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## **The Universe as a Saturated Phenomenon: The Concept of Creation of the World in View of Modern Cosmology and Philosophy**

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*In this paper we advance J.-L. Marion's theory of saturated phenomena by applying it to cosmology, namely to the notion of the universe as a whole, advocating that it must be considered as an aesthetical rather than a rational idea. It is demonstrated that the excess of intuition of the universe over its presentation in categories of the understanding places the universe as a whole in the range of saturated phenomena. Thus, as a matter of a phenomenological return, it is asserted that it is the universe as a whole, to the extent it cannot be comprehended by the intellect, that constitutes human subjectivity, so that humanity acquires a status of microcosm in a very non-trivial sense. Since the universe as a whole correlates with the notion of creation in theology, it is argued that any approach to creation in the natural attitude is impossible, for it involves the issue of that consciousness which articulates creation. Creation enters the very facticity of consciousness through being formed by its saturating givenness.*

*Keywords: consciousness, cosmology, creation, events, experience, humanity, infinity, saturated phenomenon, universe.*

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*The saturated phenomenon refuses to let itself be looked at as an object precisely because it appears with a multitude and indescribable excess that suspends any effort at constitution. To define the saturated phenomenon as a nonobjective or, more exactly, nonobjectivizable, object in no way indicates a refuge in the irrational or the arbitrary; this definition refers to one of its distinctive properties: although exemplarily visible, it nevertheless cannot be looked at.*

Jean-Luc Marion, "The Saturated Phenomenon", 209

### **Introduction: creation of the world and creation of humanity**

One of the tasks of the dialogue between theology and science is to elucidate in the modern scientific and philosophical context

the sense of what is meant by creation of the world out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). As is often argued in current discussions on the theme, the adequate theological appropriation of the scientific approach to the study of the

natural universe is possible only if nature and the universe are treated not as an “environment” for physical and biological existence, but as creation. This implies not only a dispassionate study of the universe which is contingent upon God, but also of the relationship between human creatures with God through nature (Foltz 2011, p. 108). Contrary to what Karl Barth wrote in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely that “there can be no scientific problems, questions, objections or aids in relation to what Holy Scripture and the Christian Church understand by the divine work of creation” (Barth 1936-77, p. ix), a contemporary interpretation of what is meant by the creation of the world is necessary in order to elucidate the modern liberal consciousness of that which is constantly quoted in biblical formulae related to creation of the world (Pannenberg 2008, p. 25). First of all this is related to the vision of the physical universe, as created, in modern natural sciences, cosmology in particular. Secondly it is related to an appropriation of the notion of creation to elucidate the sense of the human condition and mystery of created personhood.

Since all contemporary discussions on science and Christian theology refer to the Divine, they imply the distinction between this world (which is studied by science) and God, who created this world and who is beyond this world. Thus the issue arises of the relationship between God and the world, and how to commune with God, that is, in a way, to transcend the world. The distinction between God and the world in theology encodes the whole problem of creation of the world as its contingent facticity.<sup>1</sup> The discussion between science and Christianity attempts to establish the truth of propositions about actual being either on the grounds of the world’s self-sufficient existence according to laws of nature, or as being “rooted” in (or contingent upon) its other, trans-worldly origin, which nevertheless

allows one to *detect* its traces in the world. Phrased in a scientific manner, the latter would mean that this world with its acting contingent laws must have the foundation of their contingency in some “other transworldly laws”, as an outcome of the latter. Seen in this way, the question of the facticity of the world would reduce to its supposed inclusiveness in a wider “reality”, and it is not important whether this reality is associated with the Divine<sup>2</sup>, or with some trans-worldly principle similar to the multiverse.<sup>3</sup> However, all attempts to describe creation encounter a fundamental difficulty. Such a description can be done in abstraction, when the very act of creation, as well as that which is created, are presented as *objects*. J.-L. Marion gives a fine qualification of what is typical to those phenomena which are called objects; he defines objects as those which are poor in phenomenality: to constitute an object means to loose a phenomenal autonomy and spontaneity which a thing manifests from itself, that is from its event-like appearance. The condition of objects is exactly deprivation if this event-like manifestation and its reduction to the rubrics of “I think”; the conditions of the object can be described in four rubrics: quantity, quality, relation and modality.<sup>4</sup> But this entails an imminent difficulty because creation and the universe as a whole cannot be thought in these rubrics, so that the natural attitude with respect to the universe is impossible. Despite the fact that we have already used the term “natural attitude” many times before, it is worth to rearticulate it here once again. The natural attitude is related to the activity of consciousness and, according to M. Natanson: “Within the natural attitude I act in a world which is real, a world that existed before I was born and which I think will continue to exist after I die. This world is inhabited not only by me, but also by my fellow men, who are human beings with whom I can and do communicate meaningfully. This world has familiar features

which have been systematically described through the genetic-causal categories of science. The world of daily life is lived within this natural attitude, and as long as things go along smoothly and reasonably well, there arises no need to call this attitude into question.” The reasonability and wellness is related to the situation when the question about the contingent facticity of that which is going on around, including the facticity of the whole world and the “I”, which makes enquiries about it, does not arise. Then Natanson continues: “But even if I do occasionally ask whether some things “really real”, whether the world is “really” as it appears to be, these questions are still posed in such a way that they are my questions about the natural world in which I live. I do not really scrutinize my natural attitude in any rigorous manner: I merely mark off a bit of it for more careful study.” (Natanson 1959, p. 32). Since, as we argue in this chapter, the natural attitude is not suitable for the description of the relationship between God and the world, as well, as between the whole creation and humanity, the elucidation of these relationships can be done only on the grounds of questioning the very facticity of the natural attitude. Indeed, when talking of creation, that one, who is talking, implies its own creation and the limits of its comprehension following from being created. To represent creation mentally as “an object” one needs to exit one’s own existence in order to “look” at one’s own coming into being (as well as coming into being of the world) from “outside”, as if there were some antecedents to it. However, as was argued by existential philosophers, as well as modern phenomenologists, such an approach is philosophically untenable, because it contradicts the facticity of the given life as that originary fact and event, from within whose horizon the whole world order is unfolded, and whose non-originary origin cannot be linguistically and mentally located.

Thus the problem can be formulated: since the exit from that which is supposed to be created is impossible, how can one speculate about creation with a reference to the trans-worldly, that is the transcendent, remaining immanent to the created world? Since in any philosophy that adopts the a-priori given of the cognitive faculties, from within which the phenomena are constituted, the transcendence is deeply problematic and hence religious experience of communion with God cannot receive its exhaustive explication on the level of reason. In spite of the fact that the rationality of communion with God is different in comparison with that one which pertains to scientific research, the very actual facticity and possibility of the dialogue between science and theology demonstrates that they have a common ground and their different rationality follows from their belonging to the deeds of humanity. There is a rationality which pertains to faith which has its own reason, as well as there is a rationality which pertains to the scientific quest, which is grounded in hidden beliefs.

The rationality of theology implies that one must know how to speak of God’s presence in the world and to enquire into the sense of creation of the world or of any particular human being. This in turn implies *existential transcendence*, that is a perception of commensurability with the whole creation not in terms of space-time, but in terms of one’s fundamental otherness with respect to the rest of creation. Existential transcendence makes devoid of sense all attempts to think of creatures as overcoming and abandoning this world: this is impossible not only because of consubstantial corporeity, but also because, theologically, the Earth is spiritually central, being humanity’s flesh. Correspondingly all forms of thought of the other worlds remain no more than mental images, eidetic variations on the level of intelligible forms, which are posed as the other with respect to hypostatic subjectivity. These

other worlds could mimic the creaturely reality of the spiritual order. In this case the invocation of other worlds is dangerous and soteriologically futile and Christian theology warned against this because we cannot understand the meaning and purpose of other worlds in the conditions where the meaning of our own physical world, because of the Fall, remains obscure.<sup>5</sup>

Then the question of creation of the world becomes reduced in its content: one speaks not about creation of the world in general, but about creation of *this world as its factual givenness to humanity*. Thus what is important is not a “dynamic” of creation as its hermeneutics (be it biblical or scientific), but understanding creation as bringing humanity into this world, placing it face to face with this world, so that humanity could see God as present in the world. Speaking of creation and creaturehood, one speaks of knowledge of the creator, that is of theology, that “consists not in the conjectures of man’s reason or the results of critical research but in a statement of the life into which man has been introduced by the action of the Holy Spirit” (Sakharov 2002, p.171). The issue of creation is thus not just the question of creation of human beings in their substantial similarity with this world, but in the Divine image, capable of knowing God.

It is known that St. Athanasius the Great noted that in spite of the fact that the Father provided the works of creation as means by which its Maker might be known it did not prevent men from wallowing in error (Athanasius 1998, p. 39); because of this the Word of God descended to men in order to “renew the same teaching” (Ibid., p. 42). Since the Incarnation was initiated by the Holy Spirit, who is not transparent in rubrics of space and time, we can affirm again that the theology of creation is a statement of the life into which humanity has been introduced by the action of the Holy Spirit in the image of the eternally conceived incarnation of the Word of God. One

observes here a Christo-geocentric reduction of the problem of creation because the Incarnation, as an element of the Divine economy, implies the existence of a universe where humanity is possible, and hence the coming of the Son of God in human flesh would be possible. In this case the retaining of the transcendent in the created world would be equivalent to retaining the dual nature of the Word-Logos of God in the structures of the physical world, that is a perception of the extended space and time of the universe through the prism of its relation to God as the creator and sustainer of the universe.<sup>6</sup> Being created by the Logos and through the Logos, this world manifests the spatial paradox of Christ, that is his presence *in* space but not *of* space; his historical presence on Earth which is equivalent to omnipresence devoid of any spatio-temporal extension.

The createdness of the world, being the otherness of God rooted in his love, means a global, spatial and temporal, correlation and correspondence between all places in the created universe simply because this world is a “moment” and “event” of the Divine love. Createdness of the world must in this case not only point towards some unique antecedent moment in the history of the universe when “all was in all” and from which all came to be. It must point towards the actual omni-presence of the human insight, created in the image of Christ himself, that is its presence in all corners of the universe extended in space and time. This would signify that retaining of the transcendent in the immanent creation which overcomes the physical representation of the universe as being divided into multiple non-overlapping causally disconnected segments, only one of which is visible to us. The very intuition of the universe as a whole, manifests an archetypical trace of “all in all” in human consciousness when the transcendent revealed itself in the immanent without compromising its other-worldliness. The intuition of the universe as a whole, that is as

creation reveals that quality of the human reason which positions itself in *catholicity* with all levels of being<sup>7</sup>, that quality which originates in the Divine image, that is in the archetype of Christ himself. This quality of reason as its theological commitment to the Divine image, is accentuated through the teaching that human beings attempt to understand the underlying sense of beings and things not according to their “nature” (which is disclosed in particular sciences) but according to the final causes of these beings and things (that is in a global, cosmological, context) in relation to the place and goals of humanity, made in the image of God, in creation. This is the reason why humanity wants to recognise the universe as creation not according to its nature (as happens in cosmology) that is according to it compelling empirical givenness, but as results of humanity’s free will.

