interpretation that is employed by those who hold positions of leadership. It can easily be discerned how a selective, distorted and a fanatic reading of the sacred text is used to misguide, influence and

¹⁰⁵ Samuel Huntington, (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Making of the World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster.

¹⁰⁶ Ted Honderich, (1995) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.637. The term Other identifies the other human being, in their differences from the Self, the Other is dissimilar to and the opposite of the Self, Us, and the Same.

brainwash the prospective persons who would volunteer to bring to completion the promises of God through violence. Hence, the taming of the sacred scriptures needs to be addressed to check those interpretations that provide cover to the violent agenda of the terror groups. These interpretations of the holy texts form the formative archive of the future violent terrorists and hence there is an urgent need of a new hermeneutics that will bring peace to all. The denial of a surplus meaning in the reading of these texts by the fundamentalist groups has to be resisted. There is a need not just do a deconstructive reading of the fundamentalist interpretation of the sacred texts but to arrive at a new and enlightened reading that has the power to bring about peace and harmony in the world.

3.2 TOWARDS A MICRO-ESCHATOLOGY

The eschatology that dominates among the fundamentalist groups that employ violence to bring to completion their imagined eschaton is a macro-eschatology. Such eschatology has no patience to wait for God to act at his appointed time. It seems to select God's time to work. Hence, micro-eschatology is proposed for the advent of God who will be. It is an attempt to look at God from behind. It is a God after God in as much as his final revelation (God who will be).

3.2.1 Looking at God from Behind

Looking at God from behind is a challenge as it requires one to avoid what Emanuel Levinas calls egology¹⁰⁷. Egology thinks the other in terms of the sameness of the self. Besides, it is required to avoid the temptation of thinking and speaking of the other without falling into the trap of apophatic mysticism of ineffability¹⁰⁸ and return to the simple eschatology of every day, it means the adoption of the phenomenological approach that points to the things themselves. It allows one to extend their thoughts to the event of eschaton at God's chosen time. The things themselves (phenomenology) are looked in the light of things to come (eschatology). This approach is called phenomenological eschatology; it could allow the glimpse of

¹⁰⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, (1969) *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, p. 44.

¹⁰⁸ A kind of a theological mystical experience in which one can without expressing approach God/ Divine by negation in terms of what may not be said about the perfect goodness that is God.

the divine on its terms and not on egological terms. It opens up the God that is yet to come, the God of the future, and God after the demise of the God of the philosophers. It allows the apprehension of God in the everyday life, and it enables one to face the otherness of God that erupts into their daily life and offers epiphanies¹⁰⁹ of God. It lets one face the infinite in the infinitesimal and experiences the sacred in the ordinary.

3.2.2 *Sighting the Otherness in the Thisness of Divine*

The borrowing of the insight of thisness of John Duns Scotus¹¹⁰ enables the peeping into the divine otherness and trace it into the sacred thisness of things. It means that one can view each moment as a new occasion to the divine to transverse into flesh and blood of time. It becomes what might be called enfleshment (ensarkosis),¹¹¹ the infinite embodiment in every existence. This descent of the divine into the mundane (Katabasis)¹¹² becomes an invitation for us into the divine (Anabasis).¹¹³ It is a realized eschaton that is moving towards its final fulfilment. While the divine is sighted in the thisness and banality of created order, we are called or recalled (anamnesis)¹¹⁴ to the God of the eschaton. The God of the eschaton is available in the saturated phenomena (Jean-Luc Marion)¹¹⁵ where we confront the other face to face daily. The God is viewed as a possibilizing power that is a source, sustainer and the summit of creation. Such a vision looks at God in the most ordinary, the kenosis of the divine, and it enables us to transcend the absolutism (one without many) and relativism (many without one). In a way, the cosmos and the entire drama of life is the container of the uncontainable, a

¹⁰⁹ Burtchaell, J. T. (2002). "Theophany", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 13: seq-The (2nded.). Detroit, Michigan: The Catholic University of America by Thomson/Gale. p. 929.

¹¹⁰ Thomas, Williams. (2016), "John Duns Scotus", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/duns-scotus/>>.accessed on 1/6/2019.

¹¹¹ Holly Faith Nelson, Lynn R. Szabo, Jens Zimmermann (Eds). (2010) *Through a Glass Darkly: Suffering, the Sacred, and the Sublime in Literature and Theory*, Wilfred Laurier University Press, Canada, p. 216.

¹¹²It is a descent of some type, akin to moving downhill.

¹¹³ Will Durant, (1939). *The Story of Civilization Volume 2: The Life of Greece*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pp 460-61.

¹¹⁴ Jacob Klein, (1989). *A Commentary on Plato's Meno*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 103–173. It is Plato's thought that humans possess knowledge from past incarnations and that learning consists of rediscovering that knowledge within us.

¹¹⁵John P. Monoussakis, (2006) *After God: Richard Kearney and Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*, New York: Fordham University Press, p. 5.

signpost of the divine that takes us to the end - the eschaton. This turn to the eschaton is aptly articulated by Kearney when he says, “Such a return would invite us to experience the ultimate in the mundane. The first in the last. The most in the least. It would bring us into dialogue with those who seek the divine in the pause between two breaths. Transcendence in a thorn bush. The Eucharist in a morsel of Madeleine. The Kingdom in a cup of cold water. San Marco in a cobblestone. God in a street, cry.”¹¹⁶

3.2.3 *Sighting the end beyond the end*

The ontotheological understanding of eschatology that has been adopted here is called macro-eschatology; it looks at the end of times as an end of history when God brings the final settlement for humanity. At this point, the ontotheological thinking thinks of the divine as the Supreme Being emerging with the supremacy of his power over the created order. The eschaton, as a final solution viewed through the window of ontotheological thinking becomes the end of times, the last things. The purpose of the micro-eschatology is a space after the end (*telos*) and before the beginning.¹¹⁷ It is the eschatology that restores everything to simplicity before the first and the final causes. Hence, one is not rendered sightless and speechless (*apophasis*)¹¹⁸ before the sublimity of the divine but is still capable of speaking beyond silence (*ana-phasis*)¹¹⁹ and seeing beyond the invisible (*ana-aesthesia*) and touching beyond the tangible (*ana-pathos*). It has a possibility of saying, seeing and feeling all over again and this means there is the possibility of sensing the other, anew, for the second time. Thus, it enables one to see the touch of God in the world. While staying with micro-eschatology, one is no longer inhibited by aporetics¹²⁰ as it returns to the poetics (*anapoetics*). It opens up the *Kairos*¹²¹ the fullness of time in every instant of time.

¹¹⁶ John M onoussakis and Peter Gratton, (2006) *Traversing the Imaginary: Richard Kearney and the Postmodern Challenge*, Evaston: North Western University Press, p.3.

¹¹⁷ John Caputo, (2006) *The Weakness of God*, p.11.

¹¹⁸ Craig Baird; Lester Thonssen, (1948) “Ch.15. The Style of Public Address” in *Speech Criticism*, New York: Ronald Press Co, p.432.

¹²⁰ It is that which expresses wonder, perplexity and tends to doubt.

¹²⁰ It is (καιρός) an ancient Greek word meaning the right, critical, or opportune moment,

¹²¹ Kairos has a qualitative, permanent nature.

3.3 TOWARDS THE MICRO-ESCHATOLOGY

The ‘tropos’ manifests a way or a how, while the ‘topos’ opens the place of God’s eschaton. The tropos and the topos bring to the relatedness of all beings. Every being is a being in between. Being is between itself and towards the other. It is in the in-between relations that one can locate the how and where of God’s eschaton which erupts into the everyday life. The being in-between experiences double relations, a being introverted towards it and being extroverted towards others.

3.3.1 In the relations nexus

All beings form a network of relations, and there is nothing outside the relational nexus. Every being finds its place within the web of these relations. There is a drive of relatedness in every being. All beings tend to relate to other beings. Outside this relatedness, the dynamism of the being cannot be viewed. Moreover, it also manifests the mutuality and reciprocity of beings webbed in a relational nexus. This dynamic relational nexus is the locus of the divine micro-eschaton. The disclosure of the divine micro-eschaton becomes the discloser of beings themselves. God becomes the source, sustainer and the summit of all beings that are inter-linked. It means that the intertwined beings are held together by the being of all beings. It is the site of the divine epiphany. Kearney artfully puts it when he says, “This insight into the sacred "thisness" of things is what Duns Scotus, the Celtic thinker called haecceitas. The idea is that creation is synonymous and synchronous with the incarnation, that each moment is a new occasion for the eternal to traverse flesh and blood of time. Ensarkosis, or enfleshment: the infinite embodied in every instant of existence, waiting to be activated, acknowledged and attended. The one ablaze in the many. The timeless flaring in the transitory. The holiness of happenstance.”¹²²

The divine epiphany reveals God as the power to be. Thus, God makes real everything, holds everything and leads it to its ultimate perfection. Here, the what of the being is related to the how of the being. The how of the being becomes the site from where the coming of the micro-eschatology can be located. In the dynamic being and

¹²² Richard Kearney, (2006) “Epiphanies of Every day: Towards a Micro-eschatology” in John Monoussakis ed., *Richard Kearney and the Religious turn in Continental Philosophy*, New York: Fordham University Press, p.4.

becoming of all reality, the voice and visage of God can be discerned. All reality carries the sacred signature, and this is why the God of the micro-eschaton is profoundly enabling God, and it has characterized God as the possibilizing possibility.

3.3.2 *In the least of Things*

The theophany of the God of small things can be discerned in the least of the things and can be traced to the kenosis of God. It is the outpouring of God. He is all good and therefore, he cannot be non-good. When God is thought of as not being able, we are going against the traditional metaphysical notion of omnipotence. God's power is found more in the eschatology of the little things (micro-eschatology). It manifests as a power in our powerlessness and weakness. The divine strength is stronger than our weakness, and it is why Christians think that Jesus died to give life. In death, there is a possibility of becoming the impossible. It is here the living God of the eschaton becomes the possibilizing possibility of the fullness of life, is understood as the emptying of God (kenosis)¹²³ so that the fullness of life can be received. There may be a need to abandon the understanding of God through the economy of power¹²⁴. Such an understanding is certainly rooted in the onto-theological thinking that is desired to overcome here. The thinking through the economy of the eschaton enables us to discern the working of a God of the future who continuously gives himself till the end of times. God is the God of between, who is coming between beings and their becoming till the final eschaton.

¹²³ Renee D. N. Van Riessen, (2007) *Man as a Place of God: Levinas's Hermeneutics of Kenosis*, Dordrecht: Springer, p. 4-8. Kenosis is a Christian concept which is associated with the incarnation of Jesus Christ in whom God is believed to have become human. In Jesus, God emptied his god-head and became human. This kenotic hermeneutics can be traced in the work of Emanuel Levinas. Levinas thinks of infinity in time. Infinite has a place in our experience of time. He links both time and the infinite by thinking of both from the perspective of kenosis. Self for Levinas becomes in its constant openness to the other/Other and remains in a permanent mode of letting go. The direction of this letting go is infinity. Thus, in giving one for the other one reaches God. Levinasian self-emptying is a human letting go to achieve, the infinite other.

¹²⁴ Having embraced the notion of kenosis God cannot be thought through the economy of power alone. God's power is visible in his powerlessness. Just like the women in the Chipko movement become powerful in their powerlessness as they embraced the trees so also God is powerful in the self-kenosis.

3.3.2 In the Human Persons

God becomes manifest in the life of humans dynamically and intimately. Each human being is a person. A person is an eschatological aura of possibility.¹²⁵ Besides being marked by the divine, the human person manifests the divine trace through the dynamism of the relationship with each other, cosmos and God. Although the person not always aware of objectification and can resist it with consciousness, he/ she remains open to the possibility of an encounter with the other.¹²⁶ We cannot encounter others without at the same time trying to configure them in some way. To configure the other as a person is to grasp him/her as present in the absence, as both incarnate in flesh and transcendent in time. It means, by being open to trace of the infinity in the other one can face the face of the other. If one fails to recognize the trace of infinity in the other, then the other may be treated as an object and easily disfigure the other. Hence, configuring the other opens the possibility to view the manifestation of the God in human persons.

3.4 SIGHTING THE DIVINE PERSON

The eschatological perspective that is proposed in this study is not to be understood as an impersonal viewing God as an anonymous presence. It is not a ‘monarchian deus absconditus’¹²⁷ but it is one that enables the sighting of the divine person of God via the phenomenological journey.

3.4.1 Divine as one-for-the-other

The eschatological perspectives remind us that the persona of a person that is brought home has no power over him/her. When this primary disablement is confronted, one is re-enabled. There is a limit to the ‘can be’ as long as there is the other, once this fact is accepted, then there is an emancipation of the self and the others. It means that the persona, whether it is mine or that of others, is always already there and yet to come. Hence, the other person always remains as the other although he/she

¹²⁵ The fact the humans are transcended and are in search of the divine, they carry an aura or image of the divine.

¹²⁶ Renee D. N. Van Riessen, *Man as a Place of God: Levinas’s Hermeneutics of Kenosis*, p.8. We take Levinasian face to face encounter and the kenotic hermeneutics where openness to the otherness of the other leads us to the Infinite other/God.

¹²⁷ Richard Kearney, (2001) *The God Who May Be*, p.13.

stands in front of me. It stands for always something more, the surplus that resists the totalizing grasp. The persona is the ground of singularity. It cannot be reduced to an I-IT relation. It is always I-THOU relation.¹²⁸ It gives itself to our embodied nature, particularly through the face. There is inherent irreducibility in every person. It cannot be as a self-sufficient love loving itself alone, as this would be narcissism. The Persona is other-centered and pours out as one-for-the-other. Ontotheological thinking has reduced God as one-for-itself-in-itself. God who is perfectly self-engrossed and does nothing God for the created order.

3.4.2 *Facing the Face of God*

The persona of the other is the sign of God. Prosophon¹²⁹ is the face of the other that has the significance of being one for the other. It refers to the face of the other person as it faces us, revealing itself from within itself. There is a need to admit here that one is a face (prosophon) and not one has a face (prosophon). To be a face (prosophon) is to be a-face-towards-a-face. Commenting on the Levinasian view on God, Jacques Rolland succinctly makes the same clear when he says, ‘this is face to face of the unique before the unique.’¹³⁰

It means to be proximate to the face of the other. This coming close towards-the-face-of-the-other is profoundly ethical. It is radically inter-subjective. It always presupposes the other who is standing in front of me. This other who is standing in front of me is a person (prosophon) challenging us to-be-one-for-the-other. The Self is not condemned to be Self. If we think that self is condemned to be self, such as thinking prioritizes being over the good. This kind of thinking is epitomized in Martin Heidegger. Levinas argues against Heideggerian prioritization of ontology, and he points out that those who think that they are condemned to be self are a being towards towards-death. He further clarifies this with his ethics when he reasons that it is the good of the persona (ethics) that cares for being (ontology). The good of the person takes priority for my drive to be. There is a challenge to think of God de-

¹²⁸ Martin Buber, (1937) *I and Thou*, trans. Roland Gregor Smith, Edinburg: T & T Clark.

¹²⁹The term ‘prosophon’ originally in Greek meant face or mask and belonged to the Greek theatre where the actors wore masks on stage to portray their character and emotions to the audience. In its encounter to Christian theology, it got translated as a person. It stood for the self-manifestation of an individual.

¹³⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, (2000) *God, Death and Time*, trans.Bettina Bergo, California: Stanford University Press, p.4.

ontotheologically. The God that is thought from the eschatological location of priority, helps to think of the ethicality of God. The divine person priorities good of the other and divines itself as one for the other through the other. There is a fundamental prosophic dimension in God. It is here that one can face the face of the divine.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMING OF GOD OF PEACE

The eschatological hermeneutics that is used here stays within the acceptance of human dependence on divine revelation to understand and relate it to God. Abrahamic faiths are primarily based on divine revelation. The divine-human encounters are expressed in a highly dense and figurative language of metaphor, symbol and myth. They are so required because the divine realm is both immanent and transcendent to human speech. The divine reveals in and through a medium, forms and modes that are accessible to humans. This language points out that God is revealed in its fullest sense at the eschaton.¹³¹ Here, there is a need to explore the challenge as it poses a hermeneutic appropriation to the Abrahamic religions. It invites us to accept God's unsurpassing majesty and mastery that is yet to come in its fullness at the end of times. This study shifts from the onto-theological thinking of God and embraces eschatological thinking of the divine. The eschatological paradigm that is taken up here shares a common rhythm with Levinasian prioritization of God as Good for the conception of God as being. The eschatological hermeneutics of God has the power to bring about a new awakening to a God of Peace¹³² within the Abrahamic religions.

