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The Question

*Ye who are pure shall be scourged all the more and shall by the sword be slain
And loud will they laud the hour of thy flight away into silence and pain
So take up thy buckler and shield and smite with thy
sword that harrying horde
Let death slay death that the one true life might stand
For the time is at hand*

Mak Dizdar, *Stone Sleeper*

Introduction: Two Histories

To ask: *Where are we going?* implies two further questions: *Where are we now?*, and *Where have we come from?* The changes taking place in the new millennium coincide with a clearer notion of the potential for an open world. The temporal and spatial boundaries of the world do not exhaust its potential; and the view that the material world is not the only one is the first step to opening up to the multiplicity of levels of being. An open world is both the consequence and the prerequisite for the open human self. As such, the openness of the self and the world to Unicity make it possible for different languages, meanings and symbols to speak of Reality in another manner. Most of the languages of today's world, however, encounter impediments and ignorance at their point of demarcation from others; and these obstacles and ignorance are readily transformed into hatred and eruptions of violence. The entire experience of Bosnia is inseparable from world trends; but it proffers itself in different languages, which shed light on the clash between the human interpretation of Reality and Reality itself. Holistic insights into this are a prerequisite for identifying a clearer response, a response that is closer to reality, on the possible outcomes of this era and of the human condition of the times. The question is then whether these responses on the self, society and the

world can offer a different and more encouraging understanding and acceptance of will, knowledge and love in human destiny.

With his self, man defines two things—his being, which includes his desires, and the world, which includes all its forms. In this notion of self, his “now” separates the past and the future, both for himself and for his world. And there are two essentially different outlooks on this duality: in the one, the individual sees future as worse than the past, and in the other, the future as better than the past.

The adoption of the first approach (the future as a time in which suffering will increase and overwhelm us) leads one to become a more concerned and responsible citizen. In this conceptualization of man’s movement through time, however, an increasing distancing from principles indicates the darkening and weakening of fundamental human nature. That fundamental nature is perfection; and just as there exist ways of protecting it, so there also exist the means of destroying it. Here, development represents a distancing from that principled center which sees the Holy Scriptures as transcendental over the world of matter, and sees the world as its image. Losing the awareness of that principled dimension of the world’s humanity, we as humans enter an ever deepening alienation which René Guénon refers to as the “crisis of the modern world.”¹

This first approach is extremely rare in contemporary society. Indeed, it is distrusted by those who take the second, more current view, that is, of the future as a state in which there will be an accumulation of goodwill and harmony, and in which evil and conflict will disappear. The latter, historical-progress view is a credo in Hegelian and Marxian societies, which are based upon two ideologies: according to one, society is moving toward “the end of history,” a time during which liberal democracy will resolve social tensions; in the other, the state will be imbued with the freedom and harmony that flow from a classless society.

The second approach, which foresees a better future, views death and destruction as decreasing in likelihood. Suffering and destruction are features of the past, of a state of underdevelopment. This produces, inevitably, a naiveté towards such matters as Auschwitz, the Gulags, Bosnia, and Kosovo. For those who take this approach, these are aberrations which run counter to laws of history. In the first approach, by contrast, humankind’s experience of death and destruction is a consequence of turning away from, and forgetting about, the fundamental human principle spoken of above. The world view here is that all that can be expected in the future is ever-increasing danger.

From these two concepts of humankind and the world, two attitudes arise. The first is a pessimistic wisdom and the second is an optimistic naiveté. In the first, future events are evaluated on the basis of the worst possible scenario, and this can contribute to a change in consciousness and an effort to prevent bloodshed and destruction. The second produces happiness and a variety of ways of finding enjoyment, but at the same time predisposes towards an unwillingness to sacrifice anything for the sake of a better future.

Both approaches to humankind's position in time are attempts to deal with the question of development. Development may be examined in relation to any human "now." Where that "now" is placed—past, present, or imagined future—is irrelevant. What is important is the distancing which change brings us from that "now." If "now" is the original starting point, movement away from "now" may bring decrease or increase of whatever quantity or quality was present in that initial state.

Yet, as human societies become ever more complex, their inevitable fragility carries the danger of increasing bloodshed and destruction. Today's world consists of approximately two hundred states, of which the homogeneous are in the minority. Surprisingly, in less than 5 percent—approximately ten—of these states there exists a single ethnic group constituting at least 75 percent of the population. Moreover, the interrelatedness and interdependence of countries is becoming ever greater. The question of the self-sufficiency of sovereign states has long since lost any sense of meaning: the totality of the world market demands a unified approach, which gives rise to agreements and laws.

Economic laws in this interdependent world impose a principle of dominance, which is seen in terms of occupying the highest place in terms of economic power. This demands the expansion of governance, which in turn perpetuates the supremacy of the leader states. From this there follows not only an accumulation of state power, but also a growing exhaustion of resources. Then the most powerful turn increasingly to the least wealthy, among whom the exhaustion of resources is less extensive. Development leads, therefore, to the inevitable interrelationship of those who are most distant from their starting point with those who are closest to it.