The very ambition of cosmology to be a science of the created universe as a whole is determined by the human capacity to transcend empirical and astronomical facts and invoke the idea of the wholeness of the world and the universe. Human free will makes itself manifest here through the desire to be commensurable with the universe despite its physical impossibility. The mental image of the whole created world is *de facto* the manifestation of the willing activity of humanity, and “knowledge” of the universe as a whole is possible only as this willing. Since the universe as a whole cannot become a matter of investigation in the phenomenality of objects, all cosmological attempts to grasp the sense of this whole even if they have a complex mathematical shape, still appear to be the urges of free will.

Modern cosmological models, or more precisely, the metaphors of creation, including models of the so called multiverse, hardly shed any light on creation understood theologically. All these models have a common feature, namely they appeal to intelligible mathematical forms

which allegedly correspond to physical reality detached from us by billions of years. It is clear, however, that in spite of uncertainties in their ontological status, these mathematical constructs constitute a part of the created world, the world of ideas or Platonic forms, which are far cry from being trans-worldly in a theological sense. Seen in this perspective, all cosmological models assert only one thing: in its attempt to approach the boundary of the physical world, human reason inevitably appeals to the intelligible images of this boundary, by building a characteristic hermeneutics of the transition from the intelligible to the physical, that which, by a sheer philosophical mistake, is treated as a hermeneutic of transcendence and the creation in an absolute theological sense.<sup>8</sup> However, in spite of all futility to exercise such a transcendence in the limits of scientific rationality, cosmological speculations on the theme of creation turn out to be very useful and contribute towards a perennial mythology of creation. They manifest the infinite advance to the mystery of creation, using notations of physics and mathematics, understanding beforehand that the sense of that which is signified by them will never be exhausted. Being interpreted phenomenologically, cosmological models deliver us knowledge of how the human subjectivity acts and structures itself when it approaches the limiting questions of the sense and foundation of its own existence.

The issue of creation becomes about the contingent facticity of that which is given to humanity in life. This facticity is stated in a scientific quest, but it is never disclosed completely. One has here a certain analogy with theology: the Fathers of the Church taught that theology can claim that God *is*, but it will never be able to respond to the question “What is God?” Scientific cosmology asserts that the universe as a whole *is*. It endeavours to go even further and attempt to respond to the question “What the universe as a

whole is?” Any possible answer to this question will be apophatic by default. The “name” of the universe, its signifier and its “identity” will always escape any attempt of its accomplished definitions, leaving the enquirer with the same unanswered and unanswerable question “Why the universe is, and why it is as it is?” Sometimes scientific cosmology expresses its hope that by responding to the question “What?”, it will, in the future, give a response to the question “Why?” However this hope seems to be teleological, and may be even eschatological. Teleological, because it drives the scientific quest to the future (whereas the goal of this quest is the supposedly existent past of the universe from which everything “came to be”). Eschatological, because it is linked to the hope of humanity to acquire knowledge of the unity of the universe as a mirror of knowledge of “all in all” of humanity itself, that is of its lost pre-lapsarian unity.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Creation in the natural attitude, or how not to speak of creation**

When Christian theology through the writings of the Fathers and numerous commentaries asserts that the world is created, that it came out of nothing, that there was no world “before” it came into being, it implies a psychological frame of thought which treats creation of the world in terms of temporality pertaining to this world: to speak of creation one needs to have an intuition of the distinction between “before” and “after” (an intuition of temporal sequence) which this temporality implies. The sense of the words “the world came out of nothing” can only be understood from within the human sense of existence as existence in time. Correspondingly, if creation of the world is represented in thought as a “transition” from that something “when there was no world” to the actual existence of the world, this representation has a precarious and hypothetical character in terms of possible

antecedent references, simply because the very process of thought belongs to the already created world and it is from this created modality of intellection that one attempts to grasp the sense of the created as the facticity of the world and hence the facticity of thinking of the world.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of this last nearly obvious observation theology, starting from the Fathers of the Church and finishing with contemporary discussions on the applicability of modern cosmological theories to the riddle of creation, struggles to express the problem of creation of the world in terms of thought and speech, avoiding any reference to the problem of facticity of consciousness which attempts to explicate this creation. Speaking philosophically, theology as well as various forms of its dialogue with scientific cosmology often function in the *natural* attitude, when creation of the world is approached as if one could speculate of it objectively, in terms of logic pertaining to the phenomenality of objects and in terms of the causality of empirical things. For example, St. Basil the Great, speaking of creation of the world, says that God created heaven and earth, that created beings begin with time and end in time. Time originates together with the world, so that the origination of time is its “first” moment, its “beginning”. Then he says that one can start from the present and attempt to trace through events in the past that first day which would correspond to the creation of the world out of nothing (Basil the Great 1996, p. 55). In Basil’s affirmations it is implied that time is that part of the created reality which pertains to the intellect speculating about creation. On the one hand time is an attribute of the created world, on the other hand, it is, using contemporary language, a transcendental condition for the very possibility to speculate about creation at all. When Basil points towards the possibility of counting time backwards to the past in order to find its beginning, as if this beginning would be given to the human grasp as

an “object”, as an outward “thing”, he implicitly extrapolates the causality of mundane things towards the origin and foundation of these things. However, philosophy before Christianity understood that the causal principle of the world cannot be constructed by means of the sciences and knowledge. Modern philosophy contributes to this by saying that the origin of the world as well as the origin of one’s consciousness is phenomenologically concealed from one’s grasp, so that its explication is possible only through the unfolding in the future of that which is already given. Correspondingly, Basil’s explication of the origin can only be understood as undertaken from within the phenomenality of the created and thus establishing the retrocedent causality towards the origin which will never become the explication of creation.

If, as another patristic example, one turns to St. Maximus the Confessor, one finds a similar assertion that the world has a beginning and consequently is not eternal. Maximus, following his predecessors, repeats that the world was created out of nothing because of God’s will and goodness, by his Wisdom and Logos and the createdness of the word implies its non-eternity and consequently its beginning in time. However, in spite of the fact that this beginning in time can be understood only from within the already created world, Maximus points to a difficulty that can arise. In a passage from his *Centuries on Charity* 4.3 he says, “God, who is eternally Creator, creates when He wills by His consubstantial Word and Spirit, because of His infinite goodness.” This is a general statement that does not raise any questions because it is a matter of religious conviction. Then Maximus anticipates a possible question on details of this creation: “Nor must you object: Why did He create *at a certain time* since He was always good?” Here the question is formulated from within those categories of sequence and time which pertain to

the already created world. Indeed, if the creation of the world happened several thousand years ago measured by the created time, why this age of the world is such as it is, or, in other words, can we enquire into the nature of this age’s contingent facticity as it is contemplated from within creation? Maximus gives a characteristic response – “no”: “The unsearchable wisdom of the infinite essence does not fall under human knowledge.”<sup>11</sup> It is impossible to transcend the boundaries of the created and to enquire into its facticity on the grounds of the impossibility of knowing the divine volitions and intentions; creation remains a divine mystery connected with divine providence. It is evident that this response has general apophatic overtones related to the unknowability of God.

However, one must analyse further some implications of the question, discussed by Maximus. If the question about “when” of creation is related to the temporal span of the physical universe seen from within this universe then one can find parallels with contemporary cosmology. Formally, Maximus’ question can be translated by using modern cosmological language into a question about the initial conditions of the universe which fix its physical parameters, including its age. But physical cosmology cannot give an account of the initial conditions for dynamical laws which drive matter and space of the universe. Correspondingly cosmology cannot provide a clear explanation why the age of the visible universe is 13.7 billion years. Since we can speculate on the nature of these conditions only from within our universe by extrapolating backward the properties of the observable universe, the “knowledge” of the initial conditions thus achieved does not tell us anything about these conditions, as if there were special trans-worldly physical laws responsible for these conditions as the outcomes of these laws.<sup>12</sup> Being bounded by the universe one cannot

know the “laws” of the initial conditions of the universe as if they could be attested from beyond the universe (we can only postulate them). In this sense Maximus’ response “no” with respect to the initial conditions of the created universe exactly corresponds to “no” of scientific cosmology in respect to the initial conditions which fix the contingent facticity of the universe.

However, Maximus’s question can be reformulated differently, so that the question about “when” of creation is posed as if the universe appeared out of something preexistent. One can imagine a pre-existent space-time continuum in which our universe appears as some “moment” and “location” of this pre-existent continuum. Then the question “when” of creation will have another sense as a particular “when” of pre-existent time. We are not concerned here with the nature of this preexistence, that is whether it is related to the multiverse, or something “before” the Big Bang, or to a cycling universe of Penrose’s type (Penrose 20120). What interests us is a possibility to approach creation as an “object”, as a transition from something “before” to that which is here and now. This would be typical for the natural attitude to “look” at the creation and ask a question on the specificity of this or that “moment” of its happening in the preexistent scheme of things. Certainly one could refer to Augustine’s ways of responding to such a difficulty simply pointing to the fact that “before” the world was created no entities such as all-embracing space or time could exist.<sup>13</sup> Such an Augustinian response is true in its essence, but it would be useful to confirm it through a negative assessment of modern models of creation with preexistent space-time. Indeed to ask why creation “now” (e.g., six thousand years ago) but not later or before, would imply the possibility of approaching the creation in the objective scheme of things, that is to position it as an “event”, as a particular happening in the series of causations.

As an example of “creation” in preexistent space time one can point to a model of “creation” of matter in the universe (not space and time) from the initial state with the total energy of matter equal zero. This requirement can be treated as a meta-law, imposed on matter of the future universe in the *pre-existent* space and time. Such a model was offered in (Tryon 1998) and its major feature was that the universe originated in *preexistent* space and time as a result of a fluctuation of the physical vacuum (a physical state of quantum matter in which the values of all observables of particles are zero). Geometrically the development of such a universe can be presented as a future light cone, whose apex, symbolising the beginning of this universe, is positioned completely arbitrarily in preexistent space and time (see Fig. 1). It is exactly this arbitrariness of the “place” and “moment” of origination of the visible universe in the background of the preexistent space and time, which constitutes a difficulty similar to that of Maximus: it is impossible to specify and justify why the universe originated at a specific point of space and time (that is it is impossible to specify “when” of this origination). In this theory the spontaneous creation of the universe could occur anywhere and at any moment of pre-existent space and time. (A variety of different universes could originate at different locations of the preexistent space-time, driving cosmology to face a serious problem of the mutual influence of different universes; see Fig. 1.)

Correspondingly the question of “when” of “creation” not only cannot be answered, but, in fact, does not have any sense, for if the preexistent space-time is infinite, an infinite time could have passed since our universe originated. But this makes the question of temporality of the moment of creation devoid of any meaning. There is no need to argue that this kind of model has nothing to do with creation out of nothing in a theological sense, for space, time, the meta-law,



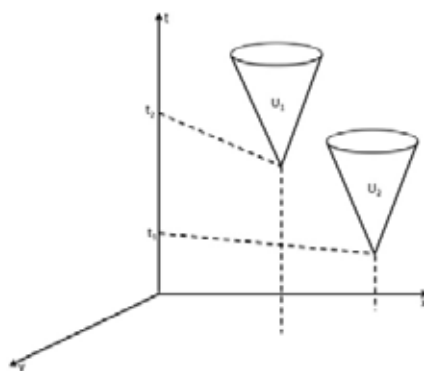


Fig. 1. Indeterminacy of “creation” of the universe in cosmology with preexistent space and time

and the quantum vacuum are all assumed to be pre-existent. It is reasonable to talk about the *temporal origination* of the material universe rather than about its creation out of nothing.<sup>14</sup>

The beginning of the world and its created temporality can be grasped from within the world, so that this beginning is the constituted beginning from within the world. No constitution or objectivisation of this beginning is possible from beyond the world, because this “beyond the world” is not an “object” but rather the condition of the very possibility for the world to be manifested *to* and articulated *by* human beings. In this sense the quest for the beginning of the created universe reveals itself as a boundary of human consciousness attempting to grasp the facticity of the world.

