THE ONE AND THE MULTIPLE - RECONSIDERING THE CONCEPT OF MONOTHEISM A METADISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Madeea Axinciuc[*]

University of Bucharest, 5-7 Edgar Quinet St., sector 1, Bucharest, Romania

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Abstract

The study revisits the concept of monotheism, by indicating toward a new horizon for the understanding of the term. 'Monotheism' functioned mainly as an apologetic label in order to justify the (spiritual, doctrinal and/ or political) supremacy of the three Abrahamic religions, and to misjudge the surrounding traditions as heathen or pagan, primitive or inferior, polytheistic or idolatrous. Recent research unveiled evident monotheistic dimensions for cults and traditions generally considered to be polytheistic or non-theistic. My assumption is that the content of monotheism ca not be deduced or reduced to particular features stemming from its sole application within the framework of the three 'monotheistic' traditions, but it needs to be reconfigured methodologically, and liberated from ideological contaminations.

The study is performed in a framework established by the correlation between the One and the Multiple considered in philosophical terms. The assumption is that the understanding of monotheism is shaped and reshaped according to each tradition's particular way of pointing to (or addressing) 'the One'. Scientific perspectives pertaining to Theoretical Physics are recalled in order to re-contextualize specific issues referring to spatiotemporal continuity, multi-dimensional universe, causality or subject-object relationship.

The study highlights the necessity to correlate the scholarly theories regarding religious experience or doctrines to nowadays scientific results approaching (the way we perceive) reality, and proposes to *instrumentalize* the term 'monotheism' in such a way that its employment will become legitimate.

Keywords: monotheism, One, Multiple, interreligious, causality

1. Methodological preamble

The study aims at a *revision* and a *re-appraisal*, from a comparative and metadisciplinary perspective, of the meaning and the significance of monotheism. The work will be performed in a framework established by the relation between the One and the Multiple considered in philosophical terms. It is our assumption that the understanding of monotheism is shaped and reshaped

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[*] E-mail: mail@madeea-axinciuc.eu, tel.: +40213121313

by the specific way of pointing to (or addressing) the One in the different 'monotheistic' religions.

The essence and the existence of the One are neither clear, nor self-evident. Since the One beyond multiplicity can only be indicated through the divine hierarchies bridging between the visible Multiple and the invisible One, monotheism appears rather as a challenge, its description and significance being essentially linked to the structure, the dynamic and the 'intention' of the divine hierarchy.

The purpose is not to merely understand the theories concerning monotheism, but rather to methodically reconfigure monotheism as an *instrument* in approaching and understanding religious phenomena (and not as a label with a mainly descriptive function). Consequently, the goal is not to summarize the theories explaining monotheism, but to fill the gap between their particular understanding and the interpretation of the religious experience.

The type of approach I propose was somehow postulated by Mircea Eliade when discussing about the new methodologies to be envisaged for the study of religion and the future developments of this discipline. He introduced then a suggestive formula to describe the new framework and methods meant to renew the scientific discourse by regaining the personal imprint: 'creative hermeneutics' [1-3].

2. On monotheism

I shall begin my excursus on monotheism by arguing that the usages and application of the term at the popular level or in the study of religion (where it is used as a conceptual value) are, with few exceptions, inadequate.

By using the term 'monotheism', I propose to enlarge its definition - in a creative, 'non-idolatrous' manner - preserving as its main description *the connection with the One*, without substantiating or embodying the One by circumscribing the monotheistic dimension to a particular religious tradition. The conceptual (philosophical and religious) burden of the *One* and the horizon of apprehending the term 'monotheism', as proposed and envisaged here, will become clear by the end of this study. The term 'monotheism' is considered to have appeared for the first time in Henry More's work *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (London, 1660). For the successive significances and reconfigurations of the term in the line of conceptual history, from Henry More to Jan Assmann, focusing mainly on the study of the representative approaches regarding biblical monotheism (Julius Wellhausen, Abraham Kuenen, W.F. Albright, Yehezekel Kaufmann, Gerhard von Rad, John Sawyer, James Sanders), I would bring into attention the significant work of Nathan MacDonald *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of 'Monotheism'* [4]. Alternative terms were proposed as redefinitions or refinements stemming, in theological or philosophical key, from various interpretations and visions of the divine and/ or divinity: 'henotheism' [5, 6], 'monolatry' [6-8], 'menotheism' [9], 'megatheism' [10], 'panentheism' [11], 'theomonism' [12]. Consequently, since the concept of monotheism incarnates different 'contents' and features according to its different