The former find it most appropriate to conceptualize the world in categories such as liberalism, democracy, economic development, free market, human rights, rule of law, and so forth. The latter tend to conceptualize the world according to categories of tradition, in which development means distancing oneself from the notion of principled perfection, forgetting fundamental human values, feeling inadequate regarding one's search for and route

towards wisdom and perfection. Yet such a concept of existence, when acknowledged rather than dismissed, establishes a clear relation between the transcendental and the mundane worlds. Such a society has established a doctrine, interpretation, and order which together are designed to resolve the conflict between this and the other world. The impossibility of perfection of the mundane, in such a picture, finds its resolution in the release made possible by transcending this world. Conversely, a “developed” nation’s social structure produces disillusionment and alienation among its members. Although at the pinnacle of historical development, such a state does not permit the sense of human fulfillment, which is experienced as responsibility towards oneself and the world, as the achievement of human desire.

Yet, to many members of the “underdeveloped” nations, in which tradition is an integral part of life, the greatest possible development (identified as social well-being and freedom) has become not only the very model to strive for, but also an ideal which is blamed for all forms of “underdevelopment” and the impossibility of eliminating them. Thus, the very development of the modern world becomes a measure of the deprivation of the “undeveloped.” Available identities are used to attribute the image of a hostile ideology to the developed state, an ideology which can be understood and overcome only by turning away from it and fighting against it.²

Power which reinforces the stereotypes of the world cannot go beyond mere utility. However, greater power leads to considerably greater needs. The discrepancy between human desires and what the world can offer is ever widening. The understanding of the causes and aims of humanity’s presence in the world diminishes even as the measure of their power increases. This leads inevitably towards an increase in the distance between “developed” and “undeveloped,” and thus, an ever starker confrontation between liberalism and traditionalism, with liberalism on the side of the developed and their power, and traditionalism on the side of the undeveloped and their supposed impotence. However, the borders between states are becoming ever more permeable in accordance with the demands of the flow of people and goods. This imposes a mutual dependence, thus enabling an ever-greater presence of a tradition-based world view.

At the same time, an upsurge in democracy in certain states may produce a weakening both of those institutions of government which make governance possible and of the traditional connections between members of that society. Then traditional intelligence withdraws in the face of modern science, and tradition becomes increasingly a matter of morality and sentimentality—ingredients that cannot compete with the laws of globalization based on economic growth. Left without an organic link between quantity and quality,

between means and ends, such states are left vulnerable to ideologies obsessed with autarchy.

The Attempt and Failure of Bosnia

It is difficult to find any text on contemporary world issues published in the last decade of the second Christian millennium that does not discuss the subject of Bosnia.³ Unfortunately, this is not a consequence of any special interest in the nature of this country and its history, although there has long existed ample justification for this. The interest derives instead from a war in which the world was a witness as this country was laid waste, thereby turning international curiosity into a ritual of shame. And despite an abundance of books about that war, which have been read and interpreted in accordance with various sentimentalist and ideological approaches, both the country and the war that destroyed it remain, for the most part, misunderstood.

Bosnia has long been home to a number of paths and rituals related to Christianity—the Bosnian Church, Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Islam, and Judaism. It is the only European country that has been based throughout its existence upon a unity of religious diversity—a diversity that was vital for the peace and stability of the world of the past. There is no reason to assume that this new millennium will be any different in its requirements. Such a striving, and the challenges it presents, can be illustrated by some paradigmatic excerpts from its history.

Threats to this diversity have often come from outside her borders. In the year 1203, in the presence of its head of state Ban Kulin, and before the Papal *capellani* and the Papal Ambassador Johannis de Casamaris, Bosnia's religious leaders were forced to deny the content of their Christian faith and ritual because it was not in accordance with the regulations of the Roman Catholic Church. In this process, they were required to change their policy toward the Other, as indicated in the oath given in the document of abjuration: ". . . and further no-one who is known for certain to be Manichean or any other heretic shall be received to live amongst us."⁴ This abjuration was forced by external, non-Bosnian authorities, and what was foresworn was the authentic will and way of life of the Bosnian people.

Threats, however, have been balanced by affirmations of Bosnia's unity in diversity. The unity of these different sacred teachings and ways represents the principle of its continuity. Towards the end of the Bosnian kingdom, when the country was riven with discord, in the year 1463, a meeting took place between the friar Anđeo Zvizdović, the custodian of the community of Bosnian Franciscan monks, and Sultan Mehmed el-Fatih, the head of the

Ottoman Empire, which around that time had spread to include parts of Bosnia. This meeting produced a “Letter of Covenant” in which these two leaders recognized one another on the basis of the sacred principles of their paths towards God. This included the statement:

Let no man hinder or obstruct either the above-mentioned (i.e., Christians) or their churches. Let them live in our dominion. And for those who have fled, let them be free and secure; let them return and live without fear within their monasteries in the lands of our dominion.⁵

