

Milton K. Munitz **Approaches to existence**

In carrying forward the dialogue on our chosen theme, which my colleagues have so sympathetically and constructively initiated by their comments on my paper, "The Concept of the World," as my own contribution I should like to refine some of the points in that paper and, in the light of these expanded remarks, to touch on some of the points made by Professors Cua, Inada, and Wyschogrod.

I

In my original paper I tried to focus on the term 'The World' itself, and it is in terms of what I said about it there that one may see certain affinities and reverberations with what others understand by Being (as distinguished from beings), by Brahman, by Tao (in one of its meanings) and so on. I now think, however, that everything I wished to say about The World in my paper is to be conveyed—perhaps more helpfully—by a distinctive use of the term 'Existence'. This distinctive use is marked by capitalization. It is thus to be contrasted with other uses of the term 'existence', for example, that in which we use it in its pluralized nominal form and speak of 'a manifold domain of existents'. In order to bring out the force of this usage I shall consider three key terms, namely, 'The Universe', 'The World', and 'Existence' in order to see both their interconnections as well as their differences from one another. The order in which I shall treat these terms, namely by going from the meanings of 'The Universe' to that of 'The World' and finally to that of 'Existence' is important. It would destroy our understanding of these terms if we reversed the sequence or took it in some other combination of steps.

The following paragraphs are adapted from a section of Chapter 8 in my book *Existence and Logic* (New York University Press, 1974).

First, then, for the term 'The Universe'. I shall distinguish two principal, though related, uses.

- a. The first is that employed in the science of cosmology. Here the term 'The Universe' will commonly be employed to designate the all-inclusive whole to which the observable universe, that is, the observable region of galaxies and clusters of galaxies belong. In constructing *models* of the Universe, the cosmologist will be guided, in the first place, by empirical considerations of extrapolation from the observable region. He will take the Universe to be constituted—as far as we know—of the same types of basic units (bodies and physical systems) as are already detected and known in the observable region: these will consist principally of galaxies and the intra-galactic and extra-galactic physico-chemical primordial elementary materials out of which the galaxies are fashioned and from which they are derived, genetically. In developing his models of The Universe, in addition to the guidance and

constraints provided by the empirical materials of observational astronomy, the cosmologist will employ the resources of mathematical physics and mathematics to give to his constructions conceptual unity, clarity, and systematic coherence with established results in other domains. At the present time, despite the lively proliferation of models and the subtle refinement, in general, of the discipline of theoretic cosmology, there is no single, preferred model of the Universe on which the specialists are themselves agreed. In any case, it is presumed that there is something to which the already developed, or yet-to-be-developed models can be applied and of which one or another might give us an acceptable descriptive account. That of which these various models aspire to give us an account is the *Universe*. This phrase, then, serves the astronomer and cosmologist as a designation of what is taken to be the independently existing individual whole possessed of the most inclusive spatial and temporal scope and that embraces within itself all subordinate bodies and systems. So much, then, for a brief sketch of what the cosmologist and astronomer understand by 'The Universe'.

Suppose one were to ask: "Does the Universe exist?" This question is, however, really two questions: (1) Does there exist an individual whole such that we can apply to it the description 'absolute, all-inclusive whole'? (2) Does there exist an individual all-inclusive whole that has the character (astronomical composition, physical, space-time properties) as formulated in some particular cosmological model? For the science of cosmology the answer to the first question is idle unless one also includes along with it the asking of the second question. And to this compound question, scientific cosmology could never, by its very nature *qua* science, give a final and conclusive answer, since the answer to the second question is in principle always open to revision. The realization of this point lends some support to a reformulated version of the Kantian thesis that the notion of a cosmological whole serves as a regulative notion for cosmology.