usages in different contexts, the hypothesis of theorizing several *types* of monotheism becomes more and more realistic. As an illustration, I would recall the typology proposed for pagan monotheism by Maria V. Cerutti in the contributive volume *Monotheism between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity* [13].

This observation with regard to the illegitimacy of circumscribing a religious phenomenon under the sign of the attribute of 'monotheism' proceeds from the premise that there is an inadequacy when it comes to relating to the religious phenomenon as an *object* that can be described, catalogued and labelled according to features deduced externally from texts, theologies, doctrines, rites, practices, etc.

Recent studies inquiring about the proper usage of the term 'monotheism' with regard to the three Abrahamic religions broaden the semantic constellation of the concept in order to become applicable, in an adequate manner, to different religious contexts.

"Monotheism, polytheism and henotheism are constructs of the Judeo-Christian tradition. They manifest a mindset quite different from that of ancient man. These concepts, along with such pejorative categories as heathens, pagans and idolaters, reflect a rationalization of history that seems natural to us but was not characteristic of ancient cultures. The use of such terms assumes a period of ignorance followed by a period of revelation. […] For ancient man, the situation was quite different. For him, the Supernatural never ceased to interact with the human community and the cosmos." [14]

To be more precise, applying the label 'monotheism' to a religious tradition is risky from the outset. In the European space, this label has given rise to a 'hierarchy' of religions, becoming a *quality* whereby the superiority of the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) is imposed to the detriment of the 'other', 'polytheistic' or quite simply 'pagan' religions.

"The prevalence of monotheism now marks one of the largest differences between the modern world and classical antiquity. Precisely for this reason the differences between Graeco-Roman polytheism and the Jewish, Christian or Islamic monotheisms, which have dominated our own religious and cultural experience since the end of antiquity, pose a serious challenge to our understanding of the past. We view ancient religion through a filter of assumptions, experiences and prejudice. Monotheism contains its own internalized value judgments about polytheistic paganism, and these have always influenced, and sometimes distorted, the academic study of ancient religion. Monotheism today seems not only to have triumphed historically but also to be morally superior to polytheism." [15]

The political consequences of religious intolerance and the violent imposition of monotheism, as understood from within dogmatized frameworks of the Abrahamic religions, were thoroughly examined by Jan Assmann in *The Price of Monotheism* [16].

This essentially political and ideological prerogative has contaminated the vision of religion in the European space, which imposed this differentiation in order to justify and assert its own supremacy. The steps from here to 'holy wars' and the establishment of 'religions of state' were short and somewhat predictable.

I therefore propose to *instrumentalize* the term 'monotheism' in such a way that its employment will become legitimate, at least within the academic register of the study of religion, and perhaps also, in time, at the popular level.

Thus, it is obvious that the hierarchization of religions denotes either ignorance (however learned it might be) or partial, very ideologically contaminated intent.

If religions, wherever they are born and develop, are the secondary reflex, the 'externalization' [17] of a universal human experience of dwelling in original connection with the ultimate ground (regardless of whether this be pointed to, suggested, named or embodied), it means that the possibility of being in connection with the One is open to every religion. This connection will be 'documented', illustrated or theorized to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the breadth and the impact of the tradition, depending on the development of material culture in the region, and depending on the political status a religion acquires within a given time.