What is interesting is that the refutation of models of “creation” of the universe in preexistent space-time leads us to further clarification of what is meant by creation in theology. Indeed, the logical difficulty of models with pre-existent space and time is connected with the inability to locate the moment of time when the universe originated, from outside, by transcending beyond the universe itself, into its imaginable preexistent “before”. One can argue about the beginning of time within the visible universe by extrapolating its expansion backward in time. But

this will never allow one to claim scientifically that there either was or was not pre-existent time “before” our universe came into existence. The situation was described by Kant in terms of his first cosmological antinomy as a logical tension between the thesis, that the world has a beginning in time and is also limited as regards space, and the antithesis, that the world has no beginning and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space (Kant, 1933, A 426-427/ B454-455).

The antinomy which arises in any cosmology with pre-existent space and time can be considered from a different perspective, without any reference to space and time, and this brings us even closer to the thinking of Maximus the Confessor. For example, the thesis can be treated as the affirmation that the visible universe is unique and finite as regards space and time (with its particular age), whereas the antithesis is that the visible universe is one particular representative out of the *ensemble* of universes with different boundary conditions (corresponding in the previous logic to different moments of their origination in preexistent time) which are responsible for different ages of these universes as they are seen from within them. The plurality of different boundary conditions corresponds to the logical multitude of a Platonic-like kind, so that the antinomial nature of any

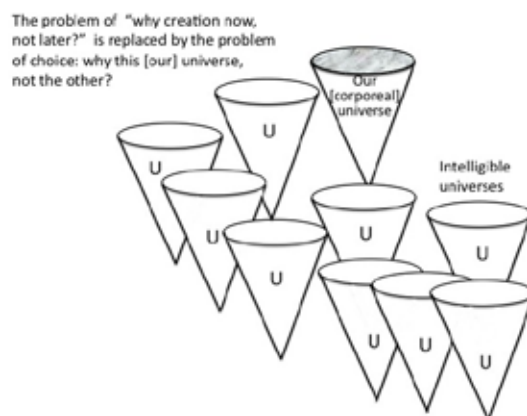


Fig. 2. Ensemble of intelligible universes with different initial [boundary] conditions

predication on the uniqueness (this universe) or multitude (other universes) of these conditions becomes evident because the ontological status of that which is predicated in thesis and antithesis is different: while with respect to the visible universe we can make an empirical inference, an assumption that there is an ensemble of universes implies a reference to the realm of the intelligible. In this case the whole meaning of the antinomy reveals itself as predication about two ontologically distinct realities, that is the empirical visible universe and the Platonic-like ensemble of the universes. If we extrapolate this reasoning back to the problem, discussed by Maximus the Confessor, the question posed by him in the *Centuries on Charity* 4.3 must be transformed in such a way that the temporal aspect of the specificity of the creation of the world is replaced by the aspect of “choice” of this particular world out of many potential possible worlds, namely “Why did God choose to create this world (with a given age) but not the other (whose internal ages could be different)?” (See Fig. 2).<sup>15</sup>

One can conjecture that Maximus’ response to the very possibility of asking such a question would probably be negative: one must rely on the wisdom and will of God as an apophatic reference with respect to a given choice of the universe.

In modern parlance, one cannot enquire in the facticity of the created universe as one cannot establish a causal principle of the universe which would be required in the natural attitude.

The approach to creation within the natural attitude can be paralleled with the substitution of a meta-physical meaning of the universe with the concepts which function according to how the physical facts of the universe are defined, that is with physics. If the created universe as a whole is understood as a metaphysical and theological concept it cannot be interpreted as a natural fact, but only in the way the signifiers of the created universe define this concept. In theology, the words such as “God”, “eternity”, “creation” which signify cause and purpose, metaphysical sustenance or foundation of existence, refer to mental definitions which do not have direct representations through experience of the senses. However, and this is how the substitution of meta-physics by physics happens, these concepts, in particular that of creation, use the same mental reference to the conditions, delimiters and contents which form the basis of sensory experience. If God is understood as the “absolutely necessary omnipotent being”, something greater than sensible and intelligible reality, devoid of contingencies of the empirical, something which

cannot be observed and measured, it is still mentally represented in the mode of ordinary objects. Similarly, eternity is understood as a mental extension of the empirical representation of time, as that which attempts intellectually to circumscribe the overall temporality that which, by definition, escapes such a circumscription. Finally creation of the world, in spite of the verbal claim that it takes place out of nothing, is mentally grasped as “transition” or “change” between “that” indefinite and ineffable “nothing” and “everything”. This “transition” is presented as if human consciousness could “look” at it from outside of both “nothing” and “everything”. Modern cosmology attempts to depict the origin of the visible universe as the actualisation of one particular member of the multiverse, the transition from one “object” (multiverse) to another “object” (our universe). As we have pointed out above this is not the modelling of *creatio ex nihilo*; however the mental frame of thinking of *creatio ex nihilo* remains unchanged. What is overlooked in this type of reasoning is a simple existential truth that one cannot position oneself outside of creation that manifests and reveals itself through the fact of life. Since the articulation of creation of the world by human subjects is the process within creation, this process must be included in the explication of creation, so that the explication of creation includes the explication of the transcendental conditions of the possibility of such an explication and thus the explication of the empirically evident embodied consciousness as the manifestation of this creation. In this case the problem of creation out of nothing acquires an existential importance for it does not say too much about the physical aspects of the universe and its origin (that is, details of creation) but it contributes to the explication of the human condition. One means here not just the biological condition which is subordinated to the necessities of the natural creation, but another human vocation through which the articulation

of creation of the world becomes meaningful, namely the attainment of *immortality*; for it is only through the vision of immortality that all concepts of creation of the world receive their sense as establishing communion with a personal God who created all with a promise of salvation. But this communion is not a matter of the necessity implanted in creation, it is not something subjected to biological instincts and the conditions of embodiment. It originates in the free will of humanity made in the image of That with Whom humanity wants to communicate. Correspondingly to explicate creation of the world means to explicate the Divine image in man, or, to be more precise, to explicate the impetus in the path of restoration of the Image in the created universe after the Fall. To remove some fallacies in the representation of creation within the phenomenality of objects and to understand the problematics of creation as contributing to the restoration of the Image means to see creation as that saturating givenness of existence which constantly forms all states of human life and its consciousness.

### **The created and the sense of infinity**

When theology and cosmology speak of the created world, that is the universe as a whole, by these terms it is denoted something which is intrinsically incommensurable with subjectivity. This incommensurability is conceptually represented through the actual infinity of distance (the volumetric content of the visible universe is  $10^{57}$  times greater than the planet earth and will grow indefinitely in the future), actual infinity of time (the visible universe is 13.7 billions years old and unbounded in the future<sup>16</sup>) and actual infinity of its contingently various objects. All such representations relate to one and the same *possible* extension of that which is sensed and measured, towards infinity through space, time and qualitative variation. The meaning of the

created as infinite is sensed as unlimited and unbounded expanse. The word “infinite” is used as a qualitative metaphor which has its origin in the purely quantitative categorical construction of infinity through unlimited addition. What is specific in such a representation of the infinity of the created is that it is exercised in the natural attitude, that is under the assumption that the incommensurability with the universe follows not only from the infinite values of the contingent parameters of the universe within the fixed type of experience related, for example, to scientific practice, but not from the infinite variety of human experience.

Here we come to a fundamental point of a theological conviction about creation: if the created world is indeed thought as brought into existence out of nothing, it was *nothing* which limited its infinite capacity to proclaim itself through the variety of relations between existent things. It is in this sense that human beings possess the immediate experiential knowledge of the infinite variety of modes in which created things can operate. They possess knowledge of the infinite possibilities through the relationship of every human person with any specific expression of the existent. This is achieved through another experiential fact, namely the radical otherness of the human hypostatic existence in comparison with the rest of creation.<sup>17</sup> It is this otherness as irreducibility to any particular mode of existence that makes it possible to experience creation through the infinitely many ways of subjective manifestation of this otherness. This experiencing of the qualitative infinity of creation drastically differs from the sense of its infinity through spatial and temporal extension of the finitely given in the natural attitude. The distinctive feature of sensing the whole creation through the event of personal existence is the convergence of all separate relations to created things in one single hypostatic consciousness of commensurability with creation

by the fact of belonging to it and being different from it. All is commensurable with a particular personal existence because this existence, being an *event*, encapsulating the whole “humankind-event” makes the whole creation to be an “event simultaneous” with this existence. Such an understanding of experiential knowledge of the infinity of creation presupposes that it transcends the phenomenology of the finite through experiencing the *limitless modes of expression* of this finitude. One can say that this transcending originates in the ontological indeterminacy of all attempts to express rationally that which exists. In other words, reason remains helpless in grasping the contingency of created things: being created out of nothing, they manifest this contingency. Thus the relationship between humanity and the world contains in itself distinct and unrepeatable expressions of unlimited reciprocity, in particular, through the sense of a paradoxical dialectic of commensurability and incommensurability with the universe.

To illustrate what we have said above, one can imagine a spatially finite universe (created in a traditional sense of contingent dependence upon God), whose temporal span is open ended. The quantitative *finitude* of the universe cannot prevent the disclosure of its qualitative *infinity* through the unlimited expressions of relation to it. In other words, the inexhaustibility of communion with the universe which follows from its radical contingency upon the transcendent uncreated, makes it possible to transcend its geometrical finitude. Another example is the alleged origin of the physical universe in the event of the Big Bang which has idiosyncratic properties characterised by physical infinities (infinite temperature, infinite curvature of space etc). What is encapsulated in this construct, is not a metric or an “additive” sense of infinity, but rather a sense of a fundamental separation and distinctiveness from the “originary” event of the

universe, the archetypical anticipation of the loss of the sense of “all in all” which humanity, treated theologically, ever experiences since the Fall. The sense of infinity of creation is revealed here as the abysmal detachment from the initial unity with the whole creation experienced before the Fall in the image and likeness of God. The sense of the infinite characteristics of the Big Bang thus attests not so much to the scientific construction of infinity through an indefinite asymptotic procedure applied to the finite physical states, but as the infinite distinctiveness and inexhaustibility of the contingent originary state of the universe, which potentially contains the infinite variety of experience of the universe by conscious creatures. The notion of the Big Bang escapes the finite and determined definitions exhibiting its open-ended, that is apophatic character. Human reason cannot constitute it simply because it exceeds the possibilities of such an accomplishment in finite time. Through an anticipatory encapsulation of the empirical givenness of creation in the non-originary origin, the structures of human subjectivity are constituted exactly to the extent that this subjectivity cannot comprehend this event “of origin”. Theologically, one can state that human attempts to comprehend the contingent facticity of the universe as that saturating limit which stops consciousness from grasping its own origin *de facto*, explicates the human condition after the Fall.