- b. There is a second use of the term 'The Universe' we must also take note of, that is, in some ways, a reasonable extension of the meaning given to this phrase in astronomy and cosmology. For the astronomer and cosmologist 'The Universe' is a term usually reserved for that level of interest and concern—in terms of distances, time-stretches, and material composition—in which he neglects, as beyond his immediate concern, any lesser systems or stretches of time and space that are not on a cosmological scale, that is, on a scale appropriate for the galaxies and *their* spatial distribution and evolutionary (temporal) scale of development. But, after all, The Universe, in this sense, is only the outer frame or whole on the grossest scale of spatial, temporal, and material magnitude. The Universe, however, includes within itself, as a whole, all manner of lesser bodies and systems. And when we turn our attention to these, it is necessary to reintroduce not only the lesser astronomical bodies previously 'neglected' when dealing with cosmological matters (such bodies as individual stars within the galaxies, our own star, the Sun, the planets, the Earth and the Moon), but also, of course, on still more restricted scales of magnitude and of varying material composition, structure, functional roles, levels of evolutionary development and so on, individual geologic matters (such as rivers, mountains, continents, oceans), biological phenomena of all sorts, the whole range and multifariousness of human behavior and the enormous complexity of atomic and subatomic physical phenomena. The Universe surely includes all these as well, from the galaxies to the grains of sand on the beach and the generations of man and the lives of individual men in their 'endless' succession, diversity, and multiplicity. In this use of the term 'The Universe' we should need to muster for our description of the whole, and all that it contains as parts, fragments,

ingredients, and constituents, all the descriptive resources of our language, of our ordinary experience, and of our scientific knowledge. We can sum it up by saying, "The Universe is the heaven, the earth, the seas and all that in them is," or we could, if pressed, be far more specific, detailed, and encyclopedic in our descriptions, enumerations, classifications, and systematizations. Let us understand, then, by The Universe in this broadened and extended sense, the individual whole or collective class of all the *a*'s, *b*'s, *c*'s . . . we are able to (or choose to) discriminate and list as belonging to, and as being parts of this whole. Finally, let us note and stress again, that the term 'The Universe', whether taken in the narrower meaning of the cosmologist or in the wider meaning just briefly indicated, is an individual name that designates an individual whole of which we can give a *description* and whose parts are also to be discriminated through the use of *descriptive* terms.

As to the expression 'The World', there are some who would use the term interchangeably with 'The Universe', while some would prefer one expression to the other, even though giving roughly the same account of what they mean. There are also some who use the term 'The Universe' in a quite different sense from those we ourselves have just examined, and, for our purposes, settled on. Among the uses of the term 'The Universe' that some writers employ is one which I shall in fact adopt, but instead of using the expression 'The Universe' for this, I shall use the expression 'The World'. I propose now, and shall henceforth use the expression 'The World' to mean 'The individual whole (or collective class) whose parts are all existents whatsoever.'

It will be asked immediately, of course, what the difference is between the meaning of 'The World' and 'The Universe'. To this I should reply that if by 'meaning' is meant 'reference' or 'designation' and thereby we intend to ask "What is the difference in the *designation* of the expressions 'The World' and 'The Universe'?"—the answer is: "There is none!" Both expressions refer to identically the same individual whole. The World is identical with The Universe. There is nevertheless a difference in meaning (what Frege would have called the 'sense' as distinguished from the 'reference') since the formulae or analyses we give to explicate their meaning (sense) *do* differ. The meaning of 'The Universe' (in its broader employment, of the two we described) is given by the descriptive terminology taken from the empirical sciences of cosmology, astronomy, geology, biology, and so on. The formula for describing the composition and structure of the Individual Whole that is The Universe is, in effect, an indeterminately large number of sentences, each of which would undertake to describe some part of The Universe. Not only is the listing of the parts an inherently arbitrary matter (there is no unique, correct way of doing this), but also because of the changing and growing character of human knowledge, there is no final list or description of structural arrangements that *can* be given of the parts. In a sense, therefore, the description of The Universe is an enterprise that is not only not finished now, but that, for the reason given, cannot in principle ever be given in some final, irrevocable, and uniquely

correct way. Yet an appreciation of this point does not in any way lessen the utility of the expression 'The Universe', provided we understand its open-ended character and the inherent limitations and relativities connected with its use.

But when we turn to the meaning to be given to the expression 'The World', the situation is different. For here, unlike the open-ended, descriptive character of the expression 'The Universe', there is a certain finality and closed character—one is tempted to say a priori character—to the use of the expression 'The World'. It has, we might say, a quasi-formal character. I use the expression 'quasi-formal' because, after all, in talking about The World, even though we use the descriptively empty expression 'existent', nevertheless we are, by these means, talking ontologically about what does exist. Each and every existent, and the whole these compose, is not a formal matter; it is not merely a symbolic or linguistic matter, which it would be if the formula were altogether *purely* formal. And yet in using the formula 'the whole has all individual existents as its parts' to explicate what we mean by 'The World', we make no attempt to go beyond this and give an actual descriptive account of either the whole or its parts. It is sufficient for the account of the World to simply talk of individual existents and the whole which they compose.