In other words, the quality of 'monotheistic' does not belong to a religion thanks to its doctrine, but rather represents a certain perfection to be found at the level of the practitioner who succeeds in achieving the experience of union with the ultimate principle. I recall the eloquent remarks of Henry Corbin:

"Les théologiens délibèrent *sur* le concept de Dieu. Le *tawīd* thèologique pose et présuppose Dieu comme étant d'ores et déjà un *étant*, *Ens supremum*. Or, le mot *tawīd* est un causatif; il signifie faire-un, faire devenir un, unifier. Il va de soi que pour le monothéisme abstrait qui consiste à s'exprimer sur le concept de Dieu, l'unité de celui-ci ne peut être envisagée comme résultant ontologiquement du *tawīd* de l'homme." ("Theologians reflect on the concept of God. Theological *tawhid* poses and presupposes God as already being an *existent being*, *Ens supremum*. Now, the word *tawhid* is causative; it means to make one; to enable the becoming of one, to unify. It goes without saying that for abstract monotheism - which consists of expressing oneself on the concept of God - the unity of God cannot be envisaged as resulting ontologically from *tawhid* by man.") (translated by Matthew Evans-Cockle) [18]

This individual, personalized and unique experience is either realized through employment of the 'tools' made available by a certain tradition, accepted as such, or will itself establish, through 'externalization' [17], a new rite, practice or religious tradition.

It therefore results that it is illegitimate to apply the term 'monotheism' when describing a certain religious tradition (which will arrogate to itself the prerogative of superiority by virtue of this determination). The term may at the most be employed in order to describe certain religious experiences, certain practices and rites, or certain schools and texts that explicitly theorize monotheism, not through differentiation from polytheism, but through

achievement of the level of dwelling in relationship with the One as an ultimate religious experience.

3. On the fragility of monotheism: emergent subjectivity and 'scientific' objectivity

Monotheism supposes, by its very definition, a relation freed from any conceptual label or intellectualizing discourse, rather characterized, in its genuine manifestation, by unstableness and precariousness. This is the outstanding contribution of Nathan MacDonald's book re-appraising and renewing the significances of biblical monotheism [4, p. 149]. The monotheistic dimension is instituted by means of the unique (and unpredictable) relation of "devoted love" [4, p. 97]. "Although central to the Deuteronomic portrayal of YHWH's oneness, love, a wholehearted commitment to YHWH, has no place in the modern intellectualization of 'monotheism'. 'Monotheism' is a truth to be comprehended, not a relationship in which to be committed." [4, p. 97] "[…] the intellectualization implicit in the use of 'monotheism' is not found in Deuteronomy. Modern 'monotheism' represents a call to recognize the objective state of metaphysical affairs. […] In Deuteronomy, however, the recognition of YHWH's oneness is a call to love YHWH, a love expressed in obedience and worship. […] As an article of knowledge, 'monotheism' fails to comprehend Deuteronomy's emphasis on 'love' as the appropriate human response to the oneness of YHWH." [4, p. 210]

The counterarguments in regard to the legitimacy of applying the term 'monotheism' exclusively to designate the three Abrahamic religions are obvious, if we are willing to pay the minimum of attention to the study and understanding of the other religious traditions (regarded as polytheistic or non-theist), traditions in which the connection with the One has the same pre-eminence and is described or suggested with the same depth via texts and representations that leave no room for doubt.

It does not mean that one tradition should (or could) become the reference frame according to which other religious traditions are evaluated, adapted, reduced and eventually distorted to indicate toward the same 'content' logically agreed as a common denominator. This would be a facile, simplified reading, deviating our discussion.

'The transcendent unity of religions', as envisaged by Schuon [19], represents such an empty, unifying formula, offering an abstract and ineffable (pseudo-)solution for the intellect, but actually avoiding the subject-matter.

Likewise, the application of the terms 'sacred' and 'hierarchy' is contaminated by the uneven valorisation of the real understood as what is manifested through us. For this reason, both terms are *subjectively* determined, something that is obvious in all theorizations hitherto bar none.

The personal experience is foundational and essential both in regard to recognition (manifestation) of the sacred and in regard to representation of the divine hierarchy as a personal journey through the different stages.