In nearly all of Bosnia’s towns, over most of the past centuries, there have lived Christians (both Catholic and Orthodox), Muslims, and Jews. The typical panorama of a Bosnian town is defined by its churches, mosques, and synagogues. This has survived in spite of numerous external attempts to destroy it. In the midst of the anti-Fascist struggle in 1943, the Bosnian people replied to the bloodshed and destruction with a renewed avowal of their country. They stressed their wish that their “country, which is neither Serbian, nor Croatian, nor Muslim, but rather inclusively Serbian, Croatian, and Muslim, should be a Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a free land united in brotherhood, in which there shall be ensured full equality and impartiality for all its citizens, whether Serb, Muslim, or Croat.”⁶

These examples from Bosnian history indicate a general desire by the Bosnian people to protect their right to different sacred paths. Though such overt declarations (like changes in the country’s legal status) have been associated with the presence of external forces, the essential feature is one of religious diversity. The various religious communities included in a vast empire or gathered together in a single country were connected by a single language and an awareness of their genealogical interrelatedness; but sacred tradition, not citizenship, was the concept which informed these basic rules of faith, trust, confidence, and tolerance. People followed the instructions of tradition to live responsibly and independently but in a country shared by all, in communities conscious of their individuality but nonetheless open towards others, with tolerance and respect toward one another but with a firm sense of their own values.

Moreover, the question of establishing and strengthening political freedom or social cohesion in this country could not be separated from its physical survival. Because Bosnia was, on the whole, a pluralist society, its freedom was equally an expression of confidence within and between its communities. Confidence and trust were a precondition for, as well as a measure of, freedom and the possibility of public good in its civil, political, and social manifestations:

Without confidence, all contracts, promises, and obligations—whether economic, social, or political, public or private—can only be maintained by third-party enforcers. (. . .) Without confidence, the ability to articulate and maintain the very idea of a Public Good (let alone one defined in terms of the interconnection of political liberty and social cohesion) becomes highly suspect.⁷

The recent war against Bosnia was directed to a preordained plan whereby the actions of its neighbors and their allies, plus certain internal elements, were bent on destroying this unity in diversity. It was finally halted through a peace accord imposed by the United States of America and their allies. Included in this negotiation process were the major instigators of the war—above all, Serbia and Croatia—and the peace agreement accepted the partition created by the war. Thus, the country was brought to a crossroads from which one could proceed either towards total disintegration, or towards the reunification of the country—either outcome being equally probable.

The free market, privatization, and the introduction of capitalism were inevitable in either outcome. Communist Bosnia had been destroyed by the war, and needed to be transformed into a democratic and capitalist country. However, there were many reasons to suppose that the free market alone, especially if installed by aggressive Western investors, looking to gain a quick profit, would be offering only crumbs of genuine assistance for the civil institutions and democracy it and they claimed to support.

The question of a civil society is crucial to the renewal and survival of Bosnia, as a means of addressing the mutually conflicting ethno-national programs which insist upon a symbiosis of liberal and traditional arguments for carving boundaries between the various ethnic and religious groupings. Nevertheless, under current conditions, the external enforcers of Bosnia's upkeep cannot achieve their goal of reestablishing confidence if this symbiosis fails to differentiate between the *two* fundamental factors for the establishing and strengthening of confidence—not only the need to build an internally consistent civil society, but also tradition. These two goals are interlinked: any long-term attempt to establish a social order and sustained interaction is possible only on the basis of the development of stable relations of trust among members of that society. It is not simply a matter of predicting and explaining the behavior of participants in a social unity: this, for the most part, can be allowed for within the concept of rules, thus, enabling one to have confidence in normative patterns. Trust is rather the need to allow for the possibilities of behavior on the part of the Other which cannot be fully described or presented.⁸ Unfortunately, this essential awareness of the freedom of the Other is equally likely to be expressed in violence and ignorance.

The Manifold Expressions of Truth

Throughout the history of Bosnia, there have thus been two opposite social tendencies. In the one, religious differences are resolved in a shared living space on the basis of confidence in a framework of various sacred paths. In the other, those differences are in conflict with one another.

In earlier centuries, these two fundamental tendencies were connected with the varying religious affiliations of the people of Bosnia. The differences were justified on the basis of individual sacred traditions: indeed, the sense of the sacredness of the Others and their right to be different, which permeated Bosnian society, was the very source of its members' definition of Us. Of course, there existed a clearly defined distinction between religious communities. Each holy doctrine and sacred path, whether Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, or Jewish, was exclusive to its members. But the very fact that the adoption of one holy doctrine and its sacred path was exclusive to the individual who chose it, that one could not choose two holy doctrines and two paths, meant that human salvation could not be seen as secured for Us but denied to the Other. Since salvation, which is interpreted by all holy doctrines and towards which all sacred paths are directed, is possible only in the Absolute, then likewise every exclusiveness is ultimately a general inclusiveness: thus, there was no denial of the right of the Other to belong to a different doctrine and follow a different path with an equal potential for salvation. There was a parallel here with the general concept of "wrong:"⁹ The violation of trust and responsibility towards the Other would represent a sin, a violation of God's instructions that were carried by the spirit in every being and every phenomenon.

In other words, the rightness and completeness of tradition (*din, traditio, religio*) includes particularity of language, symbols, and meanings; yet salvation lies behind it. What lies behind is the Divine unity, of which all the diverse languages, symbols, and meanings speak. Thus, all the diverse forms of that one and only tradition that always lies behind its individual and different forms in space and time make possible its "translation," or transmission. Furthermore, this means the need to hear the Others, regardless of what constitutes their otherness. The word of "tradition" is, therefore, that very fullness of diversity and multiplicity which reveals from hour to hour and everywhere the same, unalterable truth.