4.1 SIGHTING A GOD OF PEACE

Rene Girard has shown that there is a scapegoat mechanism embedded within religions that springs forth peace to humanity. Monotheism requires the scapegoating of many Gods to open the way for the arrival for the God of Peace. Following this mode of thought, there is a challenge to offer the sacrificial offering of ontotheological thinking of God to prepare for the advent of a God of Peace. The way for it to come is through the reflection of the divine from the privileged position of micro-eschatology.

¹³¹Ancient Greek (éskhaton), neuter singular of ἔσχατος (éskhatos, “last”) (theology) the world during the post-historic era of God's overt (apocalyptic) reign, immediately preceding the end of the world.

¹³²This inquiry thinks of God of Peace in a post onto-theological mode. The eschatological hermeneutics that is employed here is allied to the hermeneutics of kenosis and primarily visualizes God as good and not merely as being. This prioritization of good over being follows Levinas. Hence, it is God that empties to bring, hold and lead humanity, the living world and the inanimate cosmos to its fulfilment is a God of micro-eschaton.

4.1.1 God after the sacrifice of Gods

The God ‘after God’ that is thought here is a God post death of God.¹³³ The end of ontotheological God is emancipative which allows the resurrection of the God of Peace. It is the God that is attempted to look at from behind¹³⁴. It is the ‘after God’, the God of monotheism that rises after the death of polygods¹³⁵. Similarly, the end of God envisioned from the mega-eschatology promises peace.¹³⁶ It is thought that by the killing of God’s opponents that one can bring about peace promised by God. Peace is, therefore, the fruit of scapegoating of those deemed as God enemies. All violent abuse of the Abrahamic religions as well as other faiths use brutal extermination (sacrifice) of the enemies of God and hope to usher in peace. Death and sacrifice of God’s enemies promises peace. By this same logic, following mimetic theory of Girard,¹³⁷ the sacrificial offering of Gods of mega-eschaton is proposed as they are used to justify violence in the world, and it would prepare the followers of Abrahamic religions to the coming of God of Peace. It is an ‘after God’, who arrives after the sacrifice of the ontotheological God as well as the God of mega-eschaton. It will come after the double sacrifice of God. In this sense, it is genuinely an ‘after God’.

4.1.2 God of Peace- a resolution of Mimetic Rivalries

The violence¹³⁸ that has erupted in the world grounded in the Abrahamic religions could be viewed as a result of mimetic rivalries. The fundamental tendency that humans have, is to imitate the other, and this has been considered as the cause of human violence. Girard names this tendency as mimetic desire.¹³⁹ This mimetic desire triggers mimetic rivalries. The family is the environment that lays the ground for mimeticism in humans.¹⁴⁰ Human desire is a surrogate, it means that humans do not just desire the

¹³³ The death of God is used in the Nietzschean sense. In this study we are concerned with the death of onto-theological vision of God.

¹³⁴ God viewed from the privileged vantage point of eschaton.

¹³⁵ God’s of Polytheism

¹³⁶ Rene Girard, (1989). *Violence and the Sacred*. London: John Hopkins University Press.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Anthony Storr, (1968). *Human Aggression*, New York: Bantam Books.

¹³⁹ Rene Girard, (1966) *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Y. Freccero, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp.1-2.

¹⁴⁰ Oedipus complex of Freud demonstrates how mimesis results in a castration phobia. The little boy wants to identify with and replace the father in his love for his mother but surrenders himself sensing the power of the father.

object of desire of the other but desires the way the other enjoys the purpose of its desire. The enjoyment of the other becomes the model to imitate. Therefore such a desire is called mimetic desire. Slavoj Zizek explains the surrogate nature of our desire when he says, “the subject desires only in so far as it experiences the Other itself as desiring, as a sight of an unfathomable desire, as if an opaque desire is emanating from him or her not only that the other address me with an enigmatic desire, it also confronts me with the fact that I do not know what I really desire with the enigma of my own desire.”¹⁴¹

The mimetic desire is generated by the sense of lack that one feels in the presence of an enjoying other. This sense of lack fires the willingness of the person and transforms the other into a rival. Indeed, it becomes the foundation of rivalries and conflicts that humans experience. These mimetic rivalries are resolved by directing the aggressive energy that arises as a result of these conflicts on a scapegoat. The global terror and violence that is encountered today may have its roots in mimetic desires that have set up mimetic rivalries which in turn have produced scapegoats that are blamed and punished. This quest for peace by scapegoating has created a chain reaction. It can only be resolved by the scapegoating God of the mega-eschaton, and this will prepare the advent of the God of Peace.

4.1.3 God of Peace- A Healing of Mimetic Desire

The God of Peace can humanize humanity lost in violence against each other. It seems that we have arrived in a Hobbesian state of nature.¹⁴² The ego-centric mimetic desire has converted us into rivals of each other. It arouses hatred and violence. It can drive us to destroy the one deemed as a rival. Mimetic desire is also positive; it can fire love and friendship. It is a double-edged sword. The God of Peace is a desiring God. The hope of God of Peace is therapeutic and salvific. Hence, there is a need to understand the mechanism of mimeticism that is afflicting us. This exercise can enable humanity to break the chain of desire that transforms the other into a mimetic rival and can heal it of this psychopathology¹⁴³. In the light of mimetic theory, one is enabled to

¹⁴¹ Slavoj Zizek, (2007) *How to Read Lacan*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, p.42.

¹⁴² Nigel Warburton, (2000) *Philosophy: The Classics*, Routledge, pp.61- 70.

¹⁴³ Psychopathology studies mental illness or mental distress. It also refers to behaviors and experiences that indicative of mental illness.

discern how the abuse of Abrahamic religions is trapped into a sickness of desire, which may be true with other violent abuse of religions. But once the dynamism of mimetic desire is mindfully accepted, it opens them to the God of Peace; this will bring peace to both individuals and collectively to all humanity. It requires the setting aside of all onto-theological thinking and embracing the thought of God from the micro-eschaton.

4.2 UNDERSTANDING MIMESIS AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

Mimesis is a powerful force, it is the basis of religion and is at the heart of all human associations. All humans are governed by universal mimesis. The recent discovery of mirror neurons¹⁴⁴ by neuro-scientists also points in the direction of the existence of universal mimesis. It appears that human relations are basically mimetic interactions. It seems that mimetic mechanism determines our thinking, feeling and acting (behavior).

4.2.1 *Mimesis and Violence*

The mimetic mechanism of desire brings about the dynamism of social life. It may be right to say that it is because of our mimetic nature that we become social beings¹⁴⁵. Our mimetic dynamism brings us together as well as keeps us separate. It is the reason for our communion as well as our conflicts. It brings us into the paradise of human togetherness as well as casts us into the world of fallenness.¹⁴⁶ It is in this complicated relationship with its others that the self becomes what it is. It makes us fall in love as well as fall out of love. Desire is always carried further by the desire of the other and not the object it pursues. It wishes to imitate the mode of the willingness of the other, and this is noticed when people follow some heroes and models. The advertisement industry preys on this mimetic desire. Even ethical behavior is based on the mimetic nature of our hope.

¹⁴⁴ Marco Jacoboni, (2008). *Mirroring People: The New Science of How We Connect with Others*, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

¹⁴⁵ Rene Girard, (1966) *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, London: John Hopkins University Press, p.15. To discern the model of imitation among humans.

¹⁴⁶ Sibyl George, (2003)'Nihilism in Heidegger's Being and Time' in Indian Philosophical Quarterly Vol. XXX, No.1, pp.91-102.

Mimetic desire is always a desire to be like the other. In the religious sense, it is the desire that is waiting for its fullest realization. In this sense, it is a desire for an imagined eschaton, the final resolution or peace. This ultimate solution is even thought to be a fruit of violence. The other whose desire is imitated becomes a rival. Mimetic desire springs forth violence. It incites and intensifies violence and bloodshed.

4.2.2 *Mimesis and Religious Violence*

Mimetic desire moves the desire to become victors by vanquishing the mimetic rivals.¹⁴⁷ There is a paradox operating here. In copying one another and drawing ever closer to each other, the rivals progressively become identical to each other. Little by little, they come to have the same desires, same aggressiveness, same obsession and same violence. There is very little to choose between the three Abrahamic religions trapped into mimetic rivalries with their others. Here, Aristotle's theory of matter and form may be useful.¹⁴⁸ The sameness of desires, aggressiveness, violence and obsession that is stated here is not sameness in matter and form. It is merely sameness in style and not matter. All mimetic rivalries have the same form but different matter, and hence there is very little to choose between aggression and violence of different religions, particularly in the Abrahamic faiths. Besides, this there is a need to take note that as the rivalries intensify, there is a gradual disappearance of the object of desire and rivals get trapped into deeper levels of the rivalry, so that competition itself come to take the place of the purpose of desire.

Religious violence seems to have reached this stage and no longer has the object of desire which had triggered the violence. Rivalries have outraced the passion that gave birth to them. The religions are caught into the spiral of violence. Thus, trapped into this spiral of violence, the object of desire¹⁴⁹ is continuously transfigured and puts on the mask of a new good that one feels will become the outcome of the resolution of

¹⁴⁷ C. Fleming, (2004) *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p.19.

¹⁴⁸ Mark Johnston, (2006) 'Hylomorphism' in the Journal of Philosophy, C III. 12, pp.652-698.

¹⁴⁹ René Girard, (1966) *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, p.42.

the mimetic rivalries. Mimetic rivalries are set in a new spiral of scapegoating¹⁵⁰, and this means that eschatological hope feeds the mimetic rivalries.

4.2.3 *Mimesis, Violence and God of Peace*

Girard maintains that mounting mimetic rivalries cause mimetic crises. In this scenario, the initial competition transforms itself into a frenzied will to diminish the other no matter what the cost is to overturn him, crush him, cast him out, dominate him and even destroy him. The rise of violence and terror across the globe indicate that we have reached a mimetic crisis today. One can identify it in the force emanating from the Abrahamic religions. The mimetic crises manifest that mimetic rivalries have become pathological rivalries. The intensity of extermination that some religiously rooted terror group's exhibit seem to indicate that religious violence has reached dangerous levels. Now acquiring the object of desire becomes earning the place of the rival. The mimetic desire then becomes a desire to disposes him/her by completely possessing him/her. This drive can be traced to the mastery in the ontotheological thinking. It exhibits the drive to possess God entirely. It is a desire to empty God of all his mystery. The fact is that one cannot empty the God of his mystery; several substitutes mimic the possession of God is the reason why ontotheological thinking of God is at the heart of all religious violence.

Zizek makes this clear when he says “If God exists, then everything is permitted- is this not the most succinct definition of the religious fundamentalist's predicament? For him God fully exists, he perceives himself as his instrument which is why he can do whatever he wants: his acts are redeemed in advance, since they express the divine will”¹⁵¹The God of Peace, viewed from the privileged eschatological perspective is de-ontotheological thinking, which can free us from the enslavement mimetic desire.

¹⁵⁰ Rene Girard, (1987) “Generative Scapegoating,” in *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*, ed. Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith R. G. Hamerton-Kell, Stanford: Stanford University, p.78.

¹⁵¹ Slavoj Zizek, (2007) *How to Read Lacan*, p.92.

4.3 TRAUMA AND THE SPIRAL OF VIOLENCE

All violence produce trauma and when trauma is repressed it harms the individuals significantly. Some trauma is acute and crippling. Religious violence can be more traumatic as innocent lives are lost, very often injury remains unhealed, and it is passed on from generation to generation.

4.3.1 Trauma and cycle of Religious Violence

Besides physical trauma, humans experience psychic trauma. Traumatic events take place unexpectedly, and the plight of the victim becomes precarious because the traumatized is caught inside activity for which sometimes there are no witnesses. Trauma seems to drive the victim to recover the lost time and subjects the victim to a cycle of repetition. Thus, caught up in a time that cannot be transcended, the victim seeks closure and answers to questions that launch him/ her forward enabling him/her to claim life at last. But unfortunately, gaps and fissures widen in time. Far from bridging the past each new episode opens a yawning chasm leaving the victim trapped into the prison of the cycle of trauma. Unless in time the victim opens up, no person can get free from the injury that afflicts him/her. This opening is possible through counselling. The violence unleashed by the abuse of Abrahamic religions traumatizes both the victim and the perpetrators, and this means that unless a therapeutic solution is found, the cycle of religious violence may not find any peaceful settlement.¹⁵²

4.3.2 Breaking the Cycle of Violence

The repetition of the cycle of religious violence is momentarily interrupted by the emergence of a surrogate victim upon whom the whole religious community can concentrate its anger. The scapegoat becomes the victim on whom the violence is directed. The trauma wounds the victim and the victimizer. It seems to have a delayed appearance and brings a kind of a double-sidedness to the way trauma afflicts its victims who then enact it by traumatizing others. This entanglement to the wounded past keeps founding the present. The trauma seeks healing by repetition. The violence and terror that is afflicting the global community is nothing but trauma seeking healing. The victim of injury becomes a new victimizer, and the spiral of violence complexly

¹⁵² Mark Juergensmeyer, (2003) *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. California: University of California Press.

continues to afflict humans.¹⁵³ The trauma somehow brings about a loss of innocence and brings about the dynamism of recovery and determination of arresting any further damage, as the shock keeps its victims chained to the vitality of both restorations of loss and prevention of a new loss.¹⁵⁴ This dynamism most often turns violent. It is only through a therapeutic awareness that one can break the cycle of violence.

Therapeutic awareness enables the victims to remain rooted in the present, and they are thus enabled to disentangle from the prison house of the past. The God of Peace thought through the prism of the micro-eschaton of everydayness can accelerate this break from the wounded past.

4.3.3 Dealing with Inter-generational Trauma

The trauma is transmitted from generation to generation.¹⁵⁵ The transmission of trauma is the transmission of a task. It is the handing of an unfinished business that often includes some avenging of a humiliation. Often individuals and communities have a mission born out of trauma. The violence that is erupting from the abuse of Abrahamic faiths is traumatizing and is in part, a fruit of intergenerational transmission of trauma. The trauma continues to haunt both victors and the vanquished in the violence because they interchange their roles very fast today. There is the inheritance of loss on all sides that triggers recovery dynamism, and this is why trauma itself might be something that links the Abrahamic religions. The studies on inter-generational transmission of trauma are primarily about the Jewish survivors of Nazi gas chambers.¹⁵⁶ Their extreme traumatization led to depression, anhedonia, alexithymia, psychosomatic illness and pain, insomnia, masochistic lifestyle etc.¹⁵⁷ All of this made a cumulative impact on the

¹⁵³J H.Albeck, (1993) ‘Intergenerational consequences of trauma: Reframing traps in treatment theory: A second generation perspective’, in M.O. Williams & J.F. Sommer (Eds.) *Handbook of Post-Traumatic Therapy*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp.106-125.

¹⁵⁴Auerhahn N.C. & D Laub, (1998) ‘Intergenerational memory of the Holocaust’ in Y. Danieli (Ed.) *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, New York & London: Plenum, pp. 21-41.

¹⁵⁵Ana Baranowsky, Marta Young, Sue Johnson-Douglas., Lyn Williams-Keeler, & Michael McCarrey, (1998). PTSD transmission: a review of secondary traumatization in Holocaust survivor families. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 39(4), pp.247-256.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷H.A Barocas & C.B Barocas, (1980). ‘Separation-Individuation Conflicts In Children Of Holocaust Survivors’ *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 11, (1) pp. 6-14.

second generation among the Jewish people. The second generation inherits the trauma in phantasmatic terms and afflicts their life. Hence, all traumatized people need therapy.

The Abrahamic faiths cannot be harbingers of peace unless they find a way of dealing with the accumulated trauma that is being continuously transmitted from one generation to another. The loss of innocence or the loss of the original, the rupturing experience of trauma inflicted on its victims of the first as well as second and future generations has to be therapeutically addressed to bring about a condition of peace for all. The notion of God of Peace can be of great assistance in this quest.

4.4 THE SYMBOL, SYMBOLIC AND THE FIGURAL

Symbol formation is primary to human development. Symbols mediate life and its meaning for us. God as an important primary symbol is also part of this process. The symbolic makes all experience possible. God-human relations occur in and through the symbolic but always remain figural.

4.4.1 Symbolic formation and God of Peace

Melanie Klein claims that symbols express anxieties, wishes, fantasies and conflicts. Symbolization is central to the development of humanity and has pre-verbal and is a sublimated activity.¹⁵⁸ She claims that the primordial symbolism arises out of the struggle of the child to discover in every object its own organs and their functioning. It is through symbolization that things become worthy of libidinal investments. For her, symbols are the containers of meaning and are pre and proto-conceptual. Symbolization is necessary for sublimation¹⁵⁹. Depending on Klein's view of the role of symbols in human life, one can see how a symbolic construction of a God is afflicting the Abrahamic religions, and it can be put to further sublimation that views God of the micro eschaton as a God of Peace. Following Klein, one can know that thinking and fantasizing is mainly in terms of symbols. It means that, besides powerful functions, symbols also have a representative role. Symbols mediate life, and that is why the

¹⁵⁸ Melanie Klein, (1930) 'The Importance of Symbol-Formation in the Development of the Ego', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 11, pp. 24-39.