But if for recognition and embodiment of the sacred, respectively the divine hierarchy, the subjective factor is crucial, is it not natural and necessary that the (re)establishment of the connection with the One and the employment of the attribute 'monotheistic' should also be decided at the subjective level?

Consequently, terms such as 'sacred', 'hierarchy' and 'monotheism' (to which might be added others from the same semantic cluster: 'divine', 'revelation', 'religious experience', etc.) are individualized according to context, and have no predetermined, clearly delimited or separable content. The 'outlines' and 'contents' of such a term will redefine themselves otherwise, according to each particular case (whether it be a question of the description, transmission or interpretation of a religious experience). Such terms prove to be useful to the extent in which they are used cautiously, without altering their special quality as 'vehicles' intended to preserve, transmit and interpret the religious message appropriately.

The proposed approach is by no means deconstructionist, in the sense of negating in general the possibility of adequate and coherent use of the term 'monotheism', but rather aims to be *critical*, in the sense of re-evaluating the possibilities for employing the term without falling into the 'idolatry' of stereotypes and prejudices.

The academic claim to objectivity (in this case, in the study of religion) needs to be carefully weighed. It presupposes neither the stubbornness of classifying and cataloguing, providing final answers labeled as 'scientific', nor the treatment of the phenomena under analysis as measurable 'objects' that can be isolated and described using univocal attributes.

For this reason, I believe that 'scientific objectivity' must allow the subjective factor and therefore unpredictability, the immeasurable, and uniqueness as 'objective' parameters in the analysis of any human phenomenon.

A scientific work does not reveal an 'objective reality', but rather the researcher's capacity for perception, understanding and interpretation. The results do not describe the world 'objectively', but as it presents itself to us in accordance with our powers of perception, understanding and interpretation. However brilliantly this may have been expressed by Kant (and his numerous predecessors), it has had no echo in the academic world, at the level of the way in which we define and valorise scientific research.

Science's false withdrawal into the 'exterior' and 'externalizable' zone of humanity and the world, for the sake of objectivity, is erroneous and *un-objectively* excludes the possibility that the 'exterior' might, for example, be the (co)manifestation of the 'interior' exiled to the realm of the humanist sciences, which are essentially 'un-objective', 'unscientific' and therefore 'unproductive' and generally 'inefficient'. The reduction of "scientific" interest and objectivity to 'exteriority' is in itself un-objective and can only lead to partial results, i.e. relevant only to the 'part' isolated from the whole. But the establishment of the part as the whole and the exacerbation of the attention paid to the visible and therefore corporeal dimension, respectively the world perceivable via the corporeal senses, leads to disharmonies, which soon or later will lead to disease

and the collapse of the artificially created 'system', in order that the 'part' might hygienically be reabsorbed within the harmony of the whole.

4. On space, time and 'the quantum leap'

The renewed vision regarding an understanding of the religious phenomenon and, in general, any phenomenon that constitutes the object or reference point of a study ought to pay greater attention to the framework, to the subjective horizon within which the phenomenon is perceived, analyzed and interpreted.

The perception of history as sequentiality in space and time is to be found in the common (and academic) manner of interpreting the divine hierarchy, respectively monotheism.

History exists for us only from the perspective of sequentiality, in the interval opened up by the hierarchy. But the hierarchy itself, viewed in the simultaneity and integrity of its stages makes the 'leap' towards the One. I shall employ the suggestive illustration provided by the metaphor of the light spectrum: the simultaneity of all the colours in the spectrum produces the color 'white'.

This unifying view will lend each stage a particular value within the framework of the context and total transparency in connection with the One.

The transition from one state to another, from one stage to another, takes place in time if the harmony instituted by the concomitance of capturing the stages in their totality is not achieved. Through the unifying gaze the stages will come together in the non-place and non-time of the One, just as the colours of the spectrum come together in white light, without the distinction of a specific place or time.

The inclination to view and interpret phenomena in sequentiality, via the cause-effect relation, moving from one moment to the next and privileging either past, present or future, reveals a certain limited situation on the researcher's part in regard to the world, space and time (at least from the current perspective of recent theories, which have, however, remained without any effect at the level of the common understanding).