In short, the term 'The World' serves the purposes of *Ontology* by prescinding from the Universe just its existence aspect. On the other hand, for cosmology and the other empirical sciences (as well as ordinary, everyday experience) we need the term 'The Universe' to remind us that the existents are galaxies, stars, atoms, animals, men, and so on, and that together it is these that make up qualitatively and quantitatively a many-sorted whole. Despite our always-present, relative ignorance and uncertainty about the makeup and extent of The Universe, we can say that insofar as our conception of The World is a quasi-formal one, no further or deeper experience need affect our *conception* of The World. No matter what changes and discoveries will be made with respect to The Universe by the various sciences, the ontologic account of The World will not be affected. The *philosophic* understanding of 'exists' ('existent', 'existence') need not change as a result of any growth or change in empirical knowledge. For any new or different empirical account of The Universe as a whole or any of its parts will only provide the same kind of material for ontologic discourse about existence. And any examples, however limited and open to modification on an empirical level these are, are adequate for this conceptual purpose of ontology.

Is The World an absolute whole? Yes—in the specific sense that it includes, without exception, anything that is an individual existent as one of its parts. To qualify as being an individual existent it is necessary that something be part of The Universe, and if something is part of The Universe that already makes that something an individual existent. It is not the other way around. This is the point of starting with The Universe and its parts, in undertaking a discussion of existence in ontology.

If to 'qualify' as an existent it is necessary and sufficient to be part of the Universe, why should we not say that this is the meaning (the definition) of what it is to be an individual existent? Is not, therefore, the expression 'individual existent' replaceable by the expression 'part of The Universe'? To this our answer has to be (a qualified) "Yes!" "But, then" it will be said "we don't need the term 'existent' at all!" And the answer to this is that, strictly speaking, we don't! But normally, in characterizing what it is to be a 'part of the Universe', we require the use of descriptive terms in saying what the character of the part is. We describe its properties, for example, its space-time locus (its size, its duration, its location in the past, present, or future), its qualities and relations (for example, depending on what kind of thing it is, its color, its chemical composition, etc.). All of this, however is unnecessary as far as being simply an existent is concerned, although it is necessary in being the particular propertied kind of individual part it is. As a particular part, therefore, we should label it an "a" or a "b" or a "c" etc. (for example a city, a bird, a star, etc.). However, in order to be an individual existent we need none of these descriptive terms. However important they are for being the particular kinds of parts they are, such descriptive characterizations are unimportant and irrelevant when it comes to considering them simply as existents, that is, simply insofar as they are parts of the Universe. Therefore, in this sense all parts are equal, qua parts, and we only need the term 'existent' to 'describe' them. Except, of course, that the term 'existent' is not a description in the sense in which the particular terms "a," "b," "c" are descriptive terms. The term 'existent' or 'part' simply indicates the ontological status of what we are talking about: that it is a part of The Universe, and nothing more. Hence if we use terms like "a," "b," "c," etc. to describe particular parts of The Universe, we cannot include among these terms the term 'existent' itself. Rather, it itself means what it is to be an "a," "b," "c" or any other kind of part, insofar as it is described.

It also follows from the preceding that if 'existent' is not a descriptive term, then there is no *kind* of objects we call 'existent' ones. Hence it makes no sense, strictly speaking, to talk of a *collective class* or *Individual Whole of existents as such*. What, then, it may be asked, becomes of our statement that The World is the Individual Whole whose parts are existents? And why should we not treat the expression 'The World' as having the same meaning as 'The Universe'? To this latter question the answer is: "We can—provided, however, we separate out as necessary and sufficient the invariant and purely 'formal' part of the meaning of 'The Universe', namely, that it is an absolute whole from which nothing is to be excluded, and that is itself not part of any more inclusive whole." Just as we retain the term 'individual existent' as a shorthand for 'any part of The Universe', so we can retain the term 'The World' to stand for just that part of the meaning of 'The Universe' which consists in its purely formal component, leaving out, for this purpose, any further descriptive specification of the particular character of either the cosmological (space-time) structure of The

Universe or any enumeration, in descriptive terms, of its contents.