This gives us our image of the interwovenness of the various sacred traditions throughout the entire Bosnian territory.¹⁰ Historically speaking, there have been no ethnically or religiously homogeneous parts of Bosnia. Almost all children in this country grew up in an environment containing the call to

prayer from the minarets and the ringing of church bells from the steeples. One had to learn to establish one's own identity within a clear multiplicity of sacred ceremonies, and the demand for recognition of these different features presupposed a recognition and respect of the Other. Thus, the Bosnian *We* is based on the logic of "both *A* and *B*" rather than "either *A* or *B*"—that is, *We*, as a unit of society, history, and territory, cannot survive unless we first reject the exclusive right of any individual over that entirety. This is the first step towards confirming that the whole society belongs to each individual part of its unity of diversity.

This is not a radical notion. The survival of such a paradigm can be observed throughout the territory of Bosnia over its thousand year history. At the same time, it can be observed that the causes of bloodshed and destruction have been a consequence of either failure to understand this, or its deliberate betrayal. In peripheral areas of this territory, there are places where this paradigm has been demolished. A historical perspective confirms that such changes in this fundamental state are the consequence of external designs on Bosnia and projects undertaken in connection with them.¹¹ Generally speaking, Bosnian society throughout its history can be seen as an undertaking to establish, in various ways, forms of action through which tensions between the transcendental and mundane orders may be resolved. Jointly and individually, these actions have influenced the development of structures and institutions. This historical effort is described by Shmuel N. Eisenstadt:

Organizationally the crucial aspect is, of course, the existence of some type of organized church which attempts to monopolize at least the religious sphere and usually also the relations of this sphere to the political powers. But of no lesser importance is the doctrinal aspect—the organization of doctrine, that is, the very stress of the structuring of clear, cognitive, and symbolic boundaries of doctrine.¹²

Inasmuch as Bosnia's entire history is connected with the discussion of Christology and its many interpretations, it is possible not only to speak of the organizational features of each religious community, but also of a doctrinal accord regarding the sacredness of the individual, regardless of his choice of holy doctrine and sacred path. The acceptance of every human individual as a fundamental part of the totality of humanity crosses organizational and doctrinal boundaries: "Whosoever gives life to a soul, shall be as if he had given life to mankind altogether."¹³ This truth, which is fundamental to every social order, is also expressed in the words of Emile Durkheim:

Since each of us incarnates something of humanity, each individual consciousness contains something divine and thus finds itself marked with a character which renders it sacred and inviolable to others. Therein lies all individualism, and that is what makes it a necessary doctrine.¹⁴

This picture of Bosnia's historical multifacetedness was maintained as a constant in a society which was permeated with the sense of the power of the transcendental over the mundane. The position of the individual in each of the holy traditions present in Bosnia represents an image of transcendental order. Salvation is, according to these doctrines, the bridging of the tensions between the one and the other. It is not possible to explain the survival of the multireligious and multiethnic society of Bosnia throughout history without including this premodern connectedness to an awareness of the sense of that which is sacred. In fact, it should be noted that the Bosnian kings accepted the Bosnian Church as a religious organization outside the authority of existing church structures; and that the Ottoman Empire recognized this too, finding a basis within Islam, where religious and ethnic diversity occurs as a sacred feature of the world. Additionally, Bosnia was the place where, for the first time in the history of Europe, Muslims were recognized by the Austro-Hungarian Empire as citizens having equal rights with their Christian counterparts.

The long sought for disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, and then of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was brought about through a strengthening of the nationalist programs which were established to seek the a priori right of liberty from "foreign rule." These programs involved the creation of "national" elites (i.e., powerful coteries claiming to speak for the "people" as a whole), ideologies, and politico-ethnic organizations. These three essential elements of the nationalist program were rational undertakings which were accomplished within the confined circles of each national elite, but their purpose was the building of the nation-state as a part of the will of "the people." Each individual would enter into the program only within an organized majority of individuals from that society. Therefore, the role of ideology was to convince, to sway, and to strengthen individuals in their alliance with the program of building the nation-state.

This was a completely deliberate, planned undertaking, expressing the nature of the new era of rationalism.¹⁵ And it was in complete contradiction to the generalized understanding of the distinction between right and wrong¹⁶ that both permits and holds together religious diversity within one society. Nationalism is not compatible with the notion of "both *A* and *B*" (as opposed to "either *A* or *B*"). This, as we have seen, exists and functions within the sphere

of religious universality, which cannot survive within the reductionism of the nation-state program.

Passivity, Emotion, and Knowledge

Programs for both Serbian and Croatian nation-states were established and developed within the framework of two multinational empires, the former in connection with Serbian Orthodoxy, and the latter with Catholicism. The question of drawing borders or separation from the Other arose within both programs. Both of them, on this basis, attempted to divide and separate.