The transition to 'another state' does not mean a 'another' space and 'another' time. There is no 'before' and 'after'. All the registers are simultaneous. But our capacity is reduced to perceiving and situating 'locally', at the level of one stage or, at best, through transition between two stages in a hierarchy.

Thus, any historical, evolutionist or 'degenerative' approach sets out from a mode of understanding that has in view a sequential and therefore limited vision with regard to space and time. Such a vision will place the emphasis on the materializations of the stages, on the exterior aspect of positioning, on the statistical gathering of the 'data' that occur at a certain stage, but without their being representative of the totality of the stages or even the one particular stage

(inasmuch as the stage itself is always 'other', however many times it might be traversed and analyzed).

Recognition of *uniqueness* at the level of the multiple will remind us, in a different light, of the words of Heraclitus: "You cannot step into the same river twice".

The question that therefore arises is how we are to define uniqueness and, in relation to it, the individual. That which is unique manifests itself *once*, as an instant, and in the moment immediately thereafter is other and (also) unique. The fact that being has the quality of ceaselessly 'coming to birth' and thus of being unique in every moment means that the individual cannot be isolated or separated (and named), and also annuls the possibility of the existence of a spatiotemporal continuum that might guarantee continuity at the level of identity in space and time. In other words, space and time, as the alveolus of each instant, bring with them an entire world.

From this innovative perspective, there is no memory or real history, but only the memory and the history of each inevitably occurring 'instant' and its world. The transition from one instant to the next is for this reason imperceptible to us, because in each moment we exchange one infinity with another, depending on our inner gaze. Thus, an inner gesture will existentialize one world, and the 'following' gesture another. The transitions between worlds are not evident to us, and the 'memory' of this world is made absolute as an 'objective' memory of facts (and therefore as a history of mankind, the world and the universe).

Just a second 'before' (or 'after') it is possible to have lived in a different world, with a different history and a different appearance.

This possibility created by the perspective of spatiotemporal plasticity has already been postulated in scientific debates developed in Quantum Physics and String Theories by authors such as Brian Greene [20, 21] or Leonard Susskind [22].

It results that the attainment of a higher state of awareness, the living of a religious experience, and positioning within a certain horizon, at a level with its own representations, constitutes not an 'ascent' or a 'descent', but the *modification* of a state thus perceptible only from the perspective of sequentiality.

To return to the discussion of monotheism, to name a religion as 'monotheistic' or to fix the emergence of monotheism within a particular historical period is as extravagant as it is absurd. As we have seen, understanding can be 'monotheistic', as a power of inner comprehension and unification of the stages. This can be historically proven and demonstrated only through exterior *signs*, to the extent that these exist and have not, in their turn, already been distorted by misunderstanding or ideologization.

There are studies that try to precisely date the emergence of monotheism. Its nascence is conceived either as a successful ending of an evolution at the level of religious forms of worship as Edward B. Taylor sustained [23], or as a revolutionary step, emphasizing the radical change in terms of paradigm shift and debating the legitimacy of introducing the concept of 'revolutionary

monotheism' [24]. Significant for this line of thought is Raffaele Pettazzoni [25]: "Raffaele Pettazzoni, a proponent of the revolutionary change, identified the following characteristic features of monotheism: (1) monotheism arises as a new religion out of a previously polytheistic environment; (2) its appearance is associated with a religious reform and with the work of the reformer; (3) the affirmation of monotheism is expressed by the negation of polytheism." [26]

It is as if we were to describe the shift from red to ochre in the spectrum as ochre's 'revolutionary' destruction of red. This manner of understanding and interpreting the world leaves no room for simultaneity or concomitance and violently negates the existence of the other levels in the hierarchy. If you erase a single colour, how can you ever have a vision of the rainbow or of white light?

The preconception according to which only the Abrahamic religions are 'monotheistic', having arisen late in history, either as a result of a process of evolution or through divine intervention, led to the establishment of their superiority to the detriment of the other religions, which are viewed as inferior due to their 'polytheism'. The next step was aggressive missionary activity, holy war, and the undiscerning destruction of the 'inferior' religions.