The approach to the created universe which we developed above evidently remains incompatible with the modern scientific demand for objectivity, that is the representation of reality within the phenomenality of objects. In other words, the natural attitude which separates the alleged object from the recipient of its interpretation is impossible in the case of creation. Since an “observer” *of*, or a participant *in*, or a communicant *with* creation cannot be abstracted from it, being a part of this creation,

any “glance” at creation is conditioned by the presence of this observer. This condition entails that the very relationship between an observer and what is observed cannot be itself subjected to any quantitative characterisation or measurement. The infinity of creation, and thus its inexhaustibility in rubrics of the rational thought, is manifested, on the one hand, as the metaphysical indeterminacy of that which exists and, on the other hand, by the personal (hypostatic) otherness of the human knower with respect to the rest of creation. Being a part of creation and, at the same time, transcending it in the sense of not submitting to it, human beings establish an infinite relationship with creation through the chasm of otherness with it. Correspondingly every observation made with respect to the created world represents also a mode of experience of self-awareness as a personal mode of existence of the human subject that cannot be subjected to the conditions of nature. It is this mode of existence that makes possible the epistemic coordination of the finite corporeal observer with the universe as a whole in the mode of its actual infinity. Here human freedom of relationship with the whole creation in the mode of infinity manifests itself. The sense of what is real in such a vision of the created refers to the human presence as experience of relationship which is not entirely determined by the reference to rationality. Thus that which is called “reality” of the created is an existential fact and event of metaphysical relationship between two actual infinities: humanity and the universe, consubstantial, but contraposed through their otherness; contraposed, but cognitively coordinated.<sup>18</sup>

The dynamic of cognition as an existential capacity and experience of relationship between limited conscious humanity in the world and the potentially infinite creation is included in the very fact and outcome of scientific observation. The experience of the potentially infinite is rooted not

in the relationship of humanity with the world, but, in fact, in its freedom from this relationship. The delimiters in free thinking of the universe proceed in the long run from the freedom of human beings made in the image of God. All thoughts and articulations of the universe always contain traces of the divine image. Even when cosmology proves the insignificance of humanity in the universe, the divine image remains intact exactly because the human mind always resists all attempts to circumscribe its life in rubrics of the natural, finite and transient. As articulated above, human beings attempt to understand the underlying sense of beings and things not according to their “nature” but according to the final causes of these beings and things in relation to the place and goals of humanity in creation. Thus humanity wants to recognise beings as results of humanity’s *free will*. The image of eternity is retained in any cosmological theory produced through free willing even if this theory predicts the finitude of all actual forms of existence and life. Free willing and thinking of the created universe manifests its existential otherness with respect to the world, that is the ability to create its own cosmos through art, culture and history which contain the physical cosmos as its own fact. That existential otherness which is spoken of here is not understood as an evolutionary consequence of the biologically predetermined capacities of human beings achieved through natural adaptation; it does not have a transcendental fictional origin either. It is an existential response to the need for freedom from nature in spite of its relative contingency upon nature through the limited existence in nature, expressed through place, time, decay and ultimate death. One does not speak here of absolute freedom from nature, for it would imply that human beings control not only initial substance of their creations, but even the very existential presupposition of their nature. This privilege belongs only to the uncreated, that

is to God, who alone can bring existence out of nothing. However, humanity in the image of God has the privilege of establishing modes of its subjective impression with regard to nature “out of nothing”. These subjective impressions as modes of the natural abilities of man can be self-defined in a sense that they are not naturally predetermined. It is here that human freedom becomes an indispensable condition for the experience of the potentially unlimited contingent creation. It is achieved through a mental image and concise symbol of the universe which saturates intuition through an instantaneous synthesis in such a way that this universe enters human life as a work of art, revealing thus not only the content of that to which the signifier of the universe as a whole is intended, but the existential otherness of an artist, that is of a cosmologist. Since the universe as a whole cannot be presented though the phenomenality of objects and the scale of the unlimited and potentially infinite creation exceeds any possibility of the natural predetermination of the universe’s image, the universe saturates the intuition to such an extent that the faculties of its comprehension become determined by this saturation, exactly to the extent that these faculties cannot comprehend the universe. Thus humanity itself through gazing at the universe is formed by its unconditional givenness and articulates this universe in the conditions of this existential determination. The saturating intuition of the created universe makes the relationship between human beings and the universe unbounded and subjected to communion between the potentially infinite humanity (because of its Divine image), and the infinite creator. The more personal the relation with the universe becomes the more inexpressible in the limits of cognitive structures and discursive thought it remains. If human beings attempt to express the meaning of personal reference to the metaphysical causal principle of all created things, this meaning always

remains incomplete in comparison with the experience of this reference itself. The intuition of the contingency of the created world upon the transcendent God-creator, is a natural way of expressing the sense of dependence and originary foundation of all that is. To avoid a suspicion of an eidetic or imaginary unboundedness in such an intuition, one needs reciprocity, that is the personal response from that what is intuited as the infinite. But the universe, being created and enhypostatically inherent in the Divine, cannot be hypostatic itself.<sup>19</sup> Thus the infinity of the created must be accompanied by the reciprocal response of the creator who confirms this infinity. This type of reciprocity and communion cannot be subjected to the powers of natural epistemic verification and impression. This confirms an old intuition of some theologians that Christian teaching of creation has never been the narrative of the created world, but rather the narrative of relationship between God and the world, or, more precisely between man and God. It is because the reciprocity asserted can only be achieved and validated experientially that it has an intrinsically precarious character which must be carefully distinguished from any psychological projections and unjustified fantasies ultimately rooted in the rubrics of the natural.<sup>20</sup> The communal nature of such a validation and the confirmation by relationship transcends any conceptual images, intellectual constructions and ethical systems, attempting to express the reference to the whole creation and its creator. The reciprocity implies inerasable presence of the Divine image in any representation of the created universe. This inerasability as a biased position in cognition and relationship to the universe, was earlier called theological commitment which excludes any liberal and secular approach to the issue of creation as being mythopoetical and epistemologically arbitrary. In this respect one must make it clear that in spite of the fact that according to the

Christian view the cosmic history and sense of creation is unfolded from within the history of humanity, that is its history of salvation (Clément 1976, pp. 77-94), the delimiters of historicity do not phenomenalise creation as an object in similarity with the object-like representation subjected to the norms of scientific rationality; this type of phenomenality with respect to creation will be limited and existentially distorted, depriving humanity of freedom following from the Divine image. The delimiters of historicity disclose creation as relationship between humanity and God, and reveal themselves as related to the sense and purpose of the human history.<sup>21</sup>

Since the issue of creation of the world is a metaphysical issue it is contradictory to pose questions about metaphysics in the terms and manner of physics, the question of creation demands definitive answers (in contradistinction to the sciences that provide some positive insights on the nature of the created which are uncertain in the sense that they are amendable and corrigible by the very course of the scientific advance). These answers cannot be exhausted through scientific enquiry and thus the acquisition of metaphysical datum presupposes existential participation in it. What is the sense of such a participation and, to a certain extent, its inevitability? The ultimate issue is humanity's dilemma between a prospect of its ultimate annihilation by the forces of nature, and its liberation from the conditions of nature and attainment of real existence beyond the mode of nature, that is beyond biological death. Here the metaphysical dimension of the issue of creation of the world becomes imbued with a Christian theological content, namely with the Gospel's proclamation of the possibility to attain immortality. And since it is the Church and its experience that represents humanity's deepest need to attain immortality, the ecclesial dimension of the question of creation of the world comes to the fore. Here the human vision of creation as

it is aligned towards the eternal creation, that is creation which is renewed through the restoration of its unity with the Divine, corresponds to the vision of how mortal life is aligned towards eternal life. The humanity of Christ seeks for the completion of the first act of the creation through the fulfilment of the promise for salvation which is inherent in the very act of creation out of the Love of God. Correspondingly at every individual level, human beings seek for the completion of the act of conception and birth toward the fulfilment of the inherent initial promise for the attainment of salvation and eternal life.

In addressing the issue of freedom from nature and attainment of immortality one cannot appeal to science. One needs a different language, the language of existential otherness and personal mode of existence which is devoid of any limiting preconditions from nature. This happens in experience of relationship either with other human beings or nature, or in love and art, when communion with other persons unfolds as the wholeness of reality coming not from its differentiated and individual existence in the nowhere of cosmic space and time, but from the stripping off all extended (Gr.: *diastasis*) dimensions of existence, so that the whole world acquires the sense of being “contemporaneous” or “simultaneous” with the event of communion. The sought language is the language of “horizontal” transcendence, not outwardly beyond space and time, but inwardly inside the theologically understood *heart*, as that centre of disclosure and manifestation of the world which forms and constitutes the person. Personal existence can be described, in contradistinction with the individual existence, as experience of the *private absolute*. This experience can be called mystical and amounts to the possibility to sense the multifarious universality of all that exists, to sense all that is fragmented and separated in space and time (be it human history or the whole

cosmological span) as unique and exclusive experience of the universal in spite of the finitude and limited capacity of the physical and biological sustainment of the individual person. Experience of being privately absolute and unique follows from the inherent sense of commensurability with the whole created universe (distinct from the incommensurability of space-time) not through the genetic consubstantiality, but through the God-given ability to see creation as an instantaneous synthesis effected by the Divine image of the Logos, the creator and sustainer of the universe. If science remains silent with respect to the human ability to articulate the whole creation, theology formulates this ability as the actual possibility to experience the private absolute as the unique and unrepeatable fact of existence, that is hypostatic existence, which is ultimately existence in “solitude”<sup>22</sup> understood as the otherness not only to impersonal nature, but also to other human beings. Paradoxically, it is this otherness which opens the ways of communion with others. This solitude is the ability to transcend all partial and contingent relations and attitudes, impressions and feelings, and to retain the core of existence as that private and absolute “*cogito ergo sum*” or “*amo ergo sum*” which cannot be communicated in a manner of speech. The private absolute is ultimately that mystery of immanence and incomprehensibility of life which, being caught in thinking and causing the cessation of subjectively extended space and time, leaves a human being speechless and in the state of the prayerful invocation similar to a cry of a newborn child looking for the mother, as that carrier of relationship which consoles for the solitude of being born into this world. This is the reality of being born in such conditions that the motivation and phenomenalisation of this birth is profoundly hidden, with no clear antecedents. Every human being has to struggle with the mystery of its own creation as its inevitable commensurability with



creation. To uncover the sense of one's existence through the unfolding of life, as a gradual process of filling this sense with a new content of temporally succeeding events, is the same as to uncover the sense of all creation through seeing it as one's own private absolute.

If the sense of the universe as a whole can be experienced as a personal absolute, there is a natural desire of every human being to retain this sense "absolutely" regardless the conditions of embodiment, and to subject this experience to the liberation from the necessities of nature. The longing for immortality is not an idea of abandoning creation and subjecting it to the annihilating forces of non-being. It is a desire to exist in the sense "to live" in that state of creation which would maximally imitate that invisible foundation which provided this created world with the invitation to exist. If Christian faith in its ecclesial setting is about the attainment of immortality, then the issue of creation becomes an inevitable part of its theology, because the attainment of immortality must be implicitly preordained in the very event of one's conception and birth as the initial creational promise for salvation and eternal life. The transcendence toward immortality as an indefinite retaining of experience of the private absolute does not invalidate the mode of creaturehood: the experience of the private absolute is itself the disclosure and manifestation of being-in-the world as being created.