In Bosnia, both groups represented sectors of population within a presumed ethno-religious whole. Here, however, the groups were intermingled; and with them, the Muslim population. Until modern times, this interweaving exemplified a society within which there existed a consciousness of relatedness, friendship, and confidence. The reasons for tolerance were grounded within the exclusivity and completeness of each individual sacred tradition, where the existence of the Other and the different found their justification in the Divine Unity of God as manifested in each different form of tradition.

But it was precisely these features of social cohesion which were identified as critical barriers to the achievement of nationalist objectives, for an interweaving which involves friendship, confidence, and trust will prevent the demarcation of separate ethno-religious territories. The call for liberation from imperial rule was yoked with the struggle for recognition, and in this struggle the essential Others became those who were closest in terms of ethno-religious identity, those with whom the differences were very small. Thus, friendship with and confidence towards the Other became a basic obstacle to separation, and therefore their annihilation was calculated into the program.

Any attempt to understand the process of bloodshed and destruction is inseparable from understanding those deepest layers of Self which can remain unshaken even after the borders of social makeup have been changed and the basic rules of social unity demolished. It is at this point that one encounters the question of understanding and belief, two layers of Self established in accordance with the ethno-religious program.¹⁷

That predominance of “disengaged reason” is the fundamental element of modernity. That is why the weakening and apparent unsustainability of the Bosnian unity in diversity is part of the spread of modern ideologies in the complex region of southeastern Europe. And here modern-day concepts of tolerance—as Adam B. Seligman writes in his introductory text—reach the social scene, while the principled tolerance that derives from the essence of the sacred traditions is repressed.

The world contains forms, and the human Self contains desires. Every tradition is in its own way the denial of the isolation of things in the world, about which various human desires constellate. Those four vital entities—the world, forms, the Self, and desires—determine three essential aspects of human nature: the passionate, the emotional, and the intellectual. Although there is only one Truth, these aspects are expressed in various ways in the human being. It could be said that in each tradition, along with the respecting of the Other, there is one Truth to which the doctrines of various traditions correspond. When the material that belongs to the various traditions is submitted to a fundamental examination, the difficulties in explaining the differences can be identified. Distinctions exist primarily in the use of language, though every tradition offers accommodation in the area of its doctrine in order to enable various ways of expressing the Truth. It is left to the holy and wise to see the single reality that lies behind these variously shaped differences. Each tradition, when perceiving the Truth behind this diversity, conveys it in its own particular way. The difference between religions in their exoteric and esoteric content can be confirmed. The question of the transcending of this state requires confirmation of the conditionality or relativity of each form and each expression. In this way, Truth becomes distinguished from individual forms and languages, so that it can be described through each of them. But while the Truth is constantly present, the human Self can be absent, for humans may forget Oneness. The presence of Truth in the Self does not depend upon language or form. Both absence and presence may have various names, but the Truth itself does not depend upon this.

Of course, it is unimaginable that one doctrine could include all this diversity. Nonetheless, a doctrine that does not account for the inexhaustible potential of expressing its very essence cannot be a tradition in the full sense of the word. At the center towards which all traditions lead lies the Full Light. Language as reflection is conditioned by the center, but the center is not conditioned by language. In other words, in the variety of individual traditions, it is always possible to establish two fundamental aspects of content: the doctrine and the way. Further, human nature includes three levels: will, love, and knowledge. Each of these is in turn distinguished in two complementary ways which appear respectively as detachment and action, peace and fervor, discrimination and unification. Knowledge and the way connect them. They are two sides of the same being, and degrees or stations of wisdom: will-love-knowledge or fear-love-knowledge.

Regardless of the abundance of possible ways of expression (which are not repeated in form, although they always remain connected with one and the same reality), it is possible to bring them into an order through which

their multiplicity confirms the Oneness of the perennial doctrine. However, the exclusivity of a certain tradition does not require insight into the forms through which the doctrine of another is expressed. For this reason—the limitation in the reading of various forms of tradition—it is not unusual to encounter a different tradition being perceived as “incorrect,” with the resulting loss of the view that Oneness can be manifested and confirmed only through its multiplicity. Therefore the parallel presentations of various expressions of the supra-individual and non-individual truth, dependent neither on time nor on language, are essential in order to eliminate the widespread confusion concerning the conditionality of traditions arising out of a multiplicity of expressions.¹⁸

Faith and intelligence can appear to be opposed. Faith, as a security which originates beyond the state of being, surpasses intelligence. On the other hand, the discernment from which intelligence begins, in order to reach Oneness, surpasses faith. Which of these views is followed is a matter of emotional choice. Much confusion arises precisely from this. It follows, then, that it is possible for there to exist at the same time both exoteric and esoteric languages. Faith in its higher expression is what we call “*religio cordis*”—religion of the heart, that is, inner religion. Corresponding with this is *religio caeli*.¹⁹ This is the expression of eternal Truth in which are manifest signs of enlightenment in the self and in one’s horizons. Faith may be satisfied with little—in contrast with intelligence, which requires precision and is never sated in its game of shaping expressions. It constantly crosses from one thought to another, from one sign to another, without dwelling anywhere. The faith of the heart, on the other hand, will find confirmation in the tiniest manifestation. Such an encounter, no matter how small, can offer fulfillment enough for the religion of the heart.