Just as to speak of individual existents, qua individual existents, as parts, is to use the term 'part' in a stretched or deviant way as compared to the sense in which it is used when exemplified descriptively (as "*a*," "*b*," "*c*," etc.), so too the term 'individual whole', when used to characterize The World, is also to use the term "individual whole' in a stretched or deviant way. For if the 'parts' (individual existents) are not parts in any ordinary way, then neither can the Individual Whole, which is 'composed' of these 'parts', be a 'whole' in any ordinary way. Yet for all that there is value in using this terminology of 'whole' and 'part' in connection with The World and individual existents. For it does remind us of their essential connection with, and derivability from, The Universe (in the full sense) and *its* parts (in the full sense). And such attenuated use of the terms 'whole' and 'part' in connection with The World and individual existents has a certain value, for it permits the use of these terms, now, analogically rather than literally, for ontological purposes.

We must turn finally to examine what we can say of existence in the light of our discussion of 'The Universe' and 'The World'. And here I propose to concentrate our attention on the use of the capitalized expression 'Existence'. I wish to consider it as it arises in the context of considering The World as an Individual Whole. Thus far, in reaching our conception of how to characterize The World as an Individual Whole whose constituent parts are individual existents, we have relied, for the purposes of describing it as 'a whole' (in an attenuated sense), on the fact that it is 'composed' of a multiplicity of 'parts' (again in an attenuated sense). Let us now carry this process of attenuation one step further. The parts of The World, though we continue to speak of them in the plural as individual existents, are, however, qua existents, not different from one another. Their plural differentiation stems from the use of descriptive predicates and such individuating descriptions (for example, space-time locations) as we may find relevant. However, these are no longer operative when we characterize something as simply 'an individual existent'. Because of this we shall be further prepared to relinquish all differentiation of individuals. For the use of the expression 'individual existent' on this level of discourse is by courtesy only—by virtue of our remembrance of the way in which we originally came to identify such and such as an individual, that is, through its being a part of The Universe, and through its being described in an individuating way. Since these criteria of differentiation are not now operative, there is, in effect, no longer any distinction between one individual existent and another individual existent. The 'existent'-aspect of each now blends with the 'existent'-aspect of any other individual existent. The result of this process of 'blending' is one way of coming upon what I intend by the use of the term 'Existence'.

But instead of starting with the 'multiplicity' of individual existents, we may start at the other end, and reach the same conclusion, the same awareness of Existence. We spoke of The World as an Individual Whole, as a unique, all-

inclusive absolute whole of all individual existents. Let us focus now on this matter of its being an absolute unique Individual, qua Individual, neglecting for the moment the consideration that it is composed of a multiplicity of parts. It is not an individual in the ordinary sense in which we speak of parts of The Universe—for example, Socrates, this table, that lightning flash—as individuals. They are individuals in the full sense because (1) they are proper parts of The Universe, and (2) they can be described (for example, located). The World is neither of these. *It* is not a proper part of any more inclusive individual whole. And, qua 'whole', it is not open to the use of descriptive predicates (for example, it has no shape, color, size, location, duration, numerical magnitude of any sort, chemical composition, etc.). If we continue to speak of The World as an 'individual' it is so only in a very special sense. It is properly speaking an Individual only insofar as it is absolutely unique. There are no other Worlds. Nevertheless The World exists. The 'Individual' which The World is, exists.

Since we may, on the other hand, continue to speak of The World as an *Individual*, and yet, on the other hand, we have spoken of the individual parts of The World (when we regard it as a 'Whole' of 'parts') as being existents, it would be inadvisable (because misleading) to characterize The World as an utterly unique Individual as itself an *existent*. The World as an 'Individual' (because utterly unique) is neither a 'Whole' made up of 'parts' nor, of course, 'a part' of anything whatsoever. And if we use the expression 'existent' to designate any individual (proper) part of The World (to the extent that we think of The World as a 'whole' or 'parts'), then the word 'existent' cannot also be used to stand for the utterly unique 'Individual' which The World is. If we keep the expression 'individual existent' to mean (proper) part of The World, insofar as The World is thought of as a 'whole or parts', then we shall need another expression to designate and differentiate the utterly unique existence of The World as an Individual. For surely if there is anything at all which has a primary lien on our use of the word 'existence' it is The World itself. It is an inextinguishable truth that The World exists. This is the merest tautology. And one way of bringing this out is to drop the use of the grammatical predicate 'exists' and to use its nominalized counterpart. Because we wish to signal the sense in which The World, as an utterly unique 'Individual', exists, we capitalize the word 'Existence'. *The World (as an utterly unique 'Individual') is (identically) Existence.* The two expressions that flank the (identity) use of 'is' here have the same 'referent' as their target. To be The World as an absolutely unique 'Individual' *is Existence.*