**The Universe  
as a Saturated Phenomenon:  
the explication of the sense  
of the private absolute**

Experience of "private absolute" introduces a different type of apophaticism in knowledge of the universe, based not in the "universe's darkness" (lack of light), but on the excess of its donation. Here the perception of the universe as

extended in space and time is replaced by the perception of the universe in aesthetical and ethical categories. Ancient Greek philosophers called such a universe *kosmos*, that is beauty and order. However *kosmos* of the Greeks, unlike that which is understood by the *cosmos* in modern cosmology, denoted the way by which the natural reality is. It denoted not that which was related to the question "What?" of created nature but rather to the question "How?" *Kosmos* thus is the "ordered" revelation of the existent, that is the notion related to beauty. But beauty is a matter of personal judgement and observing distinctions which can be justified only within relationship, that is communion. It is because of this that Plato summarised all presocratic views in his teaching of *kosmos* as a living unity, "animate and intelligent being"<sup>23</sup>, living totality of animate creatures and inanimate things, gods and people.<sup>24</sup> The overcoming of disorder and riot as such reveals itself as life so that *kosmos* unfolds as a living whole, the "visible living being".<sup>25</sup> Since life implies soul, the "body" of the *kosmos* is harmonised in the "spirit of friendship" of that who brought it into existence. But then the beauty of the world, that is the world as *kosmos*, reveals itself as a mode of the living, animated organism whose soul is also intelligent: the order of the world, its measure and commensurability which reveal the beauty of the world also manifest the intellect.<sup>26</sup> Correspondingly the beauty of the universe reveals itself not only through the world being animated, but also through its intellect. One can say that the beauty of the universe is not that which is manifested, but the universe as manifestation. It is the "how" of the universe but not its "what".

The approach to the world as a whole based on an attempt to treat the world in categories of beauty, to look at it as a perfect creation, animated and intelligent being, constrains human knowledge of the universe to the limits of its

empirical link with the whole of the reality of nature. It does not allow any formal and logical explanation of the world which would depersonify an immediate living communion with it in intellectual abstractions. The dimensions of beauty presuppose that one can recognise and evaluate the way by which cosmic reality exists. One can experience the beauty of the world only through the immediate and intimate *relationship* as personal communion, not as an abstract measure invented by the discursive reason.<sup>27</sup>

Communion with the created universe and comprehension of its beauty is a personal process and achievement. In personal relationship we come to know the universe not as an existent whose phenomenality is limited to the numerical and quantitatively measurable domain, that is not as nature or essence, but as the unlimited of indefinite differentiations manifested to a person. This mode of personal uniqueness of things is their beauty as the reality of the universe appearing as *kosmos*. In the world as a whole the ontological difference between any existent and being in general, manifesting itself as beauty, comes forth through the difference between the intellectual circumscribing of things and their way of being as their distinction detected by a person. Their beauty claims itself as their unconcealment revealed in personal relationship. The truth (unconcealment) of an existent witnesses of itself, as creative presence and action upon persons. This personal action as ordering and arranging of the universe making it the beautiful *kosmos* cannot be exhaustively determined by the human reason through logic and quantitative definitions. It rather meets with reason dialogically, in the event of personal relationship-communion. In fact, it is only this relationship which makes possible the process of knowledge of the universe to the extent that we recognise in it *kosmos* as it was defined above. By so doing we first encounter being (in a general philosophical sense) as it is turned to us by

its, using Heideggerian terminology, unconcealed “side”: “ ‘World’ is the *clearing* [aperture, opening, AN] of being into which human being stands out on the basis of his thrown essence.”<sup>28</sup> Secondly, we discover the way of the personal givenness of things to us and, as a result, the inner world of persons. If a person contemplates the universe not simply as a conglomerate of different forms of matter arranged in a contingent manner, but as an “object” of art, then in a direct analogy with any human-made piece of art, one realises that the universe can be seen not as a precisely calculated clock-like mechanism, but as that ecstatic energy in which the creative person can be found and by which the knowing person is constituted. The beauty of the universe thus reveals that present in absence “face” of the universe which is enhypositized by the knowing person in the image of its hypostatic creator, the Logos.

This personal appreciation of the Cosmos through communion leads to such an “understanding” of the phenomenon of the universe in which the intuition (based in communion) of the universe gives immeasurably more than intention of the universe ever would have intended or foreseen. The universe perceived in this way naturally falls under the rubric of a phenomenon which is saturated with intuition; to clarify this one may refer to Kant’s distinction between the “rational idea” and “aesthetic idea.” The “rational idea”, for example the cosmological idea, can never become a sensible comprehension because it contains a concept (of the trans-sensible universe) for which no adequate intuition can ever be given. In this sense the rational idea of the universe can be considered as phenomenon that is not only poor, but deprived of intuition. In fact the cosmological idea (as a rational idea) is defined as a representation of an “object” – the universe – according to a principle that this representation can never become the cognition of the universe.

Correspondingly, to the “rational idea” (of the universe), can be contraposed the “aesthetic idea” (of the universe) as the *cosmos as communion*, that is a representation according to intuition which itself can never become an intellectual (discursive) cognition, but for an opposite reason: “because it is an intuition... for which an adequate concept can never be found” (Kant 1951, § 57, note 1, p. 187). In this case the matter is not that there is the non-adequation of the intuition, that is its lack, which leaves a concept blind (there is no intuition adequate to the concept of the universe as a whole, or the world); conversely one has here the failure or insufficiency of the concept to clarify the intuition. The excess of intuition related to a particular sphere of experience over its conceptual representation prohibits that any linguistic representation ever reaches it completely and render it intelligible (C.f. Ibid., § 49). In other words, the excess of intuition of the universe in communion will never allow one to see the universe as an object. This incapacity to produce an object does not result from a shortage of donation of the universe (as happens in the rational idea of the universe), but from the excess of intuition, that is from the excess of donation (for it is the intuition which gives). The “aesthetic idea” gives more than any concept can expose, that is arrange and order the intuitive content according to rules of the understanding. The impossibility of this conceptual arrangement follows from the fact that the intuitive overabundance itself is not accessible to experience within the rules pertaining to discursive modalities of cognition. The intuition is not exposed within the limits of the concept, but saturates it and renders its overexposed, that is keeps it invisible, blind not by the lack of “light” (the universe as a whole is invisible because it remains dark for the “light” of the categories of the understanding) but by the excess of light (there is too much in our intuition of the universe through communion which

cannot be discerned). The problem is to find a phenomenological description of the “aesthetic idea” of the universe, that is communion with the universe, rendering thus the unforeseeable nature of the donation of the universe, the impossibility of seeing it as an object, and its freedom from intentionality of subjectivity. In spite of all anomalies related to the discursive apprehension of the “aesthetic idea” the universe as a created whole is not disqualified from a phenomenological description. So that, one can use categories of the understanding (in a Kantian sense) in order to characterise the “inexposable representation” of this idea as a saturated phenomenon although in an apophatic, negative sense.

First of all, the universe as a whole cannot be aimed at in the sense of a successive synthesis of *quantity* applied to ordinary objects. It is because of belonging to the universe and its constant spontaneous givenness to us that the intuition that gives it is not limited, its excess can neither be divided nor put together because of a homogeneous magnitude of its parts. The excess of the donating intuition could not be measured on the basis of its parts since this intuition surpasses the sum of these parts. The “phenomenon of the universe”, which is always exceeded by the intuition that saturates, should be called *incommensurable* in the sense of not measurable. This lack of measure does not operate here through the enormity of an unlimited quantity which stands behind the universe. It is rather marked by the impossibility of applying a successive synthesis to it, as if one could foresee a complex whole on the basis of its parts. Since the universe as a whole, as a saturated phenomenon, exceeds any summation of its parts which are in many ways inaccessible to the subjectivity undertaking such a summation, the idea of a successive synthesis has to be replaced by what was called before the instantaneous synthesis (a synthesis of communion) the representation

of which “precedes” and goes beyond possible (unobservable and imagined) components, rather than resulting from them according to the extended in time pre-vision. Here a clarification is possible: physically, one can perceive in the universe only a particular side of it which is “turned” to us by the surface of the past null cone.<sup>29</sup> What we see through the light cone of the past imposes itself on us with a certain force which overwhelms us to the point that we are fascinated by it. This imitates a simple human impression of the universe when one looks at the sky and sees patterns of beautiful stars. At this stage the successive synthesis, attempted later in physical cosmology, is suspended exactly at the moment when the first impression from the universe occurred. This happens because another synthesis has been achieved, a synthesis that is instantaneous and irreducible to the sum of all possible parts of the universe. This type of communion with the universe which is accompanied by amazement and the sense of awe arises without any common measure with the phenomena which precede, announce or explain it.

The universe as a saturated phenomenon cannot be accounted for according to quality as an intensive magnitude. The aiming at or foreseeing the universe in perception is heterogeneous in degree for every one and is marked by a break or discontinuity such that the universe manifests itself in perception as an absolutely singular novelty. The universe seems to be already there, available for our arrival, life in it and gaze at it. In this sense the universe imposes itself on us as preceding us. It appears to our view in childhood as well in an adult state as an unexpected, unpredictable fact, originating allegedly in what we perceive as the uncontrollable past. Supplied by theoretical apparatus, we indeed face the entire cosmos in its past and this past does not reach us apart from deductions and intuitions.

The more we study the universe astronomically, the more splendour we unfold; but this splendour is unexpected and unpredictable, unknown before we glimpsed it in the sky. In this sense the “beauty” of the universe as it manifests itself through picturesque galaxies and nebula formations brings one into a state of awe when one experiences the universe as incomparable and incommensurable with any particular *event* in one’s life (in spite of its “simultaneity” with one’s life through the instantaneous synthesis). The universe comes to one, engulfs one and imposes itself without one’s control and anticipation: thus it exhibits itself in the phenomenality of events.

What is meant here is that the phenomenon of the universe reaches an intensive magnitude without measure, so that starting from a certain degree the intensity of the intuition exceeds all anticipations of perception. Existentially, while experiencing the immediacy of communion with the universe one cannot predict or measure the intensity of this impression, for it is inseparable from the fact of life and thus, life itself, cannot be subjected to any measure: it either is or is not. The intuition of the universe blinds the capacity of its anticipation through perception. It is in this sense that the intuition which gives the phenomenon of the universe is unbearable for the gaze: the perception of the universe as a whole is blocked and its comprehension manifests itself as dim and dark, unformed and essentially disturbing. The universe falls under the rubric of the saturated phenomenon that J.-L. Marion characterises by such a term as “bedazzlement” (Fr: *l’éblouissement*) (Marion1992, pp. 109-11). The universe in its pieces and moments can be seen, but the universe as a whole not only cannot be seen, it cannot be borne. The bedazzlement by infinity brings one to the recognition of its own finitude. The sense of incommensurability with the universe originates through the bedazzlement by its potential infinity. The finitude of humanity

is experienced not so much through the shortage of the given before its gaze of the universe (the universe supplies human subjectivity with a potentially infinite set of sense-impressions as different events in space and time), but, above all, through the overwhelming belonging to this universe as a fact of existence, whose magnitude of donation cannot be measured (because it cannot be controlled). Here human consciousness experiences itself in the suffering passivity (that is ignorance of its own origin, and suspended between subject and object, meaning and being) with no means to evaluate its own givenness in terms of any measure.