These distinctions and differences between and within traditions are expressed in the relationship of the individual self towards the external forms which make up the totality of the world. The way one feels one’s nature or interprets it to the self, one’s desires, forms and the world as a whole determine one’s passion, emotion, and intelligence. These are facts of human existence. The passional individual accepts the world and the self as the will of totality. Passion rules individuals and submerges them in the world of phenomena. The outcome is to be found in sacred asceticism or sacrifice. For such a person, the signs in the selves and horizons are not a ladder to infinity, and doctrine contains both a threat and a promise. The metaphysical nature of existence is manifested to the individual in the minutest measure. For the intelligent person, the signs in the selves and horizons are visible: they have no limit and they are transparent. Beyond them there is infinity and the Oneness

of Truth. This is the separation from forms and desires. Reality is that against which this kind of separation can be achieved. Emotional individuals are caught between these two possibilities: in manifestations they expect either a voice or music. If the passional individual is led by fear and desire, and the intelligent person by knowledge, then the emotional individual can be said to be led by hope and love. Expressions of dedication will permeate their relationships toward forms and toward desires. This is the sensing of life on the basis of predestiny.

The Apprenticeship of Submission and Freedom

“Freedom alone is capable of lifting men’s minds above mere mammon worship and the petty personal worries,” wrote Alexis-Charles-Henri Clérel de Tocqueville²⁰; and as such, it is the most arduous of all apprenticeships. Perhaps this is so. Tradition would, however, take the position that, of all apprenticeships, the most difficult is submission. The most sublime freedom is that which is inexpressible. It is confirmed by pure Being revealing itself in multiplicity and movement. This is the God of all forms of the Semitic expression of Truth, not simply the most supreme/sublime Self, but rather the only true reality. Everything bears witness to Him. In Him every symbol disappears: everything disappears, in fact, except God’s face. In Him there is no limitation. Therefore, His face is full of freedom. Submission to Him is the freedom of his creation. The greater that submission, the greater the freedom. If this freedom requires separating from movement for the sake of peace, from the multitude for the sake of Oneness, and from the sign for the sake of that which is signed, then this is submission. Within this submission or freedom all phenomena participate:

Hast thou not seen how to God prostrate themselves all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth, the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains, the trees and the beasts, and many of mankind?²¹

The way or the connectedness between all things leads from God, because He is present everywhere. But there is no single thing through which a path leads to God, because each thing is absent from Him. This is similar to the relationship of the infinite towards any finite thing. Such a relationship neither diminishes nor increases infinite. According to the Holy Revelation, “There is no creature that crawls, but He takes it by the forelock”²² and “to each of them He offers the rope of salvation”.²³ A different relationship is not possible. Even the language of that connectedness, which finds its complete

expression in the doctrine of the Covenant, points toward the connection between people on the basis of their belief in God or without it: “Only men possessed of minds remember, who fulfil God’s covenant, and break not the compact, who join what God has commanded shall be joined.”²⁴ (Here mention should be made of the etymological content of the concept of *religio*, which means “renewed connection.”) From this there is a possible understanding of the explanation in the Holy Revelation:

We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it, and man carried it. Surely he is sinful and very foolish.²⁵

The important word here is “offered.” Trust can be accepted or rejected. The heavens, the Earth, and the mountains reject it. This does not mean a necessarily negative characteristic. Their submission is complete: they have completely submitted their will to God’s will. Their existence is completely in accordance with God’s will. But from the fact that humans accept trust, one can conclude that they are transgressors and ignorant. Between humans and all other things in the totality of creation, there exists this difference: only humans have the freedom to choose submission or nonsubmission to God. Out of such a choice arises the chasm between their being and their knowing. In view of the conditionality of human individuality, the chasm corresponds to a conditional freedom. But that would not be possible if it did not contain violence and ignorance. The presence of violence and ignorance are a “measure” of trust. The traditional path towards freedom lies in its denial for the sake of confirming the one true Self. Humankind is always with and facing the Other. This is a relationship of movement and assessment, which means evaluation.

No perfect truth can possibly derive from the relationship between these two relativities. Confidence (*confidentio*) means the establishment of a relationship between individuals with a responsibility to God, for the face of the other manifests the face of God. The connection is maintained by the awareness that “our God and your God is ever One.” The betrayal of responsibility of man-to-man is a violation of what is owed to God. Confidence therefore maintains the recollection of God. It collapses into violence whenever individuals forget that God sees all that humankind is and does. A relationship between people mediated by their relationship with God is reduced to “trust” in the modern world, where the self decrees the postulates of its autonomy as a sufficient source of moral decision.

The concept of “trust” cannot, therefore, represent either “faith” as the relationship between God and individual, or “confidence” as a relationship

between individuals derived from the belief in God. Trust denotes a relationship between individuals unmediated by a shared faith in the Supreme Being (such a relationship in this essay is referred to as “trusting,”) ²⁶ but not as a perfection which derives from the Absolute, the Creator. Since it is a relationship of creatures, that is, of created beings whose existence is conditional, its inevitable nature is imperfection, which is manifested in “violence and ignorance.”