¹⁵⁹ Ellias Mallet da Rocha Barros, Elizabeth Lima de Rocha Barros, (2015) 'Symbolism, emotion and mental growth' in Julia Barossa, Catalina Bronstein and Claire Pajaczkowska, (Eds.), *The New Klein-Lacan Dialogues*, London: Karnak books, pp.235-254.

symbolic thinking of God stands for the real God. Unfortunately, God seems to be symbolically misconstrued, and there is a need to invest in a reconstruction of God in terms of symbols of harmony, love and peace. It will lead us to relate to God as God of Peace. This process might set in de-symbolization of God of mega-eschaton that is reigning at a time when violent terror is disturbing the global peace.

4.4.2 Reframing the Symbolic for the God of Peace

Jacques Lacan claims that we are born into a symbolic.¹⁶⁰ It is not a symbol or way of representing the world. It is everything that surrounds us and makes our experience possible. Thus, from the moment of conception, a child is inserted into the world of the mother, father, other caregivers, mother tongue and sounds/ marks are associated with it. All these and more becomes the symbol of the child. All that the child experiences, including its fears and anxieties are produced through pathways that touch the symbolic. We live and have our being in the symbolic. We oedipalize into the token and cannot easily question those elements of the symbolic that pass off as the law of the father¹⁶¹. Deleuze and Guattari challenge us to become anti-Oedipus and contest the law of the Father¹⁶². It is this anti-oedipal act that can reframe the symbolic. Hence, to open the horizon of the God of Peace, there is a need to reframe the symbolic that sustains the violent God of the mega-eschaton. Therefore, the coming of the God of Peace is also an anti-oedipal act¹⁶³. It will displace the reigning image of God that is employed to justify terror and violence and will bring religions together and also bring about peace in the world.

4.4.3 Figuring out the figural in the God of Peace

There is a need to see through words, letters and alphabets, as words function as windows which open up to another place. Plato's world of ideas is similar to this reading. The things of this world become copies of the ideas that inhabit the perfect

¹⁶⁰ Lionel Bailey, (2009). *Lacan: A Beginner's Guide*, Oxford: One world Publication, pp.88-108.

¹⁶¹. Ellias Mallet da Rocha Barros, Elizabeth Lima de Rocha Barros, (2015) "Symbolism, emotion and mental growth" in Julia Barossa, Catalina Bronstein and Claire Pajaczkowska, (Eds.), *The New Klein-Lacan Dialogues*, pp.233-334.

¹⁶²Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, (1983) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

world of Ideas. It means that the visual materiality of words is disregarded in the act of reading and the attention is focused on the meaning conveyed by them. The graphic letters become an impurity that has to be filtered out, but in that very act, it simultaneously becomes the very condition of the possibility of reading.¹⁶⁴ The material visibility (alphabets) is impure and hence, has the potential to disrupt the act of reading if there is unusual typography, unexpected spacing, fonts etc. In short, to read is no longer to be able to look at the shape of letter/ alphabets. In some way, this act of forgetting the material visibility of the text is required to derive the meaning that emerges out of the book. The material visibility of writing has to be simultaneously both present and absent when it is read. Lyotard names this troubling aspect of the visible ‘the figural’¹⁶⁵, by figural he states that the material visibility of the text can destabilize and disrupt its communicative flow and one would not be able to figure out the meaning erupting out of it. In some way, any change in the structure or the material organizability of the text can disfigure the meaning emitting from it.

The figural is violent, and it can disfigure, disrupt, distort and deform. Figural nature of any text provides the possibility of imagining how God of Peace can emerge by displacing the reigning image of God. The post-onto-theological thinking attempts to draw the curtain on the theatre of cruelty enacted by the Abrahamic religions in our days and usher in a dynamic flow of peace. The site of God thinking can be spoken in the words of Jacques Derrida where he says, “... this site is not a site, an enclosure, a place of province or a ghetto.... the site is not empirical and notional.”¹⁶⁶ Thus, God peace opens our God thinking and makes peace with the limited and violent conceptualization of God.

¹⁶⁴ David Rodowick, (2001) *Reading the figural, or Philosophy After New Media*. London: Duke’s University Press, p.230.

¹⁶⁵ Jean Francois Lyotard, (1998) *Discourse, Figure*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3-19. Figural means it is not literal. It is open and metaphorical.

¹⁶⁶Jacques Derrida, (2001) *Writing Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, London: Routledge, p.80.

CHAPTER V

FIGURING OUT THE FIGURAL IN THE GOD OF PEACE

The image of God is discursive¹⁶⁷ and articulatable, it has been ‘textualized’¹⁶⁸ in several ways. The solidity of the Euclidean image is fragmented, rendered discontinuous, divisible and liable in plural ways. The God who will be, the God of the eschaton that has been attempted to think in post-ontotheological terms is also a fruit of the figural nature of discourse¹⁶⁹. Indeed, God is a textualized figure. There is always a surplus in our thinking of the image of God, which can help in checking the reigning images and models of God thinking that are ontotheological as well as those who reinforce violence and terror. The figural nature of God allows the rupture of the reigning images and think of God in ways that are true to what is called the micro-eschaton. This way of thinking opens us not only to the articulatory powers but also to the (dis)articulatory powers of discourse.

5.1 (DIS) ARTICULATING GOD

There is a need to (dis)articulate the reigning theologies that legitimate violence in the world today. This reconsideration of faiths can be a springtime to bring into force a new image of God of Peace. All forms of (dis)articulations are articulations and re-articulation. The opening of the figural in the text enables the opening of the door to the arrival of the God of Peace.

5.1.1 *Digging for the Figural in Our God thinking*

The figural is not trapped in the text, and therefore its meaning cannot be considered to be linguistic alone, although it is given through signs, most of which are linguistic. According to Lyotard, the figural resides in the discourse as an intractable

¹⁶⁷ Discursive study of religion outlines the main assumptions, questions, materials and specific guidelines for the implementation of a discursive approach – its ways of constructing the path, the research object and area of expertise.

¹⁶⁸ What is articulatable in hence is textualizable. Text is not singular but, there are multiple ways of documenting or recording or textualizing images. There are several ways in which the image of God has been textualized is expressed within the formally organized constitution of various religions in the form of their creed, code and cult.

¹⁶⁹ God can only be figured and can never be made literal. Words (conversations) do not have the fullness of understanding/knowledge in both delivery and reception.

opacity of the visible. He makes this point emphatically when he says that opacity of the visible is a ‘unique manifestation of the linguistic space which cannot incorporate without being shaken, exteriority that it cannot interiorize as signification.¹⁷⁰ Every discourse is troubled and haunted by a perspective. It is the only way that discourse can designate an object to the interiority of thought. Therefore the text has to point beyond its borders to objects positioned in space concerning it and this means the text or discourse ruptures out of itself and indicates an object that is placed in a space holder outside itself.¹⁷¹ It is like showing the object outside the text but this outside returns back to the primary intimacy of the body in space and time. It returns to the subject and indicates its position concerning the text and space that holds it; this means that language is powerless concerning the showable, not because the showable is opposed to the expressible but rather because it is too close to it. It is this reason why one God can be conceptualized in plural ways. It is the figural that allow us to frame it or formalize within and beyond the text. This might explain why Abrahamic religions, as well as other monotheistic or even polytheistic religions, can image God in plural ways. The theological discourse configures images and formalizes the non-linguistic space (figural space)¹⁷² that houses the referent (God) indicated by the religious language. The plurality of speaking about God may not point towards polytheism. It only shows that the word cannot capture and exhaust God's reality. It also manifests the fertility and productivity of the figural space.

5.1.2 *The Figural Space of God of Peace*

The figural space is a heterogeneous space of co-habitation for all our thinking. It is a space where God thought of the Abrahamic religions resides and belong together. It is an asignifying space which only shows and has a designative function. Geoffrey Bennington explains this pointedly when he says, “the figural is the third space at work between signification, which is systemic-structural in orientation, and designation or

¹⁷⁰David Rodowick, (2001). *Reading the Figural, or, Philosophy After the New Media*. London: Dukes University, p.6.;

¹⁷¹ Grames Jones, (2014) *Lyotard Reframed: Interpreting Key Thinkers for The Arts*, New York: I.B. Tauris, p.18.

¹⁷² It is not a geometrical space. It becomes visible only by transgression. It houses the orders of visibilities.

reference, which is subjective-phenomenological, and it can be seen to disrupt visual or perceptual space".¹⁷³

Being outside the linguistic system, it does not signify anything, it is a transgressing space. This entry into the figural space allows one to view the space that accommodates the possibility of thinking in plural ways. Thus, when it comes to the Abrahamic religions, one can enter into space where they belong together before they articulate God through linguistic structures producing plural and even conflicting theologies. These conflicting theologies stay together into what is referred to as the figural space. In this space of co-habitation, possibilities of God thinking reside plurally and non-hierarchically. The figural space is a designative place vis-à-vis the subject in terms of location and time. Hence, the three Abrahamic religions may indeed be said to belong together in the figural space.

5.1.3 *Chasing the Figural of the God of Peace*

The figural is unrepresentable beneath or behind representation because it points to another space that does not give itself to been seen or thought. Lyotard calls it, the proper space of desire.¹⁷⁴ The binding energy of desire flows and cannot be articulated. It is these decoded flows that make language expression into poetry and painting into art. There is a force or passion that lets the discourse, painting or poetry erupt into a semantic order. It is the desire or the power that folds the text into an artistic work. The force or passion bestows a form to the book; it gives expression that produces an effect and conveys meaning. This force is a force of attraction. In some way, the figural (un)forms and opens for a linguistic surface for its figural potentials and becomes a force of transgression. This force opens the linguistic surface to mould into a new meaning and effect. Thus, it becomes unconscious. It is neither sayable (signification) nor showable (designation). It is the figural that makes something sayable and showable. All text is already figural. It is from this point of view that one can track the power of the figural in the imaging of God of Peace.

¹⁷³ Stuart Sim, Eds (2011) *The Lyotard Dictionary*, Edinburg: Edinburg University Press p.77.

¹⁷⁴ David Rodowick, (2001). *Reading the Figural*, p.8.

There is a need for an act of (un) forming through which the figural can push the God of Peace to arrive on the scene. The figural disruptions can assist in configuring the imaging of God of Peace, and it will require the aligning of their desire with the figural and tap the flow of energy in the society that will open the collective consciousness. This may require the figural to (un) form the modes of thinking habits and open up to a new regime of thought that would make way for the God of Peace to arrive.

5.2 ARCHITECTONIC OF IMAGING GOD

The figural open the site of becoming. This active site is a site where diverse possibilities of thinking God can emerge to be recognized or excluded. It is a site of mutation and transformation of architectonic of God thinking/imaging.

5.2.1 *Diagrammatics of Power*

Gilles Deleuze, in his book on Michel Foucault, titled ‘*Foucault*’ presents a concept that he christens as the diagrammatics of power.¹⁷⁵ He projects Foucault as a philosopher of space and spatialization in the most complex and challenging way. Foucault, he says opens the space of becoming where possibilities arise for a subject to emerge and be recognized or excluded. In his books, like *Madness and civilization*,¹⁷⁶ *Discipline and Punishment* and *Birth of Clinic*,¹⁷⁷ he manifests conditions that lead to the emergence of subjects like mad/civilized, criminal/ normal, sick/ healthy etc. The term ‘diagrammatics’,¹⁷⁸ introduces dynamism and tensile relations. He explains that diagrammatics of power assists us in examining how strategies of control seek to replicate themselves through surveillance, documentation, expression and in the spatial organization of collective life on the other. Hence, it is vital to examine the regimes of visibility that are at work in a society. The visible is intimately linked with the sayable or expressible.¹⁷⁹ In some way, the technologies of

¹⁷⁵ Gilles Deleuze, (2006). *Foucault*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁷⁶ Michel Foucault, (2006). *History of Madness*, London: Routledge.

¹⁷⁷ Michel Foucault, (2003). *The Birth of Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, London: Routledge.

¹⁷⁸ Diagrammatics is the study of using diagrams and imagery instead of linguistic and algebraic in reasoning.

¹⁷⁹ Gilles Deleuze, (2006). *Foucault*, p. 48.

seeing, indirectly control the procedures of expression and constrain our thinking and being. The regimes of seeing influences the regimes of saying and thinking. The reigning images of violence in our society have constricted the theological space of God of Peace. The visibility of violence in the name of God has put limits to religious discourse centred on God of Peace. The diagrammatics of power shapes our theology. Being aware of this might reverse the situation. The visibility of dialogue can open modes of doing theology centred on God of Peace and bring peace among religions, particularly the Abrahamic faiths.

5.2.2 *Reading the Figural*

Deleuze demonstrates three ways of reading the figural: the correlative, the complementary and the collateral. He divides them depending on the relation of the visible with the expressible. The correlative reading examines the relationship between what can be said, with what can be seen. It is a relation between verbalization and spatialization. He explains that in this context, one has to examine how the legibility of the objects, concepts and subject emerge in the organization of discursive formations and vice versa. Deleuze shows how Foucault demonstrates the correlative reading in his book, *Birth of the Clinic*. Foucault critically examines how the legibility of human body diminishes. He tries to measure the transformation of the clinical gaze into a frozen state whereby the body is no longer legible or picturable by a totalizing look. This condition converts the body into a solid surface, and there is a need for medical instruments (stethoscope and other technologies of auscultation) to translate the invisible interior of the body into a recognizable sense. There are no other systems or signs that map, classify and document the hidden interior into legible space.¹⁸⁰ The visible also affects what is sayable. This analysis can assist in understanding how ontotheological thinking has positioned God as an absolute other and has disabled thinking from the immanent micro-eschaton. The complementary figural reading can be traced in the way Foucault describes the Panopticon.¹⁸¹ It illustrates the relation of the discursive and non-discursive as the institutional basis of power.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.p.59.

¹⁸¹ Michel Foucault, (1995) *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Vintage books pp.195-228.

Deleuze shows that the complementary is a spatial organization model and is central to Panopticon. He explains that it is not so much to see without being seen but is more an imposition of conduct on human collectively. It is achieved through re-division of space, serially ordering of time and creates an architectonic of space-time. Such understanding of theology takes God as an absolute other becomes the do nothing God of the philosophers. Such a notion of God might at some level legitimate the use of God for violence as God becomes the final reward giver for the enactors of violence. Hence, one needs to realign the space, re-order time and compose space-time of micro-eschaton which will lead to the horizon of the God of Peace. The collateral reading of the figural examines the relation of the grouping of discursive statements themselves. It means that there is a necessity to scrutinize how they emerge, organize and distribute themselves as a history of discourse.¹⁸² Deleuze demonstrates that by relating the sayable to the visible, one can examine the transformation of discourse in different epochs and also understand how the quality of knowledge and power informs the organization of discussion. This way of reading the figural can help in the understanding of how different theological regimes have brought about the thinking of God as one who rewards violence and inflicts terror on the innocent.

5.2.3 *The Figural and the Banopticon*

The visibility of the force based on theologies that present God as a one who will richly reward the perpetrators of violence and terror as can be seen among the Abrahamic religions has led to the construction of a discourse centred on the war on terrorism. The idea of global (in) security is steadily gaining more acceptability. The visible is influencing the sayable. The unease about global threat to peace has brought about tremendous transformations in global policing. This development has positioned the powerful nations of the West as exporters of peace. The order that they trade with the world has to be brought with weapons of war and security industry. Unfortunately, the discourse on freedom as well as security enforcement is curtailing civil liberties.

¹⁸² Michel Foucault, (2004) *Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, p.194.

The new security regimes have ushered in what is called Banopticon¹⁸³. Banopticon is different from Panopticon. Foucault explains that Panopticon produces self-policing subjects. Often surveillance and policing techniques include technologies of biometrics, sociological profiles of potentially dangerous behaviours making civilians vulnerable to oppressive regimes of securitization. This is why the arrival of the God of Peace becomes a moment of freedom that can derail the entanglement of humanity to banopticon as well as the panopticon. The God of Peace is a God of pan-eleuthero (god of all freedom).

5.3 SPATIAL PRACTICES AND THE FIGURAL

Space, spacing and en-spacement are political practices. These practices are located in embedded theologies.¹⁸⁴ As one enters the divine milieu, there is a need to travel into the divine space and to delve on proper practices that justify themselves based on theologies as well as open to critical analysis of the faiths that they generate.