The intention to negate and destroy previous registers when a new register is discovered arises from another deficiency: that of identifying yourself with the new register or appropriating it to yourself in illegitimate ways. The arrogance of acquiring supremacy over the new 'realm' is the immediate consequence of a distorted vision according to which a 'part' or a level in the hierarchy has been separated and taken over as 'property', through the 'rising above', exclusion or even destruction of the other parts or levels.

Does our educational system not fall within this paradigm when it promotes competition and recognizes the superiority of one individual to the detriment of another, setting out from 'partial' criteria imposed by a limited vision, which, transformed into a desideratum, produce monsters due to unilateral development and the exacerbation of one register to the detriment of the others?

One such criterion is that of excellence, in the sense of being the best in your field. Is this an aim worthy dedicating one's life to? In other words, is personal development in the harmony of the multiple registers with which you are born lower than the development of a field or expertise for which one of our human dimensions is overburdened through abandonment of the others and their forcible reduction to silence?

In the present work I am not putting forward an evolutionist or, still less, revolutionary vision. I do, however, propose that we, as humans and for our own sake, take a stance by adopting a critical, realist vision, setting out from what we already know or ought to know in the light of the findings of triumphant science.

My irony here is, I think, justified: the rapid scientific development to which we are exposed is not reflected in our level of knowledge as humans. I refer to the way in which we perceive and interpret the world. The triumph of science remains external to us, as long as it has no connection with what we are,

but rather with what we produce and use, and therefore with an over-specialized knowledge and technology.

What is completely lacking is any popularization of science, evaluation of scientific endeavours, or interpretation of 'partial' results in the light of the 'whole'. This gap is already reflected in findings that undermine the artificially created system, through the introduction of products and technologies at odds with our nature.

Furthermore, the gap already manifests itself dramatically, in the case of 'experts', for example, through the difference at the personal level between knowledge in their field and knowledge as their own (unique) way of perceiving and interpreting the world.

With the exception of a small number of 'experts', all the other 'non-experts' employed 'in production' are deprived of access to knowledge. The increasingly visible results are disastrous: education has been reoriented and is financed solely to produce 'experts', and the level of the development of knowledge is no longer to be found at the level of the individual, but solely at the level of 'science', technology and its products. In time, this involution, 'retardation' and 'infantilization' at the general human level turns us into what Aristotle (speaking of slaves!) called 'talking objects'.

The confiscation of knowledge through its being transferred to the 'scientific' and technological register, followed by the exacerbated and unbalanced development of the 'exterior', will lead to dehumanization, whose consequences are already visible.

5. On causality

Besides causality via the cause-effect concatenation, there also exists causality via *connection with the One*. While the first type of causality can easily be found at the level of the forms of the visible and is for this reason chiefly exploited by science within the multiple that unfolds as hierarchy, causality via *connection with the One* can neither be predicted nor measured, as it manifests itself as pure spontaneity.

As long as the predictable and measurable cause-effect connection is exclusively pursued under the dominion of science, the connection with the One and causality through this connection will be consigned to a secondary place.

At the level of the visible, the manner in which things and beings influence each other can be 'systematized' until proven otherwise. This superficial view does not reveal the world in an 'objective' way, but rather it reveals our more or less shared mode of understanding and interpretation at the level of the senses.

Dwelling in connection with the One does not negate causality of the cause-effect type, but unfolds within a different register, the same as the theory of relativity does not negate Newtonian mechanics.

What mode of understanding the world does a shaman have, for example, when he shifts the shape of his body according to his will? What understanding of the world did Christ have when He walked on water?

In both cases causality within the order of the multiple is defied. And this is because the movement of the body follows upon the movement of the soul (and not the other way around, as we are wont to believe, taking as our reference point the law of cause and effect), and the movement of the multiple follows upon the movement of the One (and not the other way around).