### **The created universe in the phenomenality of events**

The universe as creation cannot be subjected to relational analysis because it is unique and one cannot rerun the universe or stage it as an experimental event. The universe as a whole is identical only to itself, so that its unfolding facticity is characterised not only by irreproducibility but by irreversibility understood not in a technical, thermodynamic sense, but as logical irreversibility as a coming into the facticity of existence and impossibility of exiting this existence. The universe as its sheer givenness, makes itself a phenomenon not arising from our initiative and not responding to our expectations (since it cannot be reproduced); it gives itself to us from its own self to such an extent that it affects us, changes us and almost constitutes us, and stages us out of its own giving itself to us: hence it has a phenomenality of an *event*.<sup>30</sup>

From the point of view of a physical cosmologist there is an imminent difficulty: how one can treat the universe as an event if, at first glance, it is “a” stable object, that is, the astronomical cosmos out there and what is allegedly beyond it. What is the basis for interpreting the universe (as an object of

cosmological research) as “an” or “the” event, if this word has mundane connotations? It is not difficult to realize that the logic of formulating such a question is exercised from within the natural attitude which thinks of the universe in the phenomenality of objects which by definition have a temporal pattern of stability and then cannot be events. The universe is out there and it is not “an” or “the” event because it is always over there. However, as we have attempted to argue before, the universe as articulated existence is epistemologically commensurable with the event of one’s life and thus has an eventual status in this sense. Thus, phenomenologically, one should reverse the question and enquire as to how the essential event-character of the phenomenon of the universe became blurred and disappeared to the extent that it appears no more than an object? The objectivity of the phenomenon of the universe arises from an attempted quantitative synthesis in the style of Kant: to become an object any phenomenon should be expressed in terms of quantity or magnitude. Correspondingly the totality of the phenomenon is achieved as the sum of its parts through anticipation of a quantitative synthesis.<sup>31</sup> This signifies that the magnitude of the phenomenon of the universe is always to be described in finite parameters and depicted in real or abstract mathematical (imaginary) space.<sup>32</sup> In this sense the universe as a whole is intellectually foreseen before it is actually seen. The universe is confined in its quantity, defined through its parts and brought to a conceptual cessation of any advance of its content by the already made measurements. This reduction of the universe to its foreseeable quantity turns it into an object as if there were nothing else to be seen in it, nothing other than that which can already be envisaged on the basis of its theoretical construction. This is typical for theoretical cosmologists who no longer need to *see* the universe (that is commune with it personally) because they foresee the

universe in advance. In fact, any speculative cosmology could freely avoid living insights in the universe on the basis of its theoretical foreseeing unless the measurements would contradict this possibility, that is, bring a sort of breakdown to the constructed object. The phenomenon of the universe reduced to an object deprives the universe of its independent and unrestricted appearance, placing thus its event-like character in rubrics of some common laws. When cosmology treats the universe as an object it assumes that everything in it remains seen in advance and nothing unexpected can happen which disqualifies the universe from the status of an object. Then the universe as an object of particular theoretical study remains a phenomenon which has already expired: nothing new can happen to it, since in those rubrics in which it is constituted it appears as that which is devoid of the mode of becoming or happening. Metaphorically one can say that the universe as an object appears to be a shadow of the event which is denied in it.

The event-like character of the universe cannot be foreseen since its partial causes which are invented by cosmology remain fundamentally insufficient: a typical example is a particular version of the multiverse theory in which the space of all possible initial conditions for universes is postulated.<sup>33</sup> This ensemble of the initial conditions is a necessary condition for *this* universe to be actualised in existence. However the realised facticity of this universe as the “pinning down” of the initial conditions (in the overall space of possible conditions) which leads to the formation of our universe, is not described by any theory and requires *ad extra* assumptions which do not belong to the sphere of physical causality. The realization of these particular conditions is detected post-factum, when the event of their choice and hence the coming of this universe into existence, happened and was accomplished.

But the event of choosing the appropriate initial conditions in this case is not subject to any causation based on the foreseeing of this event. It is not amazing that the post-factum possibility of these initial conditions (that is of our universe) which are impossible to foresee remains, strictly speaking, an a-priori impossibility with regard to the system of previously classified causes: indeed the choice of the initial conditions for our universe is practically impossible since it must be made out of the potentially infinite number of all possible conditions.<sup>34</sup>

The observation that the universe as a whole cannot be foreseen on the grounds of any causation, can be rephrased as that the universe imposes itself on perception without one being able to assign to it a substance in which it dwells as an accident (or a cause from which it results as an effect: there is no causal principle of the world). One could refer to the invisible whole of the universe as that substance “in” which the observable part of the universe (as its accident) dwells. The universe is given to us in its pieces and moments which represent that whole which will never be accessible *per se*. The invocation of the idea of the primordial substance in this context would just mean a conviction that there is an undifferentiated unity of “all in all”, and the visible universe represents its particular realization in the ancient sense of demiurgic order out of chaos.<sup>35</sup> This mental split in the representation of the universe as substance and accident does not correspond however to the immediate experience of the universe as an event of life for it is in this event that it is exactly impossible to make a distinction between “substance” of life and life as an “accident”. Correspondingly it is problematic to look for the cause of the universe (as its effect) if it is perceived as *coaevus universo*, that is the universe as “simultaneous” with one’s life. The question of the facticity of the universe (as an effect of some cause) cannot be even addressed

if the universe is seen as the totality of all. All rhetoric about the origination of the universe in the Big Bang has no philosophical significance as the “cause” of the universe, because it does not address the issue of the “cause” of the Big Bang itself. Even the appeal to a “particular Big Bang” taking place in the course of an inflationary generation of many bubble universes does not reach any goal, since the cause of the ensemble of those bubbles indwelling in the “substance” of the originary inflaton field does not remove the question of the facticity of this field. Indeed, in analogy with ancient Greek philosophies this field can be considered as substance of the same mental kind as, for example, the “water” of Thales from Miletus from which the actual state of affairs in the world can be produced by a potentially infinite number of ways. Finally, one can suggest that another typical characteristic of the universe as an event amounts to the fact that the number of “possible explanations” of its facticity is indefinite and increases in proportion to cosmological hermeneutics that cosmologists and their interpreters produce.

The treatment of the universe in the phenomenality of events does not deny its temporality. The temporality of the universe as a whole cannot be that of the physical flow in pre-existing time, it is a different *temporality of events* which must be elucidated. In order to do this let us start from a simple question: if the phenomenon of the universe giving itself in a mode of an event carries the signs of temporality, does it reaffirm the Kantian position that every phenomenon is a phenomenon if it admits a representation as experience in time-form of sensibility? The response to this is that while in Kant’s view temporality serves only to allow the synthesis of phenomena as object with a certain identity, that is a guarantee of its permanence in presence justified through assigning it a cause or a reason, the event-like character of the universe as a whole

cannot rely on this kind of a synthesis and thus permits a corresponding phenomenality of the universe contrary to the objectivity established in physical cosmology. The objectiveness of the created universe as permanence in presence through its evolution becomes a projection or even an illusion of an a-temporal event. The universe being described by mathematical laws as an evolving object entails that its notion is emptied of any intuitive content and thus represents a shadow of that event which gives itself in the fact of life. But then there is a question of the internal sense of temporality of life itself. Indeed, temporality belongs to sensibility of subjects articulating the universe and orienting them towards the synthesis of the already given objects. However it is this same temporality that is never applied in order to constitute and define the acting agent of this synthesis, that is the transcendental “I”. Then, even if one conjectures that the phenomena temporalized as objects (the evolving universe) preserve a trace of their belonging to the event (an intuition of the universe as a whole), still the transcendental “I” does not phenomenalyze itself as an event. This happens because the “I” never phenomenalyzes itself at all: it does not appear among other phenomena, that is it is excluded from that phenomenality which it produces. In this sense the idea that the universe as a whole is an event seems to be counter-intuitive: indeed even if the “I” experiences their communion with the universe through the a-temporal, that is non-temporalizable sense of belonging and consubstantiality, any attempt to express this linguistically and discursively puts the event-like sense of communion under the rubrics of eidetic temporality. There is one particular aspect in the phenomenality of the universe which employs such an eidetic temporality, namely the universe’s “beginning”, its point of origination, the Big Bang. It is here that the universe is explicitly eidetically temporalized as an event. And this

happens not accidentally, but because of a deep analogy between the Big Bang (as a shorthand notation for the temporal boundary of the universe) and an event of birth of any particular “I” which is the ultimate beginning and end of all possible predications of life as well as the universe. It is here that the “I” phenomenalises the universe as an event on the same grounds as it phenomenolizes itself as its own event of birth.

When cosmology tells us that whatever we see in the sky points towards the origin of the universe, the Big Bang, it asserts the universe as a phenomenon which shows itself in the mode of the already given to us in its sheer facticity originating in this Big Bang. Such a phenomenon of the universe is properly event-like. The question then is how to understand the origin of the universe (showing itself in its remote consequences as a phenomenon in the presence of humanity) in the conditions where no human subject has ever seen it by their “own eyes”. Cosmologists consider the point origination of the universe as a “phenomenon” because they constantly intend it: these intentions are fulfilled with indirect testimonies relying on intermediate deductions following from observations and belief laden theories.

The origin of the universe which contains human beings appears in fact as a privileged phenomenon since a significant effort of humanity is devoted to its reconstitution as restoration of the lost memory of it, to giving it sense and even, in a way, responding to its appeal to us as if the universe had its distinctive self-identity. Still, humanity cannot see this undeniable and unavoidable phenomenon directly. The fact that one cannot see the origin of the universe directly and that nevertheless it reveals itself as a phenomenon for which cosmology constantly intends, constitutes an aporia which can be formulated in the following way: *the origin of the universe shows to humanity precisely that its origin cannot be shown*. This

aporia urges a philosophising cosmologists to understand how the phenomenon of the origin of the universe that does not show itself directly not only affects humanity as if it did show itself, but, in fact, affects humanity in a more radical way than any other phenomena, since the beginning of the universe forms the necessary conditions for humanity’s emergence in the universe. The same cosmologists have to admit that since this indemonstrable origin of the universe reveals itself to them, it “happens” to them in that it endows human beings with a future. The origin of the universe can be called a phenomenon because of its presence in absence, that is the poverty of demonstrability, so that it comes to pass in human life as an *event*, which was never present in presence, and is always already gone past, whereas it never surpasses the present and, in fact, is always to come. Thus one can say that the origin of the universe phenomenalises itself but as a pure event unpredictable (there is no sense of temporality before and outside the universe), irreproducible (one cannot rerun the universe), exceeding all cause (there is no physical causation from beyond the universe) and making the impossible possible (the probability of origination of our universe in multiverse scenarios is always infinitely small, that is the universe is *a-priori* impossible), surpassing all expectations and predictions (the constant advance of knowledge of the universe does not make it possible to assign to the universe some definitive and stable features which could sustain indefinitely the observational tests as well as an epistemological advance). Speaking of the origin of the universe we speak of its donation: it is given to us in the measure as it gives itself and its givenness to us is an apodictic fact-event which is alone responsible for that which we call the constituted phenomenon of the origin of the universe, or the universe as a whole. It is this givenness that initiates an encapsulated temporality of the universe as an



event, which being projected onto the object-like temporality manifests the features of a shadow of the universe's wholeness and its non-originary origin.