When we combine these two routes, that through 'blending' the multiplicity of individual existents and that through reflecting on the utterly unique character which The World as an 'Individual' is, we arrive at the same result: The World as undifferentiated and as utterly unique is Existence.

Is Existence a Whole? The question now answers itself. If 'whole' (whether relative or absolute) is defined relatively to 'part', then in the sense we have

tried to make clear, Existence cannot be said to be a Whole because it does not have any parts *at all*, even in an attenuated way. The use of the term 'whole', just as the use of any other term to *analyze* it, is totally inappropriate and ultimately futile. It is so utterly unique that any attempt to explicate what it is in *simpler* terms, or by finding what it shares by way of resemblance with something else we are already (independently) familiar with, must fail. What Existence is, in itself, is ultimate, irreducible, and unassimilable to any conceptual, that is to say, to any explanatory or descriptive characterization whatsoever. We have used the analysis of 'whole' and 'part' as a ladder to climb to our awareness of Existence. But once we reach it, we can "throw the ladder away." Existence is the supreme ontological fact for which a discussion of even the discrete ontological character of individual existents, let alone the discussion of the parts of The Universe in their full-blown qualitative particularity, were only preliminary steps and halfway houses toward its final disclosure.

If there is any paradox in saying individual existents are parts of The World as a Whole, though Existence is not a 'whole' and has no 'parts', the clue to dissolving the paradox is at hand in terms of the distinctions we have drawn. We need not be troubled to acknowledge that it makes perfectly good sense to say that while Existence is itself not diversified, not a complex whole, nevertheless in another way of regarding the matter, The World is constituted of individual existents. Again it would be perfectly correct (though sounding paradoxical) to say that The Universe, The World, and Existence are one and the same, though utterly different! The key to dissolving the 'paradox' is in recognizing the order of 'abstraction' and awareness on which we base the use of these terms and what they represent.

So much then, for a brief characterization of the terms 'Universe', 'World', and 'Existence', as I understand them. I turn now to put these distinctions to some use for our present discussion.

II

A. S. Cua has sought to relate my account of the mystery and transcendence of The World—or, as I should now prefer to put it, the mystery and transcendence of Existence—to the Confucian theme of "the central harmony or unity of man and Nature." He finds it possible to apply some of the conceptual distinctions I have made in interpreting the central teaching of the *Chung Yung*. On the one hand, it is gratifying to be presented with such ready handles for agreement in a commonly shared enterprise that would seem to converge in their results despite the fact that they arise from cultural and intellectual traditions initially so different from one another. At the same time candor compels me to raise a number of questions in connection with Cua's remarks that at least inhibits any too ready willingness on my part of jump into a hastily

arranged marriage of souls. Perhaps Cua's replies will help me to reduce or even eliminate these inhibitions.

Let it be said at once that in his concern with expounding the Confucian vision of the central harmony of man and the world, Cua addresses himself to a theme that in its broadest meaning is a *moral* one: it has to do with a certain quality of life to be reached by a man of wisdom. However, this theme, for all its importance, is one that I myself did not take as my central concern in undertaking to set out the basic lineaments of an acceptable *ontology*. If I understand Cua correctly he would say that for the Confucian, the mystery of existence of the world is not something to be described as merely a certain ineliminable lack of knowledge, a matter of intellectual response or awareness in the face of an unanswerable question. Rather the answer—or rather the response—is a practical one, that of living in a certain general way on the part of a man of sincerity. It would consist in what he describes as a harmony that holds in the life of such a man between his own *tao*, his own way of life, and that of the world, that of 'Heaven and Earth'. To the ready question how, in the face of an omnipresent and ceaseless 'creative and transformative Universe' one is to know *what*, specifically, are the *particular* ways of life the wise man would choose, he refuses to give an answer. The wise man, having somehow made the choices that he does and with sincerity, finds (because his wisdom is itself a 'mystery') that how he lives manages, somehow, to establish a harmony between himself and the world.