The disequilibrium in the relation between the One and the multiple, either by exacerbating the multiple, or by taking refuge in forms ascribing themselves the universality of the One, leads, by 'dis-continuity', to a 'dis-location' produced through the "displacement of God" [27]:

"[…] the central dimensions of the thought and practice of antiquity and modernity share a common failure in conceiving and practicing relationality. The many can find their true being and be understood only as they are related to each other and to the One, but the main streams of neither antiquity nor modernity have been able to conceive the patterns of relation adequately. […] My contention is that the distinctive failures of our era derive from its failure of due relatedness to God, the one, the focus of the unity of all things. That is the pathos of modernity. […] Where the true one is displaced, false and alienating gods rush in to fill the vacancy." [27, p. 37-38]

If I decide to go to the university, I perceive and regard my intention, as a movement of the soul, as conditioned by the movement of the body that will 'take me' to the university. I will say that I have arrived not when the intention arises but when my body has got there. If I do not bodily arrive at the university (and therefore the action is interpreted as remaining at the level of an intention), I will regard myself as not having got there at all.

There are, however, cases in which intention is granted a value almost equivalent to that of the action. Such a situation is suggested by the expression 'it's the thought that counts', even if the failure of the action is evident.

Intermezzo

Christ did not *bodily* walk on water, but rather, through a different and profound understanding of that which is, *He* walked and His body followed Him.

In the case of the shaman, the body shifts shape because it fluidly follows the movement of the soul. In other words, the soul is not bound and petrified at the level of a visible shape, depending (causally) upon it.

But how are we educated in a society that strives to be the society of the 'future'? We usually perceive ourselves and distinguish ourselves as individual beings *through the body*. This has become so common that we no longer notice it: to reduce the world to visible exteriority and to attempt insistently to perpetuate the same forms means to interpret the map and the functionality of the world erroneously and superficially.

I shall give a few examples to demonstrate our 'dependence' on the 'inverse' causality (body or world/soul) passed down from generation to generation.

If we want to meet a person, we regard the meeting as having taken place only when our bodies meet in a certain space and at a certain time.

Thus, we generally believe ourselves to be where our bodies are and we identify ourselves in the first instance with our bodies, whenever it is a question of *what* we are*, how* we are, *where* we are, etc.

But do you not meet a person, spontaneously and instantaneously, when the mind or an experience is with that person (in connection with that person)? And if this connection is invisible, is it not nevertheless sufficient to allow us to say that the two persons are together? On the other hand, if two bodies are together without there being any connection of soul, can we not say that the two persons are together *only by virtue of the body*?

When Christ walks on water, is it *with the body* that he walks? And if we walked only in body, would he not sink, following the law of the multiple separated from connection with the One? This is actually happening when, out of fear, Peter, the apostle, suddenly attaches to the logic of the multiple, excluding the One (Matthew 14.23-32).

When we wake up in the morning and open our eyes, we identify ourselves immediately, *depending on what we see*, with 'our history', the 'history of the place' where we find ourselves, with the body and 'its world'. During this moment of *transition* (from the sleeping to the waking state), how often do we happen to allow our soul to go free, while 'we' follow it, without identifying ourselves with the body or reducing our 'world' to the world of our body? I think that this is a revealing exercise from the viewpoint of personal identity.

Causality through connection with the One means listening to and following the movement of the soul. It occurs only if the soul is not (too) weighed down by the body, allowing itself to be carried blindly and unconsciously by the body.

The good hierarchy is that in which movement, *alone*, un-compounded, attains and creates all the levels, and they harmoniously and endlessly follow each other.

Only the part has a beginning and end. It cannot exist alone.

6. Concluding remarks

The intellectualizing and intellectualist understandings of monotheism propose that the term be employed denotatively, as it constitutes a concept designed to serve as a criterion in the description and categorization of different religious traditions [2, p. 221].

We have seen that the term cannot be adequately applied methodologically with regard to religions on the whole, but needs to be adjusted: *monotheism* sooner refers to a tool useful in describing the personal and personalized connection with the One, respectively the normative or desiderative nature of pursuing the One and preserving the connection once it has been (re)established.

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