The resolution of the tension between the earthly order (and participation in it) and the heavenly, in which salvation promises freedom from limitations and death, includes this relationship between God and the individual, in the form of an invitation from the former and a response from the latter. Inasmuch as the invitation and the response take place in the finite world, they are, strictly speaking, a connection of each individual with the same God. It is possible to say, therefore, that there are as many different religions as there are different human beings. Acceptance of the Revealed Way means inclusion in one of the historically multifaceted religious communities. Genuine religion includes the distinction of the real from the unreal, which is a capacity found in every individual. But, likewise, there must be an attachment to reality as defined, which requires knowledge of and connection with the appropriate humanly perfected mediation. This forms the basis for the various languages and rituals. Within and between individuals the possibility of confidence exists, because between each individual “Me” and the group “We,” relations are established through the supreme and only true “I.” This requires agreement that here is a single perennial relevance at the heart of the various holy traditions.

Bosnian premodern society, as a totality of different religious communities, was founded precisely upon confidence within those communities and between them. Each of those communities established its own organization. Each of them developed and maintained its version of the doctrine and the way, but also the awareness of the meeting of that way with all the others in infinity and eternity, in the God who cannot be only “ours” or “theirs,” thus maintaining a responsibility towards all the other communities and their members. This is summed up in the statement: “Our God and your God is One and the Same, and to Him we have surrendered.” ²⁷ The particular features of holy ritual and its symbols are transcended in each of these communities by the connection between God and each of its members. Otherwise, the rituals and symbols would be mere idols. And this is the source of Bosnian tolerance: its reasons are based neither on *Realpolitik*, nor on indifference towards the Other and the different, nor on notions of universal freedom of choice. It is a different choice, rooted in the single sacred that can and must manifest itself in diverse ways in time and space.

Recent changes in Bosnian society have included secularization. Relations between individuals are increasingly founded upon trust rather than confidence. Individuals cease to understand themselves as a creation “in God’s image.” Because they view themselves as the highest level of being, all else is beneath them. Thus, they assume the position of the one who “upholds” or “chooses to hold” themselves and every other being “by the forelock,” and both ends of the rope of their salvation are held in human hands. The individual’s position as a creature has become that of creator. They express their limitations and the unconditionality of their self in relationship with others (and others with them) in violence and ignorance; holy tradition, with its multiplicity of forms, is replaced by secular ideologies.

Among these, the most significant position is taken by the ideology of the nation-state. Every religious community is allowed its own organization and traditional language, but without God as the complete freedom and source of individual salvation. The power of salvation has instead been shifted to the relationship with those people who inherit the religious communities and their legacies. In the ethno-national program, this inheritance becomes transferred to the political elite, ideology, and organization. Holy rituals, their symbols and everything connected with them no longer act as bridges, across which each individual is carried to “the other side,” towards God. Instead, they become a part of the conglomerate of means which determine relations in a closed world. The establishing of a political elite requires a coalition with the religious elite, whereby the latter is in a subordinate position. Ideology necessitates a reshaped understanding of religion, which is transferred onto an ideological reading of history.²⁸ “One nation—one state” is, in this perspective, a false god. Its destructive effect is demonstrated in the ontotopological drive to equate ethno-national identity with territory. And this means that those factors that represent a threat to the desired homogeneity must be eliminated from the ideologically postulated territory. Elites, ideology, and structures become the mediators of trust between individuals. They assume an absolutized role in sustaining society, but do not ensure the satisfaction of the desires and needs of the individual. To countermand this would require a deeper understanding of human needs and the fragility of social structures, both of which are sacrificed when the inner contents of a society’s history are lost.

Human deliverance or liberation requires a doctrine and a path. This doctrine cannot come from the individual. It is both non-individual and supra-individual. As such, it is appropriate for every individual. It is ever-present; it is only man who can be absent. To submit, or to be free, means to find the source of the Self.²⁹

To grow into our mature better selves, we need the help of our nascent better selves, which is what common standards, authoritative education, and a sense of the public good can offer. Consumption takes us as it finds us, the more impulsive and greedy, the better. Education challenges our impulses and informs our greediness with lessons drawn from our mutuality and the higher good we share in our communities of hope. Government, federal and local, with responsibility for public education once took it upon itself (back when “itself” was “us”) to even up the market and lend a hand to our better selves. Now via vouchers the market threatens to get even with public education. This sorry state of affairs is not the work of villains or boors. It arises all too naturally out of the culture of McWorld in a transnational era where governments no longer act to conceive or defend the common good.³⁰

In such a picture of the human position, the general perspective on man’s original perfection has been lost. Now he can lower himself to the lowest of levels. But even there, in that possibility of greatest humiliation, the possibility of perfection remains as a result of his being created. Not even there is he without consciousness of the *cube*, the symbol of building, which in itself includes the polarity of the simultaneous humiliation and exaltation of every being: “We indeed created Man in the fairest stature, then We restored him as the lowest of the low.”³¹

A Lower Freedom

Submission to absolute freedom, in which individual phenomena exist as archetypes, both as source and eternal potential, becomes transformed in this forgotten world of submission into a freedom “beneath the level of reason.” Traditionally, reason is a reflection of intellect in the world of multiplicity and movement. Reason is attracted by all phenomena, but none of them can give it peace. The Absolute cannot belong to it, but humans seek after the Absolute. If reason is the highest level of being, there is nothing above it. The world permits its reshaping according to human content beneath the level of reason. This is McWorld, “a theme park, a Marketland where everything is for sale, someone else is always responsible, and there is no common good or public interest. Here everyone is equal as long as they can afford the price of admission and are content to watch and to consume. McWorld as Marketland is, however, not a natural entity engineered by some benevolent deity. It is fabricated and it is owned, and how it is owned tells us a great deal about its nature.”³² This world is not concerned with the fulfillment of humankind’s creation, nor with the capacity for perfection. In its transcending of the boundaries of individuality by liberal embodiment in the state, the market,

the culture, and suchlike, the supra-individual and the non-individual sources of unity are forgotten and abandoned. Unification is imposed upon the world. Neither its acceptance nor its rejection is a question of place or time, but their expression must be sought in the human self—which may incite to evil, which may reproach, or which may be at peace.³³

Although the modern individual's Self is largely included in this economy—which at the level of society is not only expressed as a rationalization of selfish interests in the acquisition of wealth, but also as the arena of the human struggle for recognition—contemporary economic theory remains, for the most part, powerless to account for the totality of human behavior. This was pointed out by Adam Smith, when he showed that economic life was deeply rooted in social life, and that it cannot be separated from the customs, habits, and social behavior in which that life is functioning. Therefore, it cannot be separated from culture.³⁴ It is possible to see economic and cultural life as the simultaneity and opposition of two processes in a single reality: one which tries to unite people in the ideological world, and one in which they attempt to find themselves in the fullness of their Self. These processes contrast, and have different names and interpretations. When feeling oppressed by the first, humans turn towards the second. This may result in the discovery of the faith of one's ancestors—but most often as dead symbols which strengthen sentimentality and morality without any substantiating intellectual doctrine. Such a "finding of the self" in a "struggle for recognition" mostly consists of a blind resistance to McWorld and a repression of "development" (in the modern sense), in which the consciousness of the fundamental principle becomes ever weaker.

Here we should point out the obsession with the determination of civilization(s) on the basis of phenomena and their external connections, whereby the meeting place (i.e., the center or the highest essence) of a civilization, as confirmed by the sum of perceived phenomena, may become neglected or negated. This corresponds to a concern with the peripheral, as a result of which the center is ignored or denied. It may also come about as a result of an obsession with quantity, and the relation of numbers of things to each other, coupled with the ignoring of the fundamental nature of unity. In this way, civilizations become irreconcilable entities, material systems among which the decisive factor is quantity. From this misunderstanding of multiplicity arises the theory of a "clash of civilizations." This is the logical consequence of the excision of all that is beyond human reason. The center which, in a mysterious way, is both present and absent in every phenomenon, ceases to be the means through which even civilizations may be seen only as various manifestations of a nonindividual, supra-individual truth.³⁵ There is no such thing as

a society without, or without the potential for, a transcendental center. Through that center the symbolic meaning of all its forms is maintained. Without it, this meaning begins to disappear, as well as all the phenomena associated with civilization; and even civilizations themselves begin to take on the nature of condensed forms which reason cannot transcend. They become, therefore, material systems which are in irreconcilable opposition.

The dynamic of the contradiction between forms of civilization which have lost the awareness of their transcendental center is indicated in Bernard Barber's concluding remarks:

What becomes apparent is that the confrontation of Jihad and McWorld has as its first arena neither the city nor the countryside, neither pressured inner cities nor thriving exurbia, but the conflicted soul of the new generation. Nations may be under assault, but the target audience is youth.³⁶

Yet the concepts adopted to determine the contrast between Jihad and McWorld do not correspond to the nature of the conflict described. No individual or joint reading of holy doctrine, as delivered in a certain language and ritual, can claim that it must also be sacred for others. There is only the right and the possibility for each individual, in his/her reading, to overcome his/her own ignorance and inclination toward violence—to meet these needs by being rooted within his/her own Self, and then to establish him-/herself in the fullness of peace, that is, in that center without which no civilization is possible. In the original Arabic, this striving was named *jihad*, but—because of its religious content—it has since been subjected to misreading and misapplication. Widespread acceptance of this misreading has set the seal on the refusal to accept its underlying meaning.

The struggle for recognition leads to the discovery or strengthening of ethnic or religious identities. What does this mean for the young post-Communist world? Or for its colleagues in this “most developed” continent? After such ideological collapses, frequently accompanied by the destruction of entire social structures by massacre and by exile, confusion and disorientation face the survivors and bystanders. In the place of the defeated ideology, ethnized religions, liturgies and symbols, and ethno-national programs are erected. The religious organizations become structures which not only separate and limit people, but also do not offer an escape from the confusion. The blame or guilt of others is intensified, as is also the need for a reading of history which might “explain” the cause of the increased tensions.

This process, which significantly increases the fragility of the social order, has come to be called the “conflict of tradition and modernism,” or “religion