5.3.1 *Trajectory of Divine in the milieu of the Figural*

There is no univocal discourse since saying and showing are inseparable. The text is always already figured. But the figural still operates at a different level, that of the unconscious desire and returns to the discourse as an infernal (with the character of hell) repetition, the force of transgression. Figure and text organize in what Deleuze calls the collateral space. He elaborates his view by teaching that when the eye and the position of the observer are sighted, the enunciative act is caught up in another relationship that is referred to as the collateral space. But the figural is not in any of these dimensions nor; it is represented by the discourse. It is not space but the desire or force. As non-spatial it is non-representational, it can be understood as the power of transgression that acts on area expressing itself in disordered forms and hallucinatory images. It is through these acts of un-forming that different dimensions of the figural may be defended as image, style and matrix (figure-image, figure-form, matrix-figure). The figure-image (Freud's conscious) is one that is of the realm of the seen whether actual or hallucinatory. Here, the figural operates as a transgression of deconstruction of the percept unrevealing the contours of the image. It concerns the

¹⁸³ Banopticon is the subjection of a section of people to systems of policing.

¹⁸⁴ Ritual are practices that are guided by theologies. Ethical practices are also grounded in theologies. These theologies unconsciously guide practices and hence, we call them embedded theologies.

dismantling of the recognizability of the object as an image which takes place through the multiplication, dissolution, subtraction or erasure of the defining outline so that the space it occupies vis-a-vis its immediate environment is blurred or confused.¹⁸⁵ The figure-form (Freud's preconscious) is unseen yet belongs to the architecture that set it in place. It is a regulating trace or gestalt of the image or scenography of representation¹⁸⁶. Here the figural runs counter to representation, image and form. It resides in all three spaces. Matrix is like the mother's womb. The loss of mother brings trauma, and the longing for her is drawn from lack (wish fulfilment) that the child feels. Matrix provides conditions for wish fulfilment through fantasies to cope with the absence.¹⁸⁷

5.3.2 *The Conditions of Possibility and Arrival of God of Peace*

Julia Kristeva's notion of Chora assists in entering into the common ground or space where the Abrahamic religions belong together. Kristeva presents Chora as pre-linguistic space of only partly structured proto-meaning that has to be left behind but is essential to the establishment of Euclidian space with its regularities, linearities, and regimes of presences and absences.¹⁸⁸ It is a pre-subjective maternal space and is a condition for the social area. The Chora becomes a figural space for the arrival of God of Peace who remains beyond the linguist moulds and forms the exclusive and exclusionary theologies that have developed among each of the Abrahamic religions. It suggests that the God of Peace primarily inhabits non-textual space. Through the use of Kristeva's terminology, the stiff and rigid theologies of Abrahamic faiths can be set aside and arrive at trans-theologies that are fluid and somewhat formless that will enable to bring the different Abrahamic religions into an embrace of love. Thus, Chora becomes an enabling condition for the synthesis of diversities and pluralities of Abrahamic faiths.

¹⁸⁵ Patrice Pavis, (2016).*The Routledge Dictionary of Performance and Contemporary Theatre*, trans. Andre Brown, London: Routledge, p.77.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.p.77

¹⁸⁸ Oliver Kelly, (1993) *Reading Kristeva: Unravelling the Double-Bind* Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, p.48.

5.3.3 The Arrival of God of Peace in the Speaking Subject

Kristeva presents the relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic as a continually shifting sight for the arrival of the subject in language. It is with the emergence of the speaking subject that there is the arrival of God through the discourse of theology. It is the ability to speak that enables humans to relate the semiotic with the symbolic. She demonstrates that semiotic is a compelling, desire-driven, the non-discursive dimension between language and humans. She likens it to the unconscious embodiment in literature and is close to what Lyotard calls as the figural. As the unconscious embodied in the language, it is present in and communicated through the symbolic or ordered, rational and law-governed Language. Kristeva traces a familiar rhythm with Plato's concept of Chora in Timaeus. She explains that Chora has a thetic or representative function that connects the bodily drives with the symbolic order.¹⁸⁹

The semiotic drives connect the bodily drives and seek satisfaction through modes offered by the symbolic order. Kristeva shows that human subject is dynamic and unstable, driven by the semiotic drives that create meaning and puts the same into question. This creative dynamism of the creative subject opens the human person to a mystical hermeneutics that allows for the primordial thinking of God. Hence, by looking at God from behind, we are paradoxically looking at the God from the front and this is why the God of Peace emerges through mystical hermeneutics.¹⁹⁰

5.4 TOWARDS THE MYSTICAL HERMENEUTICS

Mystical theology¹⁹¹ is an eminent critic of the reigning theologies bursting forth from the Abrahamic religions. It stays within the ambit of grace. The exhausted ontotheology has alienated humanity for the world and itself.

5.4.1 The Unbound God of Peace

The mystical hermeneutics that is sought to arrive at opens us to an unbound God, the God who is not a Jew, Christian, Muslim or Hindu etc. It is humans who are Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Hindus etc. The God of Peace stands above these particularisms yet is related to them all. The dynamic notion of Advaita is employed to

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Mystical hermeneutics is a perspective that sees one in the many. It sees God in everything but does not reduce everything to God.

¹⁹¹ Mystical theologies look for God's presence in the ordinary things and events in our life.

understand the relation and distinction of God with the Abrahamic faiths. The unbound God becomes a source of harmony among them. Neither of the Abrahamic religions can bind God to their specific creeds, theologies, soteriologies, dogma, traditions, scriptures, rituals, and institutions. The unbound God stands within and beyond in an advaitic relation with them all. Indeed, unbound God can become a source of peace to all Abrahamic religions. The unbound God is the God who will be, the God of the eschaton. Such a conceptualization of God can bring the entire humanity and the whole of creation into its embrace. The unbound God is a springboard from where unbound and all-embracing theologies, soteriologies and institutions can emerge. This theology of an open embrace of God is the need of the hour not just for the Abrahamic religions but the entire Human race. This theology of an open embrace might even have to abject the word God because it is already laden with the metaphysical underpinnings of ontotheological thinking. Perhaps the notion of an unbound God resonates with the notion of sacred and may assist or even welcome the atheists who may not have God but be open to the sacred.

5.4.2 The Unbound God of Radical Love

Ontotheological thinking enthrones the ego of humanity. The violence that is seen among religions is often a result of a clash of collective egos of humanity. Following the teachings of Lacan, one can understand how language, symbols and the images fail to capture the real. The real haunts the verbal, symbolic and the imaginary. It works like the figural. It is like the hidden other that haunts all the God thought and God talk. This primordial thinking of the divine opens the doorway to the God of unbound love. It requires us to abandon the reasons that rely on the false idols of the ontotheological thinking. It almost presents God as an atheist as proposed by Slavoj Zizek¹⁹². The debunking of this thinking can assist us to understand God's continuous outpouring and self-giving love for the created world and humanity.

The de-ontotheological thinking of God moves away from the logocentric thinking of God that thinks of God in categories of the present and absent. It views the death of God as a multiplication of divine presence, rather than as a final elimination or dissolution. It means the closure is not a single endpoint but an infinite number of points on a curved space. Hence, the ending is not the closing on a single point, but it opens

¹⁹²Slavoj Zizek, (2001) *On Belief*. London: Routledge

to a curved horizon that multiplies in an unbound God's love for humanity and the entire creation.

5.4.3 Towards a Fuller life of fullness in Unbound God

Zizek directs our attention to the point where desire transforms into drive. He asserts that from the shift of desire to drive, one passes from the lost object to losing as an object. The ontotheological thinking taught God under the rubric of desire, and hence, God becomes the transcendent that could be forever pursued and also becomes one who forever eludes our grasp. It is perhaps the reason why there are diverse and conflicting theologies that fail to satisfy the thirst of the divine among humanity. Besides, human life is not just life but is possessed by the drive to enjoy life in excess or abundance, and this is why there is a passionate attachment to the surplus which in a figural manner sticks out and derails the ordinary run of things. From the perspective of desire, enjoyment is forever delayed or deferred. However, there is always a longing for fullness and fuller life to come which means that satisfaction is derived from every repetition of failure derived through desire. Thus, although one fails (desire), there is the ability to transform this failure into success (drive). This is why the desire for God in different religions, particularly in the Abrahamic religions that are enthroned by an absolute God, remains forever absent and does not satisfy our desire for a life of fullness.

The very failure of God through the ontotheological categories becomes the basis to nurture our drive for the fuller life of fullness. Therefore, the primordial thinking of God that has been embarked upon does not just promise to bring about a new approach in understanding Abrahamic religions but also opens one to ways to enjoy fuller life in the fullness that our hearts are longing for since the dawn of humanity.

CHAPTER VI

THE POWER OF (DIS) ARTICULATION

The new approach that has been attempted to articulate in this study has the power of (dis)articulation.¹⁹³ This explosive power of (dis)articulation will deconstruct all reigning beliefs and theologies that are within and between Abrahamic religions. It will bring into effect a transformation in theologizing or bring about theologies that can be called as trans-theologies both within and between the Abrahamic faiths. All these theologies will remain open-ended and in the process for now. The new theologizing will occur in and through the revised vision of God as a regulative principle. Here, there is a need to draw a possible map of that scenario. Although the current study would not solve all the problems that are plaguing the global community, it would provide significant ways of addressing our human condition that is afflicted by violence and terror emanating mainly from the Abrahamic religions. It would enable the understanding of the violent present and promise a path of leading humanity into an era of peace and harmony.

6.1 MAKING SENSE OF THE DEATH OF ONTOTHEOLOGY

The death of God grounded in ontotheology has given birth to a vision of God beyond it. This new vision of God rooted in eschatology becomes a rupturing event both within and between Abrahamic religions.

6.1.1 The Rupture and the Space for the arrival of the Other Theologies

Any occurrence of rupture always makes room for the arrival of the novel, the other. The appearance of the other also adds explosiveness to the breach. The revision of God thinking not only produces a mediatory space in-between the Abrahamic religions for the arrival of trans-theologies but also creates room for (dis)articulations of reigning theologies and beliefs grounded in ontotheological thinking. The exploding

¹⁹³ All signifying practices like language, discourse, literature, painting, etc. are inter-textual and inter-related. They enhance as well as diminish/ undermine each other process of signification. Here we are concerned with the later. We contend that the re-thinking of God that we have tried to evolve here has the power to undermine already established onto-theological thinking.

space that is positioned in this context is allied to the Chora that is disruptive and would produce disruptive theologies.¹⁹⁴ The notion of Chora of is particularly important in this context because it moves beyond the ‘either/ or’ binary structure of thought and makes room for dynamic ecology for the emergence of other theologies that are called trans-theologies that would inhabit spaces both within and between Abrahamic religions. Like Chora, the space of rupture that is spoken about is a displaced space. It is not the space of ontotheology, rather it is a space that generates de-ontotheology.

6.1.2 The Space of Rupture is a Maternal Matrix

The space of rupture could be thought alongside the maternal Chora of Julia Kristeva. It is semiotic and remains at the level of mythos far away from the logos of Raimundo Pannikar.¹⁹⁵ Although all symbolic and linguistic expression is rooted in it, it is choristic in nature and not symbolic or linguistic. Besides, belonging to the choristic it exceeds the symbolic as well as linguistic frameworks, it means the space of rupture is extra-linguistic and is semiotic. Semiosis within its realm remains complexly fluid and cannot be ontotheological that is essentialist, fixated and static. Therefore, the space of rupture is a profoundly unstable and disruptive force. It is seen as a de-ontotheological space that remains far away from the regularity of ontotheological logos. It is a rupturing space and always remains in the making and not a finished product and hence becomes the matrix of all becoming and always remains open and undecidable, and this has been christened as the maternal matrix here. All human life is embedded in the choristic and space of rupture. The choristic mothers and nurtures, the symbolic and the linguistic.

6.1.3 Disruptive power of Trans-theologies

The trans-theological approach that have been attempted in this context has (dis)articulating power. As (dis)articulating, they will certainly disrupt already established theologies grounded into ontotheological thinking. This (dis)articulating power that erupts from the new way of thinking God opens one to the realm of the

¹⁹⁴ Theologies that dislocate and deconstruct other theologies.

¹⁹⁵ Pannikar has taught that mythos and logos are two modes of human awareness. They cannot be reduced one to the other as well as both are inseparable. Mythos is like the light that show everything by remaining in the back ground or being invisible.

possible. It brings about hybridization¹⁹⁶ both within and between the Abrahamic religions. The trans-theologies that are discussed here are hybridized theologies. As hybridizations, they are theologies that mark resistance to ontotheologies that afflict the Abrahamic religions. Hybridity opens up to the possibility of the synergistic process that would be set in a new way of thinking of God.

The newness that has been articulated in God thinking would bring about transformation in humans, cosmos and their relations to God and each other. This will transform the world that we inhabit for now and de-territorialize theologies that support violence and terror. It has the power to push us into new beginnings towards peace and harmony for our global community. Just like the Bible which brought about new ways of thinking and being, this new way of God thinking will bring about a certain transformation.

6.2 DEATH OF ONTOTHEOLOGY AND SCHIZOANALYSIS

Schizoanalysis leads to a departure from the dominant coordinates of thought. The death of ontotheology becomes a death of habitually imposed God vision that deflates all other alternate God thinking. Schizoanalysis becomes a means to understand the power of (dis)articulation of the revision of God thinking.

6.2.1 (*Dis*) locating Theological boundaries

Ontotheological thinking that is afflicting the theologies of the Abrahamic religions has constricted theological thought and generated theologies that justified the violence and terror around the globe. No novelty in theological thinking was allowed. Ontotheology has somehow removed the creative power of theological thought and kept it constricted to its paradigm. An alternate theological thought needs to be oedipalized at the altar of ontotheological thinking. Schizoanalysis¹⁹⁷ dismantles this habituated oedipalization of theology and allows new ways of thinking. The new thinking of God that is opened up (*dis*)locates familiar boundaries of theologizing that are springing forth from ontotheological thinking. This opening of closed theological thinking is

¹⁹⁶Homi Bhabha, (1994) *Location of Culture* London: Routledge. Homi K. Bhabha has coined a key concept of Hybridity. He says hybridity is the appearance of new cultural forms of multiculturalism.

¹⁹⁷ Eugene W. Holland, (1999) *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis* London: Routledge.

packed with the power of (dis)articulation that derails all theologies grounded in ontotheological thinking and makes room for new theologies rising from the revision of God thinking. This new vision of God becomes a Copernican revolution for the Abrahamic religions. It promises transformation both within and between the Abrahamic religions.

6.2.2 Anti-oedipal Theological Flows

The present ontotheologies have been profoundly dispiriting as they have opened the doors of danger for humanity by promoting violence and terror. The death of ontotheological thinking is emancipative to the entire humanity and it will lead to an outbreak of global peace. It will transform the shared socio-historical conditions. To experience the fruits of de-ontotheological thinking, therefore, there is a need to give up profoundly vital psychological conditioning that leads us to submit to our Oedipus complex. Ontotheology cuts off every alternate way of thinking of God and operates as the law of the father for all our theologies. Hence, theologies oedipalize and uphold ontotheology.

The new way of thinking of God that has been taken up is anti-oedipal. It contests the law of the father and opens to the new ways of thinking God which leads to the anti-oedipal theological flows. Such anti-oedipal theological flows would spring forth within and between the Abrahamic religions. If the leaders of Abrahamic religions ride these anti-oedipal theological waves, it will certainly reach a reconciliation among them, and they will become willing partners to bring about global peace to humanity.

6.2.3 Contestation of Phallocentric ontotheology

All ontotheological thinking is based on the name of the father and is indeed phallocentric, and this is why the reigning theologies in Abrahamic religions are phallocentric. They install the phallus¹⁹⁸ both within and between the Abrahamic

¹⁹⁸ Phallus has dominated the understanding of gender difference for times immemorial. It is culturally constructed as biologically given, it operates as a grand signifier that produces and maintains our patriarchal societies. Fortunately, today the phallus is recast and its symbolic power is denuded and is largely viewed as an abject object. This portrayal of phallus as an abject object has given a mortal blow to phallic theologies and new post-phallic theological thought is arising. Staying open to all forms of anti-phallic theologies that are fundamentally de-ontotheological, we also embrace other theologies that may emerge from alternate phallus but are onto-theological in their main trust. Our main aim is to castrate the singular onto-theological phallus that has produced onto-theology laden God vision which is a ground of violence in the world.

religions. One may even trace a sense of satisfaction emanating from these theologies. The new way of thinking of God assists us to contest the singular phallus that is considered to be theologically fertile and regard all theologies as legitimate only when they emerge from the foundation head of the ontotheological phallus. In place of the singular phallus that castrates every other alternate phallus, the rethinking of God opens us to the fertility of plural phalluses. Alternate theologies can then emerge from the alternate phallus.

6.3 DISCURSIVE FORMATION OF TRANS-THEOLOGIES

The notion of the discursive formation of Michel Foucault¹⁹⁹ is important to understand how the new thinking of the divine can generate discursive practices²⁰⁰ that in turn will generate trans-theologies that could transform the within and between the Abrahamic religions.

6.3.1 Discursive Formations, Discursive Practices and Trans-theologies

Discursive formations refer to authoritative speech acts or acts of enunciation that relate to one another in some coherent way in such a manner that the elements of which are brought about and regulated by the rules of formation. These rules of formation that regulate discursive formations are not to be traced in the thoughts of the human. The rules are to be found in the way simultaneity and association work with the authoritative statements, by co-existing these statements form a discursive formation and guide human behaviour. These statements are organized by forms of succession (field of concomitance and the field of memory), forms of co-existence (field of presence) and procedures of intervention. This means it is the statements that actively constitute, regulate, and are regulated by discursive formations, as opposed to merely

¹⁹⁹ Robert Young, (1981) Introduction to Foucault ‘Order of Discourse’ in *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader* London: Routledge and Kagan Paul, pp. 51-78.

²⁰⁰ Gerard A Hauser and Amy Grim, (2004) *Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement* London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates and Publishers. Discursive practices, as developed by Foucault, refers to the practices (or operations) of discourses, meaning knowledge formations, not to linguistic practices or language use. The focus is on how knowledge is produced through plural and contingent practices across different sites and what it does to our society. It deals with what lies within the true and how it affects our society. It means discursive practices indicate what we are to do. It is not about how people write or speak. This means discursive practices are practices of discourses. Thus, the de-ontotheologization of theology would bring about new practices, new way of being in the world. These practices may further spawn new emancipative theologies that we call transtheologies.

being group speech acts that co-exist in some observable, intelligibly describable way. It is these discursive formations that generate discursive practices. Therefore, the revision of God thinking beyond the ontotheological boundaries would open space for new discursive formations both within and between Abrahamic religions. These discursive formations will generate discursive practices that would construct trans-theologies that would transform Abrahamic religions and bring global peace to humanity.

6.3.2 *Discursive Break and Trans-theologies*

Discursive formations are systems of dispersions, external conditions or co-existing statements that govern the rules of discourse. Discursive relations are not internal relations between discursive statements but they explain the limits of the discursive formation.²⁰¹ They hold together some statements and mark their boundaries. Trans-theologies are hoped to emerge from the outbreaks of such discursive limits or meltdowns. They arise from the breakdown of the old condition of knowledge building. It is proposed that with the death of ontotheology the past circumstances that generated ontotheologies are going to die. The end of ontotheology will become a discursive break that would usher in new trans-theologies within and between Abrahamic religions, and this requires time that would let the revision of God thinking that has been developed to produce the fruits that it promises. In the time it will stimulate and invest theologizing, and there will be trans-theologies springing forth.

The new discursive field would normalize and naturalize the new God thinking that has been worked out and it will become a discursive regulation for theologizing within, between and beyond Abrahamic religion. It is bound to happen because the discourse determines the boundaries of thought. De-Ontotheological thinking does have its limitations, but when it becomes central to the discursive formations, new ways of doing theologies / trans-theologies would follow.

²⁰¹ Alec McHaul, Wendy Grace, (2002) *A Foucault Primer: Discourse Power and the Subject*, London: Routledge, pp. 26-56.

6.3.3 Discursive Formations and Discursive opportunities for Trans-theologies.

The trans-theological approach enables us to capture the power of (dis)articulation present in the new way of thinking of God. It is expected to open ideas on how one can deliberately work with the revised form of thinking of God. Discursive formations offer discursive opportunities that can consciously explore and develop de-ontotheological thinking. It would need one to positively promote a new way of thinking God within the new discursive field. By carefully watching and nurturing the discursive formations of theologies grounded in the new way of thinking of God, one would be able to find opportunities to take the new way of thinking on into the discursive practices of doing theologies. These discursive practices of doing beliefs would then enable the creation of new theologies that can be called trans-theologies that would redefine the way one relates to God, humanity and the cosmos. It will take a sustained effort to make the new thinking of God into discursive practices of doing theologies that would prepare and nurse the germinating grounds for trans-theologies.

6.4 THE DIVINE MILIEU AND TRANS-THEOLOGICAL

The de-ontotheological thought has the power of effecting trans-visualization of the relation of God, Human and Cosmos. Besides, it would bring about trans-valuation²⁰² of values and become a harbinger of new morality for humanity. Nietzsche displays this new vision when he says, “Man himself becomes the determiner of values; he does not require to be approved of; he passes the judgment: What is injurious to me is injurious in itself; he knows that it is only himself who confers honour on things; he is a creator of values.”²⁰³

6.4.1 God, Human and Cosmic Matrix

The ontotheological thinking seriously delimits the notion of God. The ontotheology dissolves into idolatry wherein God is unlimitedly present to the humans and the cosmos. God's manner of being is full concerning humans and the universe.

²⁰² Fredrick Nietzsche thought that God being the highest value, would result in an inversion of value hierarchy on the basis of his demise. It is thought that on the basis of the ruins of ontotheological thinking, a new value hierarchy would be inaugurated.

²⁰³ Fredrick Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Chap. IX, No. 260. See file:///C:/Users/Victor-pc/Documents/Nietzsche%20Friedrich%20-%20Beyond%20Good%20and%20Evil%20%20(,%20guttenberg).pdf accessed on 30/5/2019.

The notion of God cannot be closed and determined by the precision of language. It remains symbolic, poetic and ever open. One cannot merely anthropomorphize the divine.²⁰⁴ The being of God is dynamic in its relation to humans and the cosmos. Hence, in the most fundamental sense, one cannot strictly conceive the divine but only experience it. The divine cannot be named as it could lead to blasphemy and idolatry.

The de-ontotheological thinking stays away from this error of ontotheology, and it opens up the dynamic inter-related matrix of the divine. It is God who keeps humanity and the cosmos in his embrace, hence it can be described as a ‘being-for’. God as a ‘being for’ becomes a giving God, who gives grace, love and peace and remains entirely unthinkable. It means that the mystery of the divine cannot be wholly dispelled even when the humans and cosmos stay in his loving embrace. Hence, all trans-theological would remain open and are not closed or idolized.

6.4.2 Trans-valuation and Tans-moralities

The new way of thinking of the divine will change and transform our value hierarchy because God is the highest value. Once the notional content of the highest value changes, the value hierarchy will also bring in new moralities. When the highest ideal is transformed, its pursuit will also change. Nietzsche has already taught about trans-valuation. This unique way of God thinking is a protest against the ideas of violence and terror emanating from the Abrahamic religions. The eclipse of these ideals is possible only by a rethinking of God from the de-ontotheological position. This new thinking will position a new model that will promote peace and harmony. Hence, it is hoped that peace and love will become the cornerstone of new morality shaping out of the latest thinking of God. The effort to free our thinking from objectifying God will also assist the Abrahamic religions to emancipate them from the tendency to treat humans as objects. This objectification of humans is seen in the way innocent humans are used to promoting violence and terror in the world. Hence, de-objectification is part of de-ontotheological thinking which would result in new ways of being-in-the-world. The trans-theologies will produce new trans-moralities both within and between Abrahamic religions.

²⁰⁴ Think God in an image and likeness of Humans.

6.4.3 Trans-theologies and Counter-hegemony Epistemologies

The ontotheological thinking promotes homogenization of thought, and as a result, it becomes the destroyers of plural ways of thinking. It supports either/or binary logic. De-ontotheological thinking becomes narrow, one-dimensional reasoning and amplifies alternate ways of thinking and knowing. It keeps all epistemologies in its embrace, particularly those that are under-valued and under-recognized epistemologies. Hence, de-ontotheological thinking becomes a counter epistemology for the reigning binary logic²⁰⁵ that controls the thought process. This new counter-hegemony epistemologies²⁰⁶ or trans-epistemologies will also become an antidote to a linear time dominated thinking epistemologies. Authentically, the emergence of counter-hegemony epistemologies will become a form of epistemic justice that would then produce righteousness to humans and the created world. The prevention of the death of alternate ways of thinking would also prevent the destruction of alternative forms of being and belonging to the world.

The new way of God thinking would produce a Copernican revolution transforming and widening the epistemological embrace of our thinking. This expansion of thinking would undoubtedly change the ways of being in the world both within and between Abrahamic religions.

²⁰⁵ A strict either/or way of thinking.

²⁰⁶ Counter-hegemony epistemologies are those that contest and deconstruct epistemologies that produces social as well theological hegemony.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This inquiry has a (dis)articulatory power as it can call all established articulations and belief systems of the Abrahamic religions into question and challenge them to rearticulate their positions. (Dis) articulatory power that is highlighted is not just a recognition of multiple interpretations of a single utterance but one that is concerned with the most significant impact of a single utterance on the already existing set of statements that make a discourse. The de-ontotheological thinking that is employed here has a dialogical (dis)articulatory power; it attempts to re-position God through the privileged window of the eschaton. Such a repositioning of God will impact the position, value and meaning of one God, one Book and one Prophet in the order of things of the Abrahamic religions. It also (dis)articulates the dominant positions, value and meaning of one God, one book, one prophet among the Abrahamic faiths.

The (dis)articulatory power is set free through juxtaposition with already established competing meanings. The reason (dis)articulation is proposed here is dialogical. It is a dialogue *ad intra* which calls upon the established views, beliefs, meanings, values, symbols, rituals, scriptures and theologies to come together. This mutual dialogue calls for mutual unlearning and learning. Here, a mutual exchange would bring about a cross-fertilization leading to a fusion of horizons. It means that the (dis)articulatory power is a double-edged sword. It invites for an intrareligious dialogue that stays in a continued active mode and remains mutually inter-penetrative. This dialogue is not a Sisyphean task without an end and any progress but is purposeful and is geared towards the promotion of mutual understanding, dialogue and peace. Although the (dis)articulatory power can be both a poison and a remedy, it is employed here therapeutically to bring peace and healing to a world ridden with violence and strife. It is also hoped that the elocutionary force of the revisioning of God will bring about intra and inter-dialogue among the Abrahamic religions.

The (dis)articulatory powers that are employed here will displace, and de-territorialize established views, beliefs, meanings, values, symbols, rituals, scriptures, texts and theologies already in operation within the framework of Abrahamic religions.

Hence, emancipative displacement of these theologies, views, meanings, symbols etc. are chosen to arrive at this goal. The elocutionary force that emanates from this investigation, as well as the one that will flow from the intra and inter-dialogue of Abrahamic religions, has the power to revisit already established positions of the Abrahamic faiths and enables them to bring forth peace amidst them and in the world at large. Hence, the displacement and de-territorialization that are let loose are in favour of replacement and territorialization of reconsidered beliefs, meanings, values, symbols, rituals, scripture, text and theologies that would assist humanity to usher in peace.

The reconsidered God leads to the hermeneutics of reconsideration. Such a hermeneutics relates to the world already inhabited by the believers of the Abrahamic religions. It calls into questions all the pre-judgements and pre-suppositions and opens new pathways to think of them again. When this pre-given or received basis of all human life as taught by Abrahamic religions is brought in dialogue with the new envisioned God, a new enabling and emancipative theologies, anthropologies, ethical orientations and cosmologies might arise and bring forth peace to the global human community. Thus, this intra and inter-dialogue could influence each of the religions from within and would also transform them. The hermeneutics of reconsideration is based on the hermeneutical circle that already exists between the reconsidered vision of God rooted in the eschaton and the world inhabited by the believers of Abrahamic religions. The new hermeneutics of God that produces trans-theologies promises to bring about revised theologies from the privileged vantage point of the eschaton, and this privileged vantage point of eschaton becomes the hermeneutics of reconsideration. Such a hermeneutics of reconsideration rethinks the relation of God within and between the Abrahamic religions.

The revisioning of God as the ‘God who would be’ emerges from the privileged vantage point of the eschaton. The eschaton manifests God’s final and the fullest manifestation of God. Thus, God who is fully revealed in all totality becomes an illuminating light. God as the origin, sustainer, and summit of human life. Our God thinking from the privileged position of eschaton becomes a hindsight or retrospective light that will brighten all beliefs within each of the Abrahamic religions as well as enables one to envision a new God's vision between them. This revisioning of God

promises to become a springboard for trans-theologization both within and between the Abrahamic religions. The change that is expected in God thinking could lead to a Copernican revolution that would bring about a new vision of the scriptures and their interpretations. It is also hoped that the unique insight emerging from this investigation would revise the position the place and the authority of each of these three Abrahamic religions.

The trans-theologies that are being proposed here are akin to the transvaluation that Nietzsche envisioned that the death of God would bring about. The transformation of God vision will undoubtedly transform the value hierarchy. Such a trans-valuation would change our ethics and aesthetics. Besides trans-valuation, it is believed that transformed God thinking would bring about transformed theologization (trans-theologization) both within and between the Abrahamic religions. Such a trans-theologization would usher in theologies, anthropologies and cosmologies. The trans-theologization is a fruit of the fusion of horizons of the Abrahamic faith and the revision of God that has been tried to develop in the context of this inquiry. The impact of this trans-theologization will be both individual and communitarian. The effect will vary in the degree to which both the individual or the community allows itself to be absorbed by the elocutionary force of the new God thought. Just like playing a game or piece of music lets the player get absorbed or immersed into the game or the musical score so too the trans-theologization can become flesh and blood both individually and collectively in different degrees within and between the Abrahamic religions.

The fact that the Abrahamic religions inescapably belong to each other, will allow trans-theologies that flow from the new God thinking to bring about new ways of belonging to God and humanity within and between them. These new ways of participating in God's eschaton would promote a life attuned to micro-eschaton and therefore, it is expected to bring about peace and harmony. The God that has been thought again is an after God. Hence, the theologies that would follow from an after God are also after dogmas and therefore are genuinely trans-theologies. The new ways of belonging to God and humanity would be based on these after theologies, and that is why they have been called as after ways which would, in turn, become the basis for harmony and peace among the Abrahamic religions.

Is Synthesis of World Religions Possible?

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Introduction

In asking the captioned question, the expectation is an affirmative answer, which many may find difficult to accept. Of course, prior to committing to an answer, some might like to seek a few clarifications regarding the intended meaning/s of certain phrases in the question. For example, what is the meaning of the term synthesis? Or, which religions are to be included in the scope of the term ‘world religions’? As regards the former, there could be several ways of understanding the term ‘synthesis’—of which one is, to find at least one ‘identical’ (metaphysical-) characteristic that runs through all the members of a group of religions chosen for synthesis even if its ‘form’ (as given in relation to ‘specific root-essence’ yielded through unification of cognitions of the Universe) of appearance may vary. In this view, the ‘identical characteristic’ has to be of fundamental nature (without being reducible further) as, for example, in terms of a metaphysical entity, like ‘Subject Consciousness’. This is absolutely unlike social feature/s (etc.)—even if some of such features maybe common or identical, and appear on certain uniform background in a social synthesis. This is because these social features—whether or not ‘fundamental’—are derivative and secondary, as they (or most of the originally ordained ones) are dependent primarily on the metaphysical scheme. Hence, these social features cannot lay a claim for an enduring and foundational synthesis of religions. As regards the second question, the ‘world religions’ will include both the Eastern and the Western religions, like Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and so forth. It is for the author desirous of synthesizing to make an appropriate choice of religions that s/he wishes to synthesize.

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This article aims at discussing the possibility of metaphysical synthesis—in the above sense of identifying an ‘identical characteristic’ with its ‘form’, where the synthesis visualized is of Buddhism, Hinduism (three Vedānta schools), Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, we reiterate that the articulation of our concern herein is not exhaustive but only suggestive and indicative.

Some Doubts against Synthesis and Counter-Doubts

Some may doubt the very existence of metaphysics in religions, as in Judaism, or Islam or Christianity. Alternatively, many may find it preposterous to assume Vedāntic schools as giving out distinct religions, especially so with respect to Advaita Vedānta. This is because we know that in Advaita the God (Saguna Brahman) is an inferior reality (apara) in relation to the ultimate, Nirguna Brahman (para).

A religious ‘God’ cannot be an inferior reality. Hesitation to construe religions as having metaphysics, especially within Semitic tradition, is due mainly to a lopsided approach to religions as mostly from theological (or other) points of view with scant regard for comprehensive view of different religions and their logical location in such a view. Similarly, ‘religions’ involved in the Eastern philosophies such as Vedānta have been side-lined. Most importantly, the idea of logical continuity in religions (Semitic) or in philosophical thoughts (Eastern) - either in the same tradition or in different traditions—has been hardly searched for. This has led to construe each religion, or philosophical thought (such as Schools of Vedānta and Buddhism) as separate and isolated island without positive transaction whatsoever either among themselves or with others, from the same or different traditions, respectively. However, no dearth is seen in criticizing the others’ views; some of which are glaringly superficial and misplaced. Obviously, never has been a logical continuity traced, especially in a modern endeavour with respect to the classical literature. Also, the modern mindset in research on religions has generally exposed the hidden bias through their covert claims of superiority to a particular religion or philosophical thought. Such non-objective research has not even realized the rudimentary need to grasp the basic reasons for the differences and/or commonality in religions or philosophies, before making such a claim for superiority. Then, in this context, metaphysically speaking, nobody seems to have asked the question why Jesus had to incarnate at all, if Moses (Judaism) had already provided the final word to all the questions of God and the like. Likewise, why

Muhammad Paigambar's advent at all after Jesus. The same holds true in Vedāntic tradition - why Rāmānuja after Sāṅkāra, or Madhva after Rāmānuja? Or, is it that succeeding Ācāryas were of lesser intellectual calibre so as to miss the point/s made by the previous Ācāryas? Many a time, the enterprise of synthesizing ends up with identifying, at the most, some common features; especially so in the non-metaphysical domains such as social life, customs and traditions, and so forth. Of course, there is nothing wrong in this kind of an enterprise as an ordinary philosophical programme. However, such an enterprise does not provide lasting logical solutions either for assimilation of the core metaphysical concepts of God and soul that are indispensable for any religion or for the derivability of the postulated social concepts themselves.

Misleading Pseudo Definition of a Religion

One of the major—but undesirable—definitions of religion has been to identify a religion through the characteristic of One book (scripture), One prophet and One God (OOOGod). In other words, the emphasis has been on One God—the monotheism—as preached by a single book and a Prophet. With this deadly stroke, Hinduism gets eliminated outright as a religion of the same kind as an Abrahamic religion is. Obviously, in this scheme, Hinduism does not fit as a ‘monotheistic’ religion. Without disregarding the immensity of plurality of Gods in Hinduism, we can say that this mindless characterization at once has dissuaded one and all from treating the Western and the Eastern traditions on par in any way whatsoever. The differential treatment meted out, in turn, has created an unbridgeable psychological chasm between the Eastern and the Western religions, as if the twain would never meet. More importantly, the OOOGod permanently shuts the door off on the face of metaphysics both in the Western and Indian traditions, in favour of theology since scriptures are held to belong to exclusively theological (spiritual or mystical) and liturgical domains. In such a state of affairs, there is some sort of unwritten claim for superiority to monotheism hidden in the OOOGod of Semitic tradition, despite the problem of Trinity - a perennial puzzle in Christianity, for example; also, despite the riddle of how two or three different monotheistic Gods of Judaism, Christianity and Islam could all be true at the same time. If monotheism alone is superior-most theory, then, obviously, all non-monotheistic religions must be inferior. Add to this, the possibility of superiority-inferiority among different monotheisms of the Semitic religions themselves! Same points hold true of all

monotheistic claims in the Vedānta or Eastern religions as well. Of course, there are some good exceptions to the above OOOGod characterization about Hinduism that speak of transaction of ideas between India and the West.²⁰⁷

Hinduism as Religion: Vedānta its Metaphysical Core

Generally, in Hinduism, there are more than one God and one Text, and so on. Similarly, Hinduism does not have a monolithic metaphysics in the same sense as a given Western religion might be said to have. As such, OOOGod is a Western conception and appears to have been forced on Hinduism. Can ‘Hinduism’ be considered as a religion at all even if we reject Western characterization? We think that to understand the situation in Hinduism, we should configure the conceptual categories with the delineation between the metaphysical and non-metaphysical. This would at once yield us Vedānta as the religio-metaphysical core of Hinduism. How do we go about with Vedānta itself in order to see the ‘religions’ in it?

Definition of Religion Through Continuity of Two Absolutes—Impersonal and Personal

From the strict metaphysical context of Vedānta, the most fundamental categories of a religion are the ‘worshipper’ and the ‘Worshipped’. This idea can be clearly seen when we juxtapose Advaita and Viśistādvaita, for example. In Advaita, there is the subject-alone as the ultimate (Impersonal Positive Absolute), which is not an object, hence cannot be worshipped. In the latter, the ultimate reality is ‘God’ the highest object (Personal Absolute) that is capable and worthy of being worshipped by a subject. This hints at the logical continuity, from Advaita to Viśistādvaita and later, to the Dvaita. Buddhism (especially Vijnānavāda) forms the psychological backdrop for the logical exposition of Advaita itself. As such, Buddhism provides the Impersonal Negative Absolute.

No one can truly ‘worship’ oneself by himself, if one’s self itself is the ultimate, except perhaps as a metamorphosed Narcissus. If so, in a strict metaphysical sense, neither Advaita nor Buddhism fits in as a religion. Buddhism has its logical continuity in Advaita. In other words, there is transformation of Impersonal Negative Absolute to

²⁰⁷ See for example Elst (2011).

Impersonal Positive Absolute, and later from Impersonal Positive Absolute to Personal Absolute, from Buddhism, to Advaita and to Viśistādvaita, respectively. Finally, the Personal Absolute undergoes a transformation to make it almost look like ‘one among the humans’. Precisely in Viśistādvaita, the distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped has been made in logical continuity of the Advaita. The requirement of the two categories of worshipper and the worshipped for a religion qua religion could be applied even on Semitic religions successfully and unravel their deeply hidden metaphysics.

In a religious context, neither of the two categories of worshipper and the worshipped could be of unreal nature. The ontology of Advaita has put forward the unreal nature of the Universe. This had to be modified to establish a ‘real Universe’, and a ‘real individual soul’, in the context of Viśistādvaita. As such, religion of ‘Viśistādvaita and its Personal Absolute are logical consequences of establishing ‘reality’ to the Universe. Thus, a ‘real object of worship, God’, and ‘real worshipper’ come into being. This is unlike the Advaitic ‘Object-totality’, viz., illusory world [including dreams, (etc.).] Viśistādvaita, disagrees with Māyā of Advaita and establishes real Universe and real individuals, and a God as an object of worship.

Further, when the categories of ‘worshipper’ and the ‘Worshipped’ are retained as defining characteristic of religions, the Western OOOGod, more or less, comes true of Hinduism as well. This is clearly so within the different schools of Vedānta as each school has one founding Ācārya, one book as foundational source (prasthānatraya) and one God. In that case, the Vedāntic philosophies, viz., Advaita, Viśistādvaita, and Dvaita, could be considered as three distinct monotheistic religions/philosophies or religio-philosophies. Cumulatively, they indeed are representors of Hinduism as a religion and philosophy. When we trace these Vedāntic thoughts to the Vedas as a comprehensive repository of Hindu thought, it is possible to consider Hinduism as a special sort of synthesis of all the schools of Vedānta at the core. Buddhism, in this view, may be considered as sprouting from the very seeds of the Vedas, in order to provide the most fundamental counter perspective—the ultimate as a Śūnya, which, however, is a distinct psychological possibility, rather than ontological reality. For an effective and meaningful branching of the Vedānta schools into three distinct religions,

one has to observe certain conditions, for example; one has to stop tracing these three Vedāntic systems to their purported common source, the Vedas (or prasthānatraya, the foundation trio, viz., the Brahma Sūtras, the Bhagavad Gītā and the Upanisads). In this view, the specific bhāṣya will act as the ‘One Book’. In other words, one should not think of oneness of the three systems via media the common source, viz., the foundation-trio, or the Vedas, if one wishes to retain their distinctness. Then, this will yield three apparently unconnected Weltanschauungen each—all of which can at once be construed as both religionistic and philosophical/metaphysical at their core.

Of course, in the case of Advaita, we will have to effect certain further conceptual modifications in order to fit it well into the schema of religions. This is necessitated because Advaita’s ultimate reality is an Impersonal Absolute, which is the pure subject itself (where the individual self is identical with the ultimate reality, Brahman.) In order to accomplish conversion of Advaita into religion, at a slightly lower level from the pure subject, a cosmic subject, who is attributed with the functions of God, is conceptualized in Advaita. At this stage, the individual subject is still maintaining its distinction from the ultimate. Therefore, the individual subject could treat the cosmic subject as the God.

Apparently, Christianity had sought to encompass within it all the three views of Universe—Sustenance, Destruction and Creation—corresponding to Dvaita, Advaita and Viśistādvaita, respectively. It is while dealing with Destruction view, Christianity appears to face an Advaita-like situation, where religion appears to take a back-seat. In order to grasp the actual situation, contents of Apocalypse or the Book of Revelation must be read with the leads provided by pyramid formation. The construction of pyramid itself calls for a pre-knowledge of the construction of both the cubes of Ālayavijñāna and Advaita. In fact, it is the Advaitic cube (or the resulting dimensionless point [DP])—with slight conceptual modification—is what is conceived at the apex of the pyramid, known as capstone, or the first cube (FC).

The distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped being ‘completely’ erased out during the destruction of the Universe, due to the ‘merger’ of the individual subject with the Ultimate Nirguna Brahman (merger in the sense of Advaitic identity,

i.e. $x = x$, and no room for ‘y’, the material Universe), no religion truly obtains, at that stage. However, from Christianity/Viśistādvaita perspective of real creation, the singularity of Advaitic Brahman in the first cube cannot be accepted, as it will defeat the idea of religion and the idea of the reality of the Universe. Thus, the Brahman required for creation cannot be Nirguna, nor can it be a ‘Singular entity’ like the Advaitic one. Here, we find the conceptual seeds for creating a real Universe, unlike the illusory Universe of Advaita. Thus, the ultimate FC (or DP) or the Saguna Brahman, contains two elements, consciousness and matter (potentially). This idea of ‘two-in-one’ is represented through the use of a vertical line drawn over ‘0’ (zero) and is commonly known as ϕ (phi) to represent religion.

Christianity, however, is not blind to the Advaitic Subject. Such a subject appears to be hinted at in its Apocalypse. In any case, the overarching dominance of creation orientation for Christianity cannot be denied. Thus, the first book of Genesis gives out the philosophy of creation. A pyramid is visualized for this creation philosophy. At the belly of the pyramid, we have the incarnation of Jesus, as almost in the sustenance mode of the Universe, but up to four dimensions instead of 24D. This gives out the sustenance philosophy. In this way, all three views of the Universe seem to have been dealt with by Christianity.

The non-or under-representation of Advaitic strand in an overt manner in Christianity seems to have ended up in getting itself ticked away as a true synthesis of three views of the Universe. Another reason seems to be the absence of representation of Buddhism, which is the most fundamental and essential psychological background for every successive philosophy.

However, the absolute supremacy of Impersonal Absolute as ultimate reality and the illusoriness of the Jagat (Universe) including the God in Advaita are all logical consequences of unification of cognitions of the changing Universe in a particular manner. While the individual self is absolutely identified with the unchanging Universal self (which is completely real), the Universe through unification of cognitions is held to be of lesser reality (rather than no reality of Buddhism). Thus, the Universe in Advaita is sadasadvilakṣaṇa. However, the Universe in Advaita exists

eternally in the form of a ghost. This is equivalent to saying that Universe exists as a permanently destroyed entity for the Brahman, yet appears to keep moving in its different modes—creation, sustenance and destruction—within the body of the ultimate reality perennially for the unrealized. In any case, the Advaitic ultimate reality itself is unconnected to such a Universe. Universe, considered as ‘matter’ is, therefore, an illusion, as it does not have a locus of its own, other than being ‘dependent’ upon some other thing, the consciousness, the subject.

As hinted above, it is possible to have a smooth logical movement between Impersonal and Personal Absolute/s and vice versa. In fact, similar ‘Impersonal’ and ‘Personal’ Absolutes play crucial role even in the Semitic religions including the synthetic religion, Islam.

Buddhism

As regards Buddhism, it is a unique case and has already the well-known distinction of being both a religion and a philosophy in a completely acknowledged sense in the academic circles. In Buddhism, a similar situation akin to Advaita occurs with regard to its own Absolute. Hence, in its strictest sense, Buddhism cannot be a religion, since at the ultimate level there is neither the ‘worshipper’ nor the ‘Worshipped’ in it. However, the Buddha himself being the discoverer of the Buddhist ultimate, and which ultimate is logically identical to the Buddha, the Buddha has been kept on the pedestal of God by the followers. In this way, personification of what is essentially non-personifiable—the ultimate of Buddhism, the Śūnya, has been successfully carried out by identifying it with the Buddha himself. Hence, Buddhism as a religion has Buddha (or some such entity that is assigned to represent the ultimate Śūnya of Buddhism) at the central place as an object of worship, even though the whole affair is ad hoc and provisional, i.e. it lasts only till the worshipper himself realizes the inner core of himself as Buddha, the Absolute Nothing, Śūnya.

Buddhism, with its Absolute Nothing, actually constitutes a logical and an indispensable background for Advaita. The main difference between the two, however, is that there is no reality to anything, including both to the Universe (Object) and the Self (Subject), in Buddhism, while it is not so in Advaita. Buddhism conceives

something like ‘ontological barrenness’ everywhere—a sort of ‘Barren Impersonal Absolute’. Such an Absolute has—and can have—no self-reflexive knowledge of itself, nay it does not even have any sort of existence as such. This is entirely unlike Advaita.

Yet this so-called barren Absolute of Buddhism finds its inclusion in Semitic synthesis, by an ingenious stroke of modification of such barrenness into one’s own self as a metaphorical Śūnya, i.e. infinitesimally small entity, tending to zero. After all, a really Absolute Nothing that is supposed to include one’s own self’s negation can only be psychological and never logical. This is because the denier of the self is himself the self. And this psychologism may be removed only by ontologizing the psychological ‘Absolute Nothing’ as ‘an infinitesimally small logico-ontological something’. Thus, there is never an absolute zero of oneself, rather there can only be an infinitesimally small entity tending to zero.

Semitic Religions

Semitic religions indeed contain deeper metaphysics in them than what meets the eye. This fact will become clear when we examine the leading symbols—such as for example, Christian Cross, Pyramid, Kaaba, Judaist Sephirot, and so forth—of these religions from a metaphysical point of view. It is a fact that so far no philosophico-mathematical analysis of leading symbols in Semitic Tradition has been carried out with a metaphysical eye.

Due to the two aspects of religion and philosophy being in them, they are religio-philosophical thoughts containing in them deeper metaphysical elements. Metaphysics or ontology is a branch of philosophy that concerns itself with the fundamental question of what there is and includes both the physical and beyond, where the latter is generally the domain of consciousness. Thus, both the physical and the metaphysical are elements that ontologically ‘exist’.

‘Dissolution Mechanism/s’ (DMs)

This is a term which may be interchangeably used for religions, because in essence, the religio-philosophical thoughts are understood basically as mechanisms designed to

secure dissolution (or termination) of social contract, with explicit metaphysical statements regarding the aftermath of such dissolution with regard to the state of the individual soul. The design of the Universe, cognitions of the ‘changing’ Universe, ultimate consciousness (or its absence), and so forth, are all logical products of the engagement with the termination of social contract.

Each religion would deal with dissolution and its aftermath as the paramapuruṣārtha (the supreme goal—the sumnum bonum). To articulate one’s own view of what logically follows when the dissolution occurs, one offers a full-fledged metaphysics. And in consonance with it the author modifies the meaning/s of the three terms of normal (General) Social Contract in order to facilitate the ultimate dissolution of the contract. The explanation of the state of termination itself will constitute the fourth term of the social contract. Thus, a view of the Universe and the goal of life, etc., are obtained in a DM. In this scheme, more specifically, the viśesadharmas are dealt with and re-stated by it. A Social Contract without metaphysics is a general one. Alternatively, the one which has the provision for liberation, etc., is a DM or specific Social Contract. Our understanding that a religion is essentially a DM or specific Social Contract would also facilitate sketching the metaphysical commonality and continuity among religions, along with social commonality and its derivability. More of Social Contract will be discussed a little later Inclusivity/Synthesis, Apparent Synthesis, Common Ground, Views of Universe

Inclusivity and Synthesis.

In fact, in the West, Islam itself is a result of synthesis. This has been under cloud for a long time now. This point demonstrates the classical existence of synthesis. Modern and contemporary craving for synthesis requires hardly any argument. Before moving further, let us note that there are two types of religions—(1) non-synthetic, and (2) synthetic. Islam is a synthetic religion. Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism (Vedānta schools, when taken separately) are non-synthetic. The main external physical feature that distinguishes a synthetic religion from that of non-synthetic is the two distinct types of worship places. For example, Islam’s mosque is for daily worship and the Kaaba is the final place for pilgrimage. This feature of Islam clearly shows that it is a synthetic religion. This feature of two worship places occurs

even in Sikhism and Baha'I, and hence they too are synthetic religions. These features constitute the formal symbols and hence, call for a deeper philosophico-mathematical analysis. These three synthetic religions have accomplished their synthesis, with three distinct foci regarding the processes of the Universe—Creation, Destruction and Sustenance, respectively.

And as a matter of fact, in some sense, each chronologically succeeding religio-philosophical thought could be considered as synthesis, provided the crucial metaphysical elements of relevant preceding thought/s could be found in it in an ‘inclusive’ manner with distinct designs of Universe being actually expressed in its exposition. However, more often than not, we come across the absence of such inclusivity as to provide all distinct designs of Universe of previous systems, in the non-synthetic religions mentioned above, as for example, in Christianity. Christianity may be called as a semi-synthetic or non-synthetic religion as it attempts at mere inclusivity without the respective designs of the views purportedly included in its synthesis.

Although inclusivity, in the sense of including designs of Universe, is an important feature of synthesis, by itself it cannot present a synthetic view. Rather, a true synthesis must contain in it, first, an identical common ground of all its constituent religions. Generally, this common ground itself is embedded in the Buddhist psychological Nothing. In synthesis, different designs of Universe, which are the results of ‘unification of cognitions’ of the Universe must be well connected. All this happens on the ‘Common Ground’. Usually the ‘Common Ground’ is ultimate Lord, the personal God, or Impersonal Absolute, as the case may be.

The Eastern religio-philosophical thoughts are no exception to mere ‘inclusivity’ without actual synthesis in the manner sketched above. Thus, the credit goes to Islam as the first serious, successful and explicit metaphysical synthesis involving apparently disparate DMs. Islam, comprehends all views of Universe, in physical terms, backed by appropriate logic and mathematics. As of today, the intuition per se in this direction in the minds of scholars—however vague—cannot be denied;

after all such an intuition cannot occur without reason.²⁰⁸ Usually, these intuitions manifest in lectures, talks, articles, etc., by scholars belonging to different religions.

Common Ground

No one can dispute that even for a meaningful disagreement—be it in the domain of social customs or metaphysical arena or elsewhere—there must be some or the other common ground. A succeeding system in a domain will, in all likelihood, go the full length of its logical predecessor and will branch away only when it (predecessor) fails to provide a ‘satisfactory’ answer to its (successor’s) own questions and concerns. In this view, therefore, a succeeding system need not entirely subsume under it each and every concept provided by the predecessor system. Rather it has the freedom to make choice of concepts from its predecessor and leave out the rest in accordance with its own requirement. This freedom holds true of both a synthetic and non-synthetic systems. The fundamental agreements between any two systems would—when appropriate abstraction is made—provide the generic feature of the tradition. Conversely, when the generic feature undergoes specific transformation in a given system, the emerging difference becomes the unique identity of the system. When such difference is of an extremely fundamental nature it is known as the specific root-essence of a system. In the metaphysics of religions, the specific root essences are the designs of the Universe.

Views of Universe—East and West

The directions of growth in the Eastern and the Western traditions, in the perceived metaphysical continuity, historically, are in some sense, opposite to each other. More precisely, in the West, the progress is from Judaism to Christianity to Islam; i.e. from what can be characterized as inside view (of the Universe) to middle view (of the Universe) (moderate outside view and inside view seem to be implicit in Christianity) to all comprehensive synthetic view (Islam).²⁰⁹ In the Eastern Tradition, the movement

²⁰⁸ See Acharya (2011) Zakir Naik’s intuition in Islam is the culmination of Vedānta. Acharya says: “Zakir Naik’s claim that Muslims are the culmination of Veda-antic teachings of non-idolatry is ridiculous to say the least.” If Acharya has represented Zakir Naik correctly, then, it clearly shows that Zakir Naik did have some sort of intuition about Islam as synthesis of metaphysical teachings of Vedānta or other religions. Thus, in spite of the possible incompleteness of these articulations of the common ground in these intuitions, the existence of common ground per se cannot be denied.

²⁰⁹ See Kumar (2015) for the explanation of Time as constituting the 4th Dimension, which needs to be taken into account in all the three views of Universe.

is from Buddhism to Advaita to Viśistādvaita to Dvaita. Thus, it is from ‘Extreme Outside’ to ‘Moderate Outside’ to ‘Middle’ to ‘Inside’ view of the Universe. Perhaps, one could find numerous intervening shades of thought. The intervening systems would obtain some prominence only if either their view of Universe is distinct or they cause deep dent in the views of existing systems through unassailable logical argumentation. In the Semitic tradition, Islamic ‘all-comprehensive’ view may be considered as the three + one of Destruction, Creation and Sustenance with no Universe (and Soul) views.

The two terms, viz., ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ with respect to the Universe frequently occur in our present and future entailing analyses, in both the categories of Western and Eastern religio-philosophical thoughts. So, one could ask—of what, it is the outside? And, of what it is the inside? When the primordial singularity (PS) of matter has a conscious space inside, the subject (consciousness) can be said to be inside it. When no such consciousness exists inside a PS, the subject can be said to exist outside of such a PS, in which case ‘outside view’ of Universe will obtain. ‘Middle View’ holds that the border line between the pure consciousness and the matter will constitute the observer consciousness for cognition of the object. The knowledge obtained from such cognitions will be transported to the domain of pure consciousness. In any case, it is the Super-soul, and the ultimate Cognizer’s location for viewing the Universe will determine whether a religion has the ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ view.

The general Indian intellectual mind, as of today, seems to be fastened to the Advaitic ‘Moderate Outside View’ of the Universe—the Advaita. This view when translated into philosophical language will mean ‘Subject-Consciousness alone’ in the form of I am Brahman or Aham Brahmasmi with the reality status of jagat (Universe) as Māyā or (mīthyā)—illusion. Unfortunately, this stagnation of mind appears to have impeded progressive movement even an inch outside of this domain of self-imposed intellectual exile. On the other hand, the general Indian devotional mind (bhakti) seems to go with the ‘Middle’ and/or ‘Inside’ view of the Universe, where a distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped is explicitly made. However, the moderate outside view, i.e. the Advaita, has a theistic side to it, which becomes clear when one

restricts the doctrine to its I-Factor²¹⁰ (the same as specific root-essence), the mark of Saguna Brahman, which in theistic terms is known as Iṣvara or Śiva. Thus, the theistic mind of India is also with Advaita in some sense. If Śankara's bhāṣya (commentary) on Viṣṇusahasranāma²¹¹, and his lesser known work Prabodhasudhākara²¹² are any indication, then Śankara may be said to have been aware of the middle view and even the inside view, as well, even though he was perhaps completely convinced of the non-theistic part—the Absolute, the Nirguna Brahman, of the Moderate Outside View.

Two Domains

Mix-Up of Concepts

Generally, we come across attempts at synthesis that have illogically combined different categories of concepts, such as the concepts from social/sociological domain with concepts from other domains like ethics or metaphysics. That it is entirely illogical follows from the cumulative effect of the mixing up of following aspects:

(a) Essential concepts from every sub-domain (which is social, etc.) of a particular religion have a distinct and basic metaphysical framework at the background from where they follow. The nomenclature ‘sub-domain’ is used only to refer to their ultimate dependency on derivability from some other domain. Metaphysics constitutes the main domain of any religion. Thus, there are at least two conceptually distinct domains for a religion—the metaphysical and the social. And (b) there is a sort of logical incommensurability between any two metaphysical backgrounds of any two religions, which can be bridged in some sense only by identifying ‘logical continuity’ between them. However, the assumed incommensurability per se will yield distinct domains, two each in given religions.

²¹⁰ Individuating Factor (I-Factor) is a particular design of the Universe conceived by each system uniquely on the background of generic essence. This design is geometrical in nature and is derived through the method of unifying the cognitions of the Universe specific to the system. The difference in the conception of I-Factors is itself a result of answering certain questions not answered or not-satisfactorily answered by the system's predecessor. See Kumar (2015).

²¹¹ Sastry (1980) In this work, Visnu, the Vis̄istādvaitic Lord is praised by Śankara.
.. .

²¹² Samvid (1987) In this book, Śankara begins with salutations to ŚriKṛṣṇa, the Dvaita Supreme Reality.
.. .

Since, in this way, all religio-philosophical thoughts have two basic domains—(1) the social and (2) the metaphysical—the total number of distinct domains one has to deal within a proposed synthesis is two multiplied by N, where N is the number of distinct religio-philosophical thoughts taken for synthesis. Thus, if three religio-philosophical thoughts are the candidates for synthesis, then the number of distinct domains will be 6 [2 9 3 = 6].

In addition to this, synthesizer has to contend with apparent synthesis that attempts to pre-empt hegemony to other systems by apparently synthesizing the predecessor system and/or (imagined) successor systems, or both. apparent synthesis is the same as inclusivity without the involvement of required ‘specific root-essences’, etc. Similarly, one has to actually identify a genuine synthetic religion and must make appropriate provision to deal with its own two distinct domains. This task will become more complex when an actual synthetic religion is taken for synthesis since it itself has dealt with a huge number of distinct domains. If the total number of systems taken up for synthesis in a synthetic religion is 4 (=N), then this has to be multiplied by 2, which will yield eight domains. And to this one has to add the two domains each for every non-synthetic religion taken for synthesis. Moreover, qualitatively the whole thing will become inconceivably complex, since there would be difference in emphasis laid by a synthetic or non-synthetic religion on different domains and sub-domains.

The distinctness—of two social domains of two different religio-philosophical thoughts—follows from the fact that social domain of every religio-philosophical thought has a distinct metaphysical-domain as its unique logical background. Since each DM permits at least a portion of its metaphysics to remain distinctive even on the face of possible synthesis, the social deductions following from such distinctive features—with or without the synthetic features—will necessarily be distinct in nature.

Therefore, inasmuch as the logic of relation varies between a social-domain and the metaphysical-domain of one, with these respective domains of the other, there will result distinctness for each of the domains in all the religio-philosophical thought/s. And when such relation remains unarticulated in the relevant comparable system/s in an endeavour of synthesis, the purported comparison and/or contrast ends up as an

illogical mix-up of concepts. An important consequence of this is that we lose the real connotations and significance of the relevant concepts/domains in different religions/thoughts at least partially, if not entirely.

Thus, a synthesis based on surface-similarity—rather than on the fundamental metaphysical affinity and continuity—will necessarily be unsteady, and hence prone for misrepresentation. Therefore, correctness and accuracy of such synthesis, in part or whole, if any, will only be accidental and will be without any support from concrete logico-metaphysical foundation of the religions themselves.

Essences for Synthesis

Alternatively, a genuine universal synthesis can not only ill-afford to jumble-up concepts, but also will identify and fully engage with the essences of the concerned domains of synthesis, with a clear comprehension of the framework of metaphysics. Metaphysics explicates the generic essence, and also explains how the specific root essence, that is the way ‘unification of cognitions’ is accomplished, in a system. By and large, the nature of social concepts (etc.) is necessarily a logico-psychological consequence of such metaphysics, as they are compatible with the corresponding metaphysical conceptions. The generic essence acts as a canvass or background for the specific root-essence. Identical generic essence runs through all chosen systems, like the suture that runs through all the chosen beads—*sūtre maṇigaṇa iva*. Yet the propositional construal of generic essence in each system may vary, this depends on the conclusions that are intended to be derived.

Since the syntheses of the ‘restricted’ sort fundamentally lack engagement with either generic essence, and/or specific root-essence, they cannot really be called metaphysical synthesis at all. At the most they may be called as sanctimonious socially inclusive statements, since they display some sort of inclusivity imparting logically camouflaged soothing touch; but then, we know, mere inclusivity without metaphysical foundation is not the hallmark of synthesis. In fact, contemporary works do not even engage in apparent syntheses or inclusivity i.e. metaphysical synthesis of the second order, such as the ones done by some classical systems like Advaita or Christianity, for example, as illustrated above.

In the books edited by Peter Koslowski,²¹³ one comes across papers on synthesis of world religions—which explicitly claim that the synthesis concerned is from such and such religion’s perspective.²¹⁴ Besides being a self-proclaimed restricted synthesis, such works reveal even for a casual reader that these syntheses lack engagement with the generic essence—as in the metaphysics—of the system/s. Therefore, the proclaimed synthesis cannot be considered as universal even remotely. And some of them even proceed to combine the concepts from different domains without express or even covert reference to the logic of relations, already explained above.

Similarly, one finds in Madame Blavatsky’s splendid work *The Secret Doctrine* the restricted Hindu perspective as its viewpoint for an apparent synthesis²¹⁵ without expressing the logic of relations between different domains of different religions. Thus, despite its immense psychological appeal, Blavatsky’s work, quite unfortunately, fails to be a genuinely universal metaphysical synthesis.

²¹³ See Koslowski (2001a, b).

²¹⁴ Such as, see for example, by Armin Kreiner, and Johannes Laube. See Koslowski (ed.) (2001a). See Adnan Aslan in Koslowski (2001b). But each one of these syntheses has been carried out from a restricted perspective of a particular religion, such as Christianity, Buddhism and Islam, respectively. See papers—The Concept of God, the Origin of the World, and the Image of the Human in the World Religions: An Attempt at a Synthesis from a Christian Perspective, (Kreiner) pp. 127–143;—On the Conceptions of God, the World and the Human Person in Five World Religions: An Attempt at a Synthesis from Buddhist Perspective (Laube), pp. 115–126;—The Propositions of the World Religions about the Origin and Overcoming of Evil—An Attempt at a Synthesis from an Islamic Perspective (Aslan) 118–131]. Also see, Koslowski (2003). It should be noted that their synthesis is not merely restricted in the sense expressed in their respective title itself, but also restricted within the metaphysical understanding, since each one of them speaks about the metaphysical entity—God, covertly or overtly. See also Birnbaum (1988). Birnbaum appears to take Jewish Perspective for Synthesis.

²¹⁵ See Blavatsky (1888) Blavatsky’s synthesis mostly urges us to consider thoughts of other religions in the light of Hindu view, though the Preface says that: But it is perhaps desirable to state unequivocally that the teachings, however, fragmentary and incomplete, contained in these volumes, belong neither to the Hindu, the Zoroastrian, the Chaldean, nor the Egyptian religion, neither to Buddhism, Islam, Judaism nor Christianity exclusively. The Secret Doctrine is the essence of all these. Sprung from it in their origins, the various religious schemes are now made to merge back into their original element, out of which every mystery and dogma has grown, developed, and become materialized. [Vol. 1; p. viii] Even if this essence ‘is not to be understood as a claim for synthesis’, the essence per se mainly pertains to practices drawn from Hindu ethos, and does not appear to be directly connected to the metaphysical structures. The only justification for her covert claim for synthesis, if any, lies in the fact that the different religious schemes are said to have been made to merge back in their original element. While it could be true that an original element itself exists, the work does not appear to succeed either in explaining the original element as synthesis or in explaining the emergence of different religions with different metaphysical structures as taking place from the said essence, or in explaining how the original element represents any metaphysical commonality running through the avowed religions.

It should be clearly noted that as such there is nothing intrinsically wrong in making a particular religion a viewpoint to look at other religion/s for synthesis, as long as they fulfill three important conditions: (1) identification of common metaphysical frame—i.e. generic essence of all the systems taken up for synthesis, (2) statement of a specific root-essence, i.e. the unique feature of each one of the systems, (3) statement of relation between the generic essence and the specific root essence in each system, and also in the purported synthesis as running through all of the constituent systems. The whole result must cohere well even when synthesis is carried out from different viewpoints.

However, it is not at all easy—nays impossible—to convert any sundry religion into a metaphysically synthetic religion arbitrarily. This is because the specific root essence or I-Factors of different preceding religions are the already fixed distinguishing marks, and no violence can be afflicted on them. Therefore, in order to show the nature of chosen religion to be truly synthetic, the I-Factors of its constituent religions must be authentically shown to exist in it in a cohesive manner. Such incorporation of I-Factors cannot be arbitrary and must have the sanction from the original scriptures and sources. Hence, actually available or possible syntheses are finite in number. This being the case, contemporary authors should concentrate more on exposition of the already existing classical attempts at synthesis rather than creating arbitrary ‘synthesis of the restricted sort’.

To the question whether or not there can be more than one result for a metaphysical synthesis, the answer is: ‘yes’. For example, as stated already, Sikhism (Golden Temple and Gurudwāra) and Baha’I seem to have arrived at different instantiations for synthesis, which seem to have been carried out from the viewpoints of ‘Moderate Outside View’ (Advaitic) and ‘Inside View’ (Dvaitic-Judaist), respectively. We shall not enter into a discussion about them in the present work. As noted already, by and large a synthetic religion/DM makes provision for two types of places of worship—one for normal day-to-day place of worship [like Mosque, Gurudwāra, and Mašriqu-l-‘adkār (Dawning- place of the remembrances of God)] and the other, the final place—Kaaba, Golden Temple and a Nonagon, nine-sided circular shaped Temple. This provision is made to show the normal day-to-day location

(normally, the space of 3D with time as the fourth dimension) of the faithful (generally, the structure of sustenance mode of Universe), i.e. where all the individual souls are existing at present, in relation to the Lord (the Ultimate), and the final abode one has to reach (like, Kaaba, Golden Temple or the Nonagon) as per the ‘focus-philosophy’ adopted by the Synthesis.