In his interpretation of the expressions "the *tao* of Heaven and Earth," "the *tao* of Heaven," "the *tao* of the superior man," and "the *tao* of the sage," Cua suggests that we understand the notion of *tao* as used in these expressions as corresponding to the notion of existence. I find a difficulty here. For if indeed '*tao*' does mean 'existence' then I fail to see how any *moral* consequences follow from the injunction that the *tao* of the wise man will be one that is in a central harmony with that of 'Heaven and Earth'. I myself should rather be inclined to understand by 'Heaven and Earth' what I have earlier designated as 'The Universe.' And for The Universe in this sense, while we can never claim to have a detailed, unified, or complete knowledge of its contents and structure, as an absolute whole, some descriptive and explanatory account of these, some relative though incomplete degree of intelligibility *is* provided by the combined resources of tested common experience and science. Such knowledge and intelligibility as are secured involve the use of all our available sensory and conceptual resources—or in linguistic terms, all the appropriate descriptive vocabulary we can muster. But to speak of *existence* as such, whether of the world as a whole (and so of Existence) or of its parts as existents, is to forego and leave behind the discriminative, descriptive vocabulary and intelligibilities of common sense and science.

How can any particular way of life follow from such ontologic awareness as we may have of the nature of Existence or of existents? On the contrary, the

moral choices we could—and in a sense are forced—to make, are made on a more fundamental, rich, and determinate level. That level is one in which as parts of The Universe and as the particular kind of biological *organisms* and social *persons* we are, we need to assess and evaluate the multiple alternative courses of action available to us. The philosophic discrimination of existents qua existents does not give us as such any specific moral guidance, any more that we should be able to derive an astronomy, chemistry, biology, or psychology from an ontologic consideration of existents qua existents. Should we not say therefore that the *tao* of Heaven and Earth is whatever the best available scientific knowledge tells us, at a given time, is the structure, the 'way' things are? And should we not say, too, that the *tao* or way individual men should conduct their lives calls for the best available practical intelligence and wisdom in the face of the specific circumstances, both relatively unchanging as well as continually changing that define the context for moral choice in action, precisely in order to achieve the general end of 'living at ease with things'?

There is, however, possibly another tack altogether we might follow in order to make sense of the theme of the central harmony of man and Heaven and Earth. If the *tao* of the wise man be understood as the achievement of that type of insight which comes from having philosophically and ontologically discriminated the nature of Existence and the status of existents then such achievement is itself a supreme form of spiritual harmony. The fruit of the achievement of such philosophic insight is—as the sages of the Orient and the West have repeatedly confirmed—a supreme good of life. Such harmony of insight functions on a different level from that of discriminative practical intelligence devoted to the ordering of our desires and emotions, and thus to a harmony of moral action in a more circumscribed sense. If this be the central theme of the *Doctrine of the Mean* (and I am not at all sure that it is), then it would represent a meeting place for a Confucian ethic and the message of Lao Tze.

In turning to the papers of Kenneth Inada and Edith Wyschogrod, as representing two of the most important strands in traditional Indian thought, that of Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta, we are once again confronted with an evident desire on the part of these interpreters to find points of contact between the philosophies they expound and my own efforts at characterizing the transcendence of Existence. I welcome these generous proposals at bridge building and, indeed, I accept with much satisfaction a good deal of what they have to say. Nevertheless I feel it necessary here too to enter a number of caveats and reservations.

The chief problem of ontology, as I conceive it, is to give a satisfactory account of existence. What this entails, as I have summarized earlier, is to give an analysis of the relation of the domain of plural existents to the transcendent One that is Existence. In traditional 'religious' terms, it is to give an account of the relation of the finite to the Infinite. In the history of thought, there have

been, among others, two main types of 'solutions' to this problem, each in its own way highly influential. One—whose chief example is theism—takes the relation to be that modelled on causality: The One (God) creates the world (the domain of the Many). In other terminology, the Infinite is the 'ground', 'source', 'cause' of the finite Many. The other view takes the domain of the Many as a domain of illusion, of appearances that screen the True Reality which is The One, and where only the eventual disclosure of The One brings genuine enlightenment. I shall refer to the first type of view as that of Creationism, that of the second as Illusionism. My own attempt at showing how both the domain of existents (The World) as well as the transcendent Existence itself is, each in its own way, an abstractive ontologic aspect of The Universe, would involve a rejection of both Creationism and Illusionism.