Since the universe as totality cannot be specified in terms of analogies of experience including, first of all, its temporality, the universe acquires the character of an event, that is a phenomenon that is unforeseeable on the basis of the past, incomprehensible on the basis of the present and irreproducible on the basis of the future. Cosmology attempts to reconstruct the invisible past of the universe on the basis of its present. In this sense the past of the universe is not "the past in the past" but rather "the past of the present"<sup>36</sup>, so that the unforeseeable future is simply a result of the fact that we do not know the past. However, neither is the universe exhaustively comprehensible on the basis of the present: the contingency of our location in space and time, as well as the contingency of the very factual self-articulation of the universe through the human voice, point towards the incommensurability (not consubstantiality) of the universe as a whole with its particular articulated incarnation leading to the untestability of many conjectures about the universe and the fundamental uncertainty of cosmology (Ellis 2007, p. 1274). The universe is an event because it is not reproducible on the basis of the future: there is simply no future with respect to the universe as a whole which by definition incorporates all past, present and future<sup>37</sup>; the universe cannot be rerun. Finally one asserts that the universe, by definition, is a unique occurrence, it is that which has a modality of created absoluteness. All cosmological theories which attempt to explore the possibility of non-uniqueness of this universe make a reduction of the phenomenality of this universe to that distorted and damaged phenomenality which is typical of objects constituted by the empirical sciences, the phenomenality which is poor in

intuition (foreseeable as reconstructed from the allegedly existing past, exhaustively knowable according to existing theories, reproducible theoretically through the plurality of different scenarios). It is clear that what is left behind these reconstructions is a historical dimension of the universe as a unique and contingent event which cannot be exhausted by its reduction to human subjectivity, in particular to that mode which deals with the universe's thematization as an object. Here historicity of the universe is understood not as a sequence of its stages of evolution as they are described in cosmology. One implies the historicity of the universe as a whole as its contingent givenness to humanity in its entire span of time and space, that is as a humanly historical relation and communion. This historicity has a different origin, following not from physical causality but rather originating in intentional consciousness as the intrinsic and mysterious unity of subject and object, being and non-being, spirit and matter. It is interesting to note that Christian cosmology is built upon a premise that it is the fate of humanity which determines the fate of the universe and the whole history of the universe becomes seen as part of the history of salvation.

**The universe as a saturated phenomenon:  
from analogies  
of experience to plurality of horizons**

Mathematical cosmology works through the analogies of experience understood in a Kantian sense as constitutive principles. However, it is quite otherwise with those principles which attempt to bring the existence of appearances of the universe under a-priori rules (that is formulate the causal principle of the world). For since the contingent facticity of existence of the universe cannot be constructed (we disregard attempts of "constructing" this facticity by appealing to the multiverse models for the facticity of multiverse

itself cannot be scientifically constituted but only postulated) the principles of analogy of experience can only be applied to the relations in the universe as already existent. In this sense they can have only a regulative (not constitutive) character, and in the same sense these principles cannot be mathematical, but only philosophical. Kant comments on this by contraposing the constitutive nature of mathematical predication through a proportion. For example: if there is a proportion as an equality of the ratio of two known quantities to another ratio in which one is unknown, then this unknown is effectively constructed (constituted). In application to the standard model in cosmology it means, for example, that since the ratio of the scale factors at present and at the time of decoupling of matter from radiation (which is equal to a thousand) is proportional to the inverse ratio of temperatures at the same times, by knowing the temperature at present one can infer the temperature at decoupling, that is it can be constructed. This type of constitution is applied to the already existent and cannot be transferred if the analogy of experience is extended to the issue of the facticity of the universe, for example, its origin. Here the proportion does not work and hence the mathematical constitution of the origin of the universe is simply impossible (the endless series of aberrations approaching this origin points to the fact that the computational synthesis of the origin of the universe is not an accomplished constitution, but an ongoing mode of approximation mocking time itself). In this sense to make an analogy from astronomical experience to the experience of the universe as a whole does not mean to establish a *quantitative* relation between what is given in the limited empirical realm and that which is intended as totality. It is rather a *qualitative* relation: more specifically, one can a-priori establish knowledge only of the *relation* to the universe as a whole, but not of what it is. This relation yields a rule for seeking

the universe as that member of experience which is in relation to any other experience of the ordinary things. Thus, that which can be named by an analogy of experience represents only a rule according to which the unity of experience (experience of incarnate hypostatic existence in the universe) may arise from the perception of separate things and astronomical objects. Being a rule, this analogy of experience does not tell us how the empirical or intellectual intuition of the universe comes about: in this it is not a principle which is constitutive of the universe and its appearances, but is a regulative norm for the unity of experience through its particular mode of the intuition of the universe as totality. That which is observed here can be affirmed with respect to the postulates of any empirical knowledge: the facticity of appearance of empirical facts as events cannot be subjected to the criteria of *a priori*. Then the analogies of experience which scientific cosmology attempts to stretch across the frontiers of the empirical are distinguished here not from the point of view of their certainty (they are certain in their given facticity), but in the nature of their evidence, that is as regards the character of the intuitive factors involved. For example, talking about the early stages of the universe which by definition are beyond any empirical verification, cosmology implicitly appeals to the coherence of epistemic justification of its claims related to the communal agreement which represents a different nature of the evidence related to the analogies of experience. The analogies of experience express and represent here rather the regulative delimiters of the understanding. The important feature is that whatever mode of understanding related to analogies of experience cosmology uses, it places its subject matter in rubrics of time which, according to Kant, guarantees the unity of experience (Kant 1933, A 177/B 219-220). In this sense the universe of scientific cosmology always

stands in relation to any experience in terms of time. It is this feature that guarantees any positive predication of the universe and explication of its structure. However, being a limitation of experience, the analogies of experience which base themselves in time provide us only with a fringe of the universe's appearances, namely only those aspects of the universe which allow their manifestation through relation to time. Time enters experience as that implicit horizon of phenomena without which no appearance is possible: time reveals itself as that which receives this appearance and at the same "time" rejects it to make it appear. The universe which cosmology is speaking about represents thus the breakthrough of its phenomenality, that is its visibility in the background of the time-horizon which is over there in advance. The universe in its appearing (and thus further theoretical thematization) is thus limited to that portion of the time-horizon (which otherwise remains implicit and invisible) which allows the universe's actualisation as temporalisation. The question now is whether "the universe as a whole" does fit into such a horizon, or, in other words, whether the universe as a whole can adequately and exhaustively manifest itself within the rubrics of this horizon? A simple semantic reflection directs one to answer in the negative to this question on purely definitional grounds: the universe as a whole, as the totality of "all in all" cannot be subjected to any limitations and conditions of time, for it exceeds all time. Then one must rephrase the same question as to whether the universe as a whole exceeds every horizon. Here we come to the phenomenological understanding of the world as the horizon of all horizons, exceeding all particular horizons. The issue, however, is not to dispense with the horizon in general in cosmology, for in this case the very manifestation of the universe would be prohibited; the question is how to neutralise the delimiting anteriority of the

horizon (time) in order to avoid the conflict in claiming the absoluteness of the phenomenon of the universe (as not related to time). The problem is how to avoid the conflict between an approach to the universe as pure event (which is not foreseeable, not knowable or reproducible), that is as a saturated phenomenon, and the delimiting anteriority of the horizon which makes its particular manifestation possible. On the one hand, the excess of intuition saturates the phenomenon of the universe as communion (as existence and life); in this sense it exceeds the delimitations of ordinary experience, being *de facto* its own foundation. On the other hand the horizon of time makes possible discursive definitions of experience of the universe as communion, but in doing so this horizon itself must be defined. However, this very definition limits the definition of a horizon, so that the limits of the discursive definition of experience of the universe go together with the limitations in the very structuring of the horizon. The universe represented through the prism of this dialectic of the defining and definable horizon is inevitably manifested in a fringed phenomenality. Finally one anticipates that if the universe is approached as a pure event, that is as a saturated phenomenon, it saturates its own horizon for there is no way out from the totality of the universe and no reference to the other ("sans porte, ni fenetre, sans autre, ni autrui" (Marion 1992, p. 117). In fact, to ascribe to the universe a single horizon would be a naïve and abstract exercise, because the universe as it appears to humanity in the course of history exhibits itself through a plurality of horizons none of which can precede or delimit the other. One can even claim that the experience of the universe through different horizons exhibits the persistence of saturation, its multiplication and cross-horizon saturation which does not relieve the basic factor that the universe saturates the intuition, exceeds the capacity of the understanding

and the delimitation through the analogies of experience rendering its incessant presence at the bottom of any existential act. The plurality of accounts of experience of the universe even in scientific cosmology, such as the universe as an astronomical whole, or the universe as a theoretical construct of the all-unity, the infinite change of theories and endless self-correction of theories through observation shows that one deals here with a saturated phenomenon. If one adds to this the variety of genres expressing communion with the universe starting from philosophical prose and finishing with mystical poetry, involving a personal element in communion as an opposite to the impersonal, an anonymous depiction of the universe through scientific naturalism, one then escapes any necessity of justification of the same fact that when one pronounces the word “universe”, one invokes that which saturates intuition and involves one’s *ego* in endless multi-facet hermeneutics which acts as the constitutive factor for this *ego*. Here cosmology exhibits a very closed kinship to theology, whose account of creation of the universe and the divine presence in it involves not only the plurality of the exegesis of the Gospels, including its patristic accounts, but the variety of mystical experience of the universe whose testimony is kept in endless writings of saints, spiritual seers and liturgical texts, all of which are referring to one and the same experience, but whose different context is irreducible and non-amendable in the course of time. Nowadays, the unrestrained proliferation of popular scientific accounts borrowing ideas from main-stream research in theoretical cosmology exhibits the same, although pseudo-priestly, fervor towards preaching about the universe, in which the horizon of encompassing the subject matter not only does not stop but endlessly corrects and complements itself through an appeal to different analogies and topics from other disciplines. In fact, the very phenomenon of

the popular scientific literature as well science-fiction can be made analogous to Biblical exegesis: indeed, whereas the Bible emerges as a main source of interpretation in different intersecting contexts, the scientific papers in narrow and high-specialised journals play a similar role by providing for popular science an indefinite field for various exegesis adjusted for different audiences and serving different social and ideological needs. In the case of cosmology, its content and its texts themselves appear to be a saturated phenomenon simply because they provide a multiple contextual interpretation of that which they speak about and render as their content. Rephrasing it again, the open-endedness of cosmological discourse, as well as its intrinsic incompleteness delimited by the discursive faculties, creates the natural conditions for approaching its pronouncements and descriptions as a narrative, which as such, is subject to a further treatment by “cosmologists”, so to speak of the second order, which deal not with the universe *per se* but through reflection and interpretation in mundane words of that which has been established by scientific cosmology. Thus the universe receives its duplication in literature and becomes a subject of an independent study by “cosmological linguists” and writers who are restaging and rewriting the story always exceeding the limits of any given context. Finally, one must not forget the impact which the study of the universe, cosmological literature and its mass-media treatment have on human perception of its place in the universe, its happiness and anxiety, and on practical stances on ecology and the value of life.

The signifying conventions of context-language affect those subjects who study cosmology, but subjects are not the agents who transform the language conventions pertaining to this or that context. The possibility of transformation inheres in the very temporal and

spatial movement of concepts and corresponding language, historical sensitivity and social delimiters that are carried forward but not controlled by the particular context-dependent citations which are used by subjects. Even though one may intend to transform the meaning conventions of words in a given context, our intentions, by themselves cannot establish the desired transformation because one does not control the future course of the signifying chain of questions and answers arising from the human communion with the universe.<sup>38</sup> The transformation of contexts is not subjected to any law in time, as it is not a process implying causality; it reflects events related to the human apprehension of existence here and now and, therefore, at the mercy of an always unforeseeable “future”.

It is the plurality of horizons or contexts such that no horizon could delimit or precede the created universe that justifies the absoluteness of the universe as a saturated phenomenon. The alleged “identity” of the universe “survives” the multiplication of dimensions of its perception. Then the question of identity of the universe as a saturated phenomenon arises in an acute form: if the universe cannot be subjected and held by any horizon, because it gives itself as absolutely free from analogy with any empirical law and free from any network of relations with that which has already been seen (or foreseen), can the universe as creation have an identity at all if the very fullness of multiple contexts pertaining to being manifested to humanity cannot contain or encompass the universe? Can the universe enter into relationship with itself in order to render to it its own identity? The simplest form of identity available to the human grasp is the generic relation between the universe with itself which can be symbolically presented through a formula “the universe is the universe”. It seems, however, that for the universe as a saturated phenomenon even this is impossible, for the very relationship

with itself entails such a differentiation in a single “unity” of the universe, that it becomes a definition of this universe from the outside of the initial non-split unity.<sup>39</sup> In this sense to speak about the identity of the universe is to enter the tension with its understanding as a saturated phenomenon. As a saturated phenomenon is neither visible according to quantity, nor bearable according to quality, absolute according to relation and thus unconditioned by the horizon, this phenomenon escapes the conditions of its own ability for being displayed and configured. Thus no positive sign of the universe’s identity is possible. However the withdrawal of the universe’s identity and, at the same time, its escaping presence through the act of communion, retains its apophatic manifestation. In spite of humanity’s subjection of the universe to the identifying relation with itself, it only remains a symbol, an apophatic manifestation of the impossibility of this relation expressed in rubrics of the identity of human consciousness. The intellectual posing of self-identity of the universe which effectively splits this identity in itself, creates contexts and horizons pertaining to empirical experience and thus reducing the saturated phenomenon to a glimpse of that which is neither visible according to quantity, nor bearable according to quality, but absolute according to relation.

### Creation and consciousness

Now we come to the climax in understanding creation, or the universe as a whole, as a saturated phenomenon which positions it outside of any general conditions of experience which are demanded by transcendental philosophy. The question is how the saturated phenomenon of the universe is related to thought in general. According to Kant the object of experience and the power of knowing must agree in order to be suitable for the source of experience, that is, the transcendental “I”. The possibility of phenomenon

depends on its fitness to the conditions of experience as originating in the “I”: the “I” can know things which this same “I” can access and comprehend in the conditions of this “I’s” facticity. Correspondingly if a phenomenon does not “agree” or “correspond” to the “I’s” power of knowing, this phenomenon cannot appear, that is there will not be any phenomenon at all but just a perceptive aberration.<sup>40</sup> In the case of the universe as a saturated phenomenon the “I” by definition experiences the disagreement between a “potential phenomenon of the universe” expected to appear in the manner of ordinary objects and its subjective experience through sheer belonging to the universe (communion). Consequently the “I” cannot constitute the universe as an object whose concept would agree with the conditions of experience of the universe as communion. Correspondingly, the failure to objectify the universe does not mean that there is an appearance of nothing and the implied communion is an empty phrase. One has here the intuitive saturation by the universe which imposes itself by excess which makes this universe effectively invisible and incomprehensible to the extent that it cannot be tolerated and thus seems to be incommensurable. It is the universe as a saturated phenomenon which resists any regard with respect to itself as an object: it engulfs the subjectivity of the “I” to such an excess that this “I” fails, and any attempt of the universe’s constitution is suspended. The universe is *visible* (in its particular pieces and moments) but it nevertheless cannot be *looked at*. It is this feature of visibility as presence and at the same time the impossibility of gazing at it that characterises the saturated phenomenon.

On the side of a human being a meeting with a saturated phenomenon of the universe can be characterised as a condition of not being adapted to and not being at home in the world. In analogy with J.-F. Lyotard, (Lyotard 1991, p. 4), the meeting

with the saturated phenomenon can be described as a return back to the condition of infancy, for as infants, humans are helplessly exposed to a strange and overwhelming environment while lacking the ability to articulate what affects them. By reducing this analogy to the bodily functions, the universe as saturated phenomenon deprives the body of its attunement to the universe. In a trivial sense there is the body’s contingent, and literally free-flying, position in the space-time of the universe so that it is displaced and hence not attuned to the universe. In a more sophisticated sense, being in the universe but constituting itself through communion with the universe as a whole, a body is nowhere (according to Kant, as *noumen*, human being is outside of space and time) and thus is not attuned to anything.<sup>41</sup> This condition of not being attuned to the universe signifies a gap between sensibility and the possibility of mental articulation or linguistic expressibility in situations when human beings meet saturated phenomena. If sensibility is a condition of unmasterable and vulnerable openness to excesses of affection, then the passage from sensation to articulation is not guaranteed: what we have here is the suspension of comprehension and its linguistic expressibility, a break between them which indicates that the saturated phenomenon *de facto* breaks that which could be called the conditions of experience corresponding to ordinary phenomena (poor in intuitive content).<sup>42</sup>

Then the question is: what does the “I” “see” in the conditions of the broken link between the overabundance of intuition and the possibility of discursive expressibility? What is that which appears to the “I” under the rubrics of the saturated phenomenon of the created universe? The answer comes (not unexpectedly from a phenomenological point of view, although extended beyond it) from the recognition that what the “I” definitely realises is its own incapacity to constitute this phenomenon once and for all,

certain and accommodated to its pre-existent and finite (as accumulated in time) rubrics of experience. The universe is received through the “I’s” sight as pure donation which cannot be caught as complete in rubrics of thought at any given moment of time. One can say that to wrestle with the saturated phenomenon of the universe is to be in a constant despair of chasing its escaping presence which constantly reminds the “I” of the obfuscated nature of its handling the universe implanted in the inevitability of the “I’s” created finitude.<sup>43</sup> The presence of the universe in human life and the very definitiveness of the I thus itself is subjected to the donation of the universe and it is the “I” which is not a-priori and independent of the universe in its free willing ambitions of tackling it, but it is the “I” which is positioned by the nature of the universe’s speech into the passive voice thus becoming a dative of manifestation and the nominative of disclosure only to the extent the universe itself, being created and enhypostasized by the Divine Logos, makes it possible. The “I” as being unable to constitute the phenomenon of the created universe as a whole experiences itself as being constituted by this phenomenon through inescapable creaturely participation. The hypothetical identity of the universe, sought and intended on the grounds of the free-willing ambitions, remains no more than an unfulfilled intentionality which characteristically returns back to the “I” which is being constituted by the universe as if the “I” is being gazed at by it. However one must not be mesmerised by this conclusion: the “I” is constituted by the universe only in the sense that both the “I” and the universe are enhypostasized by their hypostatic otherness in an intrinsically coinherent way, when one cannot exist without the other. The “I” experiences itself as a subject of the endless dialogue in which it is involved through pure donation of creation to all humans as creaturely existents in the creaturely universe. In this sense the response of humanity

to the invitation to participate in this dialogue has certain modalities of both fear (as not attunement) and gratitude for the gift of being-in-the-universe. By being in the universe the “I” does not have (it simply cannot have) any dominant point of view over the intuition of the universe as an expression of the very fact of life. The universe as a saturated phenomenon engulfs subjectivity by removing its parts and spatial extension. In a temporal sense, the universe is always already there, so that all events of subjectivity’s life unfold from the never-ending donating event of the universe as constant coming into being, in which the unforeseeable nature of every consequent moment entails the unending historicity and unpredictability of existence.<sup>44</sup> In a spatial sense, the contingency as concrete factuality of an event of appearance of the “I’s” life, which is not foreseeable and phenomenologically hidden from the “I’s” comprehension, makes its position in the universe *out of tune* (in spite of the fine tuning related to consubstantiality with the universe implied and explicated by the anthropic inference) through the fact that the universe engulfs the “I” with the intuitive flood, which ultimately breaks the link between the intuitive and discursive mind and thus deprives the “I” of clear comprehension of the created universe leaving the human “I” with no place in the universe. Its “place” is its sheer facticity and any constitution of the universe’s space by the heroic modalities of human free will just reduce the universe to its limited phenomenality, the phenomenality which is not; for the universe is the saturated phenomenon invisible according to quantity, unbearable according to quality, unconditioned according to relation and irreducible to the “I” according to modality (Marion 2001, p. 211). From a phenomenological point of view the universe as a saturated phenomenon represents the conceptual completion of the definition of the phenomenon as that which appears of itself, and starting from

itself (Heidegger 1998, p. 54), since it appears without any limitations by horizons and without being able to be reduced to the rubrics of human subjectivity.

The situation with “knowledge” of the universe as a saturated phenomenon becomes characteristically similar to that of knowledge of God in theology if one remembers that what is called “knowledge” in theology is not related to the discursive faculties of cognition but rather to mystical awareness based on personal participation and communion with the Divine. Correspondingly, in theology one cannot be detached from what is intended as the subject matter of its enquiry; one needs faith and participation in that which is studied. In this case the “knowledge” of God can not be “objective” (in the sense of scientific rationality) because it depends on a mode of personal experience and involvement. This suggests that theology implies a special understanding of “objectivity”, different from the natural attitude where the reason attempts to separate itself from attachments (contexts) in order to be detached from the finite object (which is constituted as freed from attachments). Thus, in theology, no prior assessment of the attachments to its “object” is possible, for the definitiveness of the perceptive intellect is revealed to itself only through its relationship with the divine as god-given capacity. This is the moment when the intuition saturates over the intellect in its attempt to grasp its own facticity, and it is this saturation as such which indicates the inseparable union of consciousness and its source in the Divine. As a simple result any imagined deprivation of this donating intuition of its source (that is the objectivization of the Divine) would mean the immediate cessation of subjectivity in general. Thus we face an interesting reversal (with respect to scientific knowledge): the “objective” knowledge of God presupposes saturation over all discursive images of the Divine (apophaticism)

which paradoxically means the impossibility of detachment from communion with God. If one now turns back to the universe as a saturated phenomenon one realises that the commonly accepted objectivity in scientific cosmology based