Essence and Synthesis

The concepts of ‘essence’ and ‘synthesis’ have a difference as well as affinity between them. Affinity is the overlap of certain features of a system on another system’s features, where the overlapping features could both be construed as ‘essential feature’ and ‘synthetic feature’. But since the two sets of features belong to two distinct systems with different background formations, they will be necessarily different from a broader perspective. In this way, essence is what basically refers to an element that runs through each and every ‘object’ of a class without which the class of objects ‘cannot belong to a class’. To identify a generic essence, one needs to examine various objects/systems, minutely. The specific root essence constitutes the distinguishing mark of a given system.

When essential feature, as generic essence is common to all systems incorporated in a synthesis, it is called a synthetic feature. But to arrive at a full-fledged ‘synthesis’, it takes more than this generic essence. This is because the so-called generic essence itself ‘metamorphoses’ in view of the appearance of specific root-essence on it. Thus, generic essence needs to be logically universalized first. This can be done by looking at the content of the essence without any distinguishing mark. In the next step of synthesis, all the different specific root- essences are sketched on the universalized generic essence in a logical continuity. In this way, synthesis becomes a sort of essence (universal generic essence with all specific root-essences, cohesively) of essences (different specific root essences existing on generic essence of various systems).

Schleiermacher has succinctly expressed the idea of essence, in the context of Christianity of different shades thus:

“(T)he only pertinent way of discovering the peculiar essence of any particular faith and reducing it as far as possible to a formula is by showing the element which remains constant throughout the most diverse religious affections within this same communion, while it is absent from analogous affections within other communions.”²¹⁶

The term ‘Christianity’ denotes a class name with respect to different shades of Christianity. So, every member of the said communion of Christianity is attributed with the name Christianity or—being Christian or—having Christian-ness, only when some element is identified as constant and runs through most (if not all) diverse religious affections [but] within the same communion of Christianity, and which, however, is absent within other analogous communions, such as for example, Judaism or Islam. Alternatively, Christianity is a member in the class of religions, where it has to have the common element that runs through all members of the class of religions.

Dissolution Mechanism/s (DM/s)

The term ‘Social Contract’ is a convenient theoretical construct, the origin of which can be sought in the Roman Stoicism of Cicero. Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke and lately John Rawls can be considered as chief architects of this theory.²¹⁷ However, it should be noted that there are some fundamental differences between the said Western notion, and its unarticulated Indian counterpart as envisaged in the concept of purusārthas or in Purusa Sūkta. This is important because it is hypothesized that it is the Indian understanding that is pervasive in both the Eastern and Western DMs, unlike the modern notions of Social Contract. Although the idea of ‘withdrawal from’ or ‘termination of’ Contract exists in both Indian and Western theories of Social Contract, the nature and domain of action regarding such withdrawal/ termination significantly vary.

1. First of all, while the Western notion allows withdrawal from contract, because of ‘conflict’ within the social domain, the Indian notion provides for a voluntary withdrawal from contract, the reason for which is one’s realization of the need to know (and subsequent experiencing of) the transcendental, even though

²¹⁶ Cf. Christianity: an Overview, by Jaroslav Pelikan in Eliade (1987), p. 354, vol. 3, pp. 348–362.

²¹⁷ See the article—Social Contract by Peter Laslett in Edwards (1967), vol. 5, pp. 465–467.

disillusionment through conflict or such other events within the social domain could trigger this realization.

2. Similarly, the idea of state of nature as a sort of anarchy with human-being as a ‘noble savage’ was never existent in Indian notion, but which is organic to the Western notion, in one way or the other. The term noble ‘savage’ as such appears to be an oxymoron. After all, in the Indian context, the Dharma cannot emerge from adharma, nor can adharma from dharma, inasmuch as they are logical opposites.

General Social Contract (GSC)

Primarily, General Social Contract means a group or community’s life plan, which ensures each individual member’s peaceful existence and ensures the gratification of basic needs of artha and kāma. This gratification takes into account all members of the society, and hence the contractual terms take care of both survival of all members and its facilitation of gratification of the needs—including provisions to deal with possible violations of terms. Hence, the social contract—which states this life plan and its obligations, without containing in it the ways and means to terminate such a contract by an individual, is called GSC. Although it could be socially comprehensive, it cannot be called a logically comprehensive plan for this reason. In a GSC, the main thrust is not on the individual, but on the group. Consequently, the individual, in a sense, is lost, or at least side-lined, since it does not permit him the freedom to evolve independently of the social organism at any stage of his life. This is because the terms of GSC are largely determined by the elements of group-dynamics. In a way, the individual is utterly missed out in the group, and he appears to irredeemably surrender his identity, will and individuality to a faceless community, in an absolute measure. It is clear from this account that the conceived Social Contract is not between two separate parties, as is normally understood of a contract; rather the contract is by declaration by All—starting with the words, ‘WE, the members of the Group, hereby...’. The individual/s, group or even the state are all subordinate to this WE and are emergent concepts as only subsequent to the said WE. The independent locus for the existence of these subordinate concepts also emerges only subsequently, because of differentiation. In this way, the initial contract is always a unilateral declaration by a single entity. Of course, this unilateral declaration as in GSC continues even in its transformed state of DM, to the

extent of social domain of three terms. However, the individual's autonomy would be restored in its full bloom within a DM.

Emergence of DM

General Social Contract should not—and indeed cannot—suppress the individual, since it is he who had been instrumental in the GSC-formation. After all, without the individuals, the group has no existence. Further, each individual member of the GSC has his own inerasable identity, which cannot be wished off by mere generality of the GSC. Therefore, if an individual wishes to move out of GSC, it is his inalienable right and freedom to do so.

In accord with this, when the provisions of dissolution or termination of the Social Contract and its aftermath ‘existence’ for an individual ‘if any’, are incorporated into the GSC, the GSC will transform itself into a logically comprehensive life plan without forgoing social comprehensiveness, which it had possessed earlier. The GSC as a whole transforms in accordance with the world view propounded by the specific DM. This transformed GSC is the same as DM. In this transformed GSC, the individual’s identity is always kept on a high pedestal without negating concern for collective social good. In some sense, the social domain prepares an individual for the transcendental (moksha) domain. It prepares the individual for the next journey through positive feelings of contentment or through the negative feelings of ultimate dejection created by the conflict situations. However, since an individual has the freedom to terminate the contract—as it is now a part of the terms of transformed GSC, the DM—an individual can call off the contract anytime, anywhere, and completely at his will.

The Aftermath

The aftermath of the termination is the state of an individual, in which he will find himself as ordained by a DM. The transformation of an ordinary GSC requires elaborate argumentation employed to provide both rationale for the termination, and its aftermath. Most such argumentation primarily—and necessarily—involves metaphysics. The transformed GSC, in this way is therefore called as a dissolution mechanism, to include both the states of before and after the dissolution. The actual

physical insertion of moksa into the scheme of purusārthas by the śramana tradition at a later date historically points to this very scheme.²¹⁸

In the final statement of contract, as in a DM, the subtle provision of dissolution takes away the steam out of the GSC where the Group had become the faceless, but an all-powerful Super-soul. In a DM, the erstwhile elements of GSC become only a subdued sub-domain/s of metaphysics of moksa. The full-fledged DM, the final frame of reference for everything, which is the metaphysics of dissolution, performs two major tasks—(1) to state the exact nature of the soul at the aftermath of the dissolution and (2) to state a logically smooth way of entering the ontological arena (of its own conception) when dissolution of contract occurs, by averting the possible violent logical conflict between the GSC domain and Dissolution domain.

Extraneous Factors

In a sociological endeavour, we must be aware of the social terms and their relation with a particular DM, and the non-metaphysical factors that go to shape the social terms.

“Religious teachings differ owing to difference in circumstances... I hold that from a historical standpoint, from time to time, the exigencies and requirements of the situation are responsible for the actual form which any kind of preaching or teaching takes.”²¹⁹

However, in this quote, the Swāmiji seems to include both metaphysical and Social Contract terms, as being affected by the circumstances. While this may be true to some extent, we must note the subtle differences. In the case of metaphysics, the views are logically ‘stable’ and do not depend on circumstances once the same are put forward theoretically in clear terms. The terms of social contract, on the contrary—and

²¹⁸ See Krishna (1997), p. 43 “...As is well-known, only three purusārthas were accepted in the beginning and the fourth purusārtha.... Moksa came to be added only later under the influence of śramana tradition.”

²¹⁹ Tīrtha (1983), p. 159.

especially, some of the secondary terms (*viśesadharma*, excepting those that are essential for the welfare of a society (as against mere sustenance), like *varnadharmā*)—are basically the products of different circumstances and will vanish (and must vanish) or continue, if the causal conditions so warrant—i.e. cease or continue, as the case may be. Thus, the social matter is more or less dependent on the prevailing time and circumstances. The difference between Śruti and Smṛti reflects this very difference in metaphysics and sociology, respectively. One should note that the nature of geographical region or historical events/incidents, making inroads into the DM, etc., is generally the extraneous factors and are essentially contingent. By and large, they do not and cannot have any direct bearing on the metaphysics of a DM except that the DMs need to maintain logical conformity and consistency between the concerned metaphysical view and its own restated GSC domain. Exceptions to these contingent social formations are those which are directly derived from metaphysical conceptions. It is for these reasons there is ‘stability of a DM’ in both social and metaphysical domains. In the social domain, a DM has freedom to inject new terms and modify the existing ones, and in metaphysical it is a statement made once and for all times.

In a modern sociological study of religions, the extraneous factors need to be carefully segregated from the metaphysical core of a DM, in order to extract the core metaphysical presuppositions and premises on which the sociological propositions rest. This task, by no means, is easy, since any DM in its general totality encompasses the restated GSC terms, which are the statements as at the historical times of DMs, which in the flow of time can occupy the central place as metaphysics does, even while the original metaphysics might itself have gotten erased out of the memory. In other words, what was important could become subsidiary and what was subsidiary could become central! Then, the unfortunate consequence is that since a follower of a specific DM is strictly ordained to follow the core terms of the contract in the social domain, he may end up following even those terms which may have nothing to do with the originally intended core metaphysical Weltanschauung, leading to a massive build-up of superstitious and credulous practices. At worse, the follower may end up practicing something exactly opposite to what is commanded.

Content of the Soul

Content of the soul assumes enormous significance in a DM, both in the states before and after the dissolution. Another term that assumes immense significance in the theistic DMs is God. The term ‘content of the soul’ has many different characterizations in different DMs including its contentlessness as in Buddhism, to ontological Infinity as in Advaita. Similarly, the term God includes in its connotation many different metaphysical notions such as, (Saguna) Brahman, or Embodied Śūnya (the Buddha), or Father along with the Son and the Holy Ghost in identity in the Trinity, in different DMs. One has to be completely clear about the connotation/s of these terms.

The Generic Mokṣa

The concept of ‘liberation’ is a common and central theme of all DMs. Liberation is one of the conventional terminologies for mokṣa, the +1 term of the puruṣārtha. Basically, all the terms in puruṣārtha are of generic nature. Sometimes the concept of liberation is veiled in obscure terminologies that conceal the real metaphysical state and significance of soul after dissolution of Social Contract as in a given DM. Some of the terms used for the concept of liberation in specific sense are salvation, nirvāṇa, najaṭ,²²⁰ nihśreyasa, emancipation, etc.

Physical Universe

Each DM necessarily locates the physical Universe after conceiving its structure on the body of the generic essence, so that it can locate the liberated state of the individual soul and can trace the goal point and the path for the soul to move into, after the termination of social contract. From a philosophical point of view, the location and/or structure of Universe through unique characteristic, enables individuation of the ultimate (the generic essence, or its specific transformation, to suit a particular DM’s own philosophy), and also it enables facilitation of the individual mind for an understanding of—the ultimate principles of a DM itself. Theoretically, this structure

²²⁰ Al Quor'anSuura 40: Verse 41: “Wayaa-Qawmi ma liii'ad-'uukum'ilan-Najaatiwa tad-'uunaniii'ilanNaar” “And, O my people! What aileth me that I call you unto deliverance when you call me unto the Fire?” Pickthall (1989) The terms ‘salvation’, or ‘najat’ (‘furqaan’ is considered as denoting salvation by some authors) in the context of Christianity or Islam, apparently, do not get rigorous philosophical treatment. Of course, the fact that the term ‘najat’ is used only once in Quran has been noted by scholars. See Nickel (1994). ‘Naja’ means ‘to save’.

of Universe will also enable articulation of the nature of the ultimate in clearer terms, in the absence of explicit and comprehensive statements of a given DM to that effect. This will also enable comparison and contrast between any two DMs, especially those that closely resemble such as Advaita and Buddhism, where the respective ultimate becomes almost indiscernible from the other in the absence of respective I-Factor.

Main Stream of the DMs

A metaphysical synthesizer has to take up the main metaphysical position having general acceptation without deflecting into different shades of the relevant DM. This is called here in this context as the ‘main stream’ of a DM. For example, the Advaitic DM, in the proposed endeavour, will be dealt without reference to distinct internal shades of Advaita such as that of Bhāmatīr Vivarana. Externally, Gaudapāda’s. Advaita, etc., for example, does not concern in its specificities, even if certain essentials of Advaita might be found there too. As such, it needs to be stated that different shades of a system are basically a product of verbalization process regarding the essential metaphysical quality, which base their distinctness of approach on the degree of emphasis and/or perspective and such other adventitious—but nevertheless mostly logical—elements cropping up in the process of understanding the essential core concept. We believe that these shades can be successfully incorporated within the visualized synthesis by further elaboration and explanation, in principle.

Sources of Interpretation

The main sources which consist of—or themselves comprise the data for interpretation—are the major Universe-depicting mandalas, or symbols, or architecture, etc., and their theoretical counterpart, scriptures. The correspondence between the figures and the theory is intuitively presumed. We shall use the term ‘mandala/s’ to cover all these cases. In using these things as data for interpretation, we do not enter into debate over their historical authenticity, in as much as there is, currently, general acceptation of them as essential part of the respective DM. The truth and validity of these symbols are also presupposed in the endeavour of synthesis. However, the truth and validity of these data can also be gauged from the degree of success of the interpretation and its cohesion with the accepted tenets of the concerned DM. Thus, for example, despite the controversy surrounding the authorship of Saundaryalaharī, i.e. whether or not Śankara is its author, the said authorship may be more or less decided

by the success of our interpretation of the Śrī Cakra itself. (Śrī Cakra is yāntric diagram in Saundaryalaharī). Some may consider this kind of evidence as indirect, yet the method suggested here is sufficiently strong and logically persuasive, especially when we have no other better and direct proof available to decide the same (of the data in question), conclusively.²²¹ The other sources are originals of different religio-philosophical systems. We could also make use of secondary sources including Wikipedia entries, most of which could be cross-checked and are verifiable on their own for their authenticity. Certain Wikipedia data are used here only for analytical purposes without having a direct bearing upon the metaphysics that we propose to speak about. Such entries need not be taken in a historical manner and for that reason their authenticity is inconsequential to the overall nature of present endeavour, except that they provide wider scope for original thinking.

Conclusion

It is useful here to recall Koslowski's objectives: (1) The justification of religious truth claims, (2) the critique of the justifications and the praxis of the religions, and (3) communication, in the sense of translation and demonstration of commonalities and differences between religions, are the three tasks of the intellectual entry into religion, regardless of whether this entry is called theological or philosophical'.²²² While the proposed synthesis is expected to satisfy—what it considers most crucial, i.e.—the third objective of Koslowski, of communication in the sense of translation and demonstration of commonalities and differences between religions, the other two objectives appear to be based and dependent on the successful completion of meeting the third objective itself. Therefore, it seems that only if the current synthesis can be in place, the

²²¹ “Most of the commentators ... ascribe it to Śrī Śankarācārya. But...the hymn ((Saundaryalaharī)) was ascribed by one tradition to Śiva, by another to Śrī Śankarācārya supposed to have been an incarnation of Śiva, and by a third to the Goddess Lalitā... the author of Sudhāvidyotini, fathers it upon one Pravarasena, a prince of the Dramidas... But the fact that Śrī Śankarācārya was a reformer in his days of Śākta cult as of various others, the very important part played by the Śakti worship in all the Advaitamutts, the identity of soul and the Goddess spoken of in verse 22, the reference to the Vedānta in verse 4, the peculiar style of the hymn and an impartial reference to and an attempt to unify the peculiar doctrines of the mutually opposed sects of Samaya-mārga, and lastly, the unanimous testimony of such writers as Lakshmidhara and Bhāskararāya—all these incline me to believe that the hymn is genuine work of Śrī Śankarācārya.” A. M.—Preface to First Edition, 1896, p. ix Saundaryalaharī, (Ed.) Venkatanathacharya (1969).

²²² Koslowski (2001a) p. 3.

justification of truth claims and the critique of justifications and the praxis of religions can be successfully dealt with, by both distinguishing and synthesizing them without obliteration of facts. In this way, metaphysical synthesis of world religions is definitely a distinct possibility.

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