I would argue against the first view that there is, for ontology, no relation of production, causation, derivation, or creation holding between the One Existence and the many existents. Both the One and the Many are equally real and primary, different sides or aspects of what exists. Causality, however, applies only within the domain of existents, when these are in turn filled out in all their descriptive richness in order for causal relations to be suitably expressed and embedded. Causality however, does not, cut across and hold as a linkage between Existence and existents.

The second view, the illusionistic one, has been the dominant view in Indian religious philosophy, whether Buddhistic or Vedāntic. For this type of philosophy, the world, as a realm of plural existents, does not have a subordinate status as in creationism, where, though it is subordinate to the ultimate reality of God, it is nevertheless real. Rather the world is taken as a domain of illusion and unreality, preoccupation with which shields us from coming to know the only genuine reality, that of Brahman.

Inada reminds us that for the Buddhist the plural realm of existents is an ontologically imperfect realm, one of "limitation and ignorance." The wise man will forsake it in order that the "ontologically perfect realm can be arrived at by taking an aloof position to all concepts, notions, elements, etc. which hinder all perceptions and experiences." And Wyschogrod reminds us similarly that for Śaṅkara "the totality of discriminable objects . . . (is) neither *sat* (Being) nor *asat* (nonbeing) but is designated as having the qualified being belonging to illusion." Indeed according to her, "when knowledge of Brahman is attained, what we call the enterprise of descriptive metaphysics is seen to be without value and the rules for discriminating entities from one another . . . become meaningless."

Now this ontological disparagement of the realm of plural existents is a thesis with which I do not find any sympathy. To ignore the reality of existents is to ignore that aspect of existence which derives in the first place from seeing that the Universe is a whole of many parts, and that these parts, however we come to identify, enumerate, and classify them, *do* belong to the Universe and

without which it could not be a Universe at all. Indeed therefore Existence, as the other aspect of the Universe—its aspect of being indescribable and conceptually inaccessible as the wholly unique 'thing' it is—(what we become aware of when all multiplicity drops out of view, but not out of existence), cannot itself be real unless there were also a multiplicity of parts. To deny reality to the domain of existents is tantamount to removing the very ontological base for Existence itself.

I think it is important to keep separate these two things: (1) the extent to which concepts, judgments, and the exercise of human faculties of perception, imagination, and intelligence are relevant and ineradicably important for dealing with the domain of finite existents: and (2) the inappropriateness and irrelevancy of these same faculties and methods when dealing with Existence. The great mistake, it seems to me, is to select one of these as all-sufficient and to ignore or condemn the other. I think this would be a mistake not only for ontology which undertakes to determine the nature of existence: it would also be a mistake for any value considerations that would counsel us in what directions we are to look in order to exercise to the fullest our human faculties. In this respect the pragmatists, materialists, nominalists, and various species of moral idealists are guilty of ignoring the extent to which we must also dwell upon and acknowledge the Transcendent. On the other hand, those who condemn intellect, judgment, conceptual analysis, because they have, through meditative exercises, succeeded in ridding the mind of these and any regard for the private self, the social scene or the natural world, are just as guilty of philosophic and human inadequacy. Having found tranquillity in their awareness of Brahman or a state of *Nirvāṇa*, they relegate the domain of ordinary human affairs and the exercise of reason and conceptual understanding to the status of illusion. On a practical level this only paves the way for disaster; on a philosophic level it shows a failure to do equal justice to the finite as it would to the Infinite. What is called for, it seems to me, is thus not a preference for the One over the Many, an exclusive mystical absorption in Brahman as the sole ultimate reality, but an awareness of the *coordinate* ontologic status of the realm of the many existents and Existence. The task of elaborating, in adequate detail the lineaments of such a coordinative analysis of the two sides or dimensions of existence, of existents and Existence, is, as I see it, the major task of philosophy. It would seek to bring to a harmonious integration the best available insights of the rich heritage of the East and West, and thereby provide the philosophic support and matrix in which both a serious regard for science and an equally serious regard for the rewards of a transcendental spirituality can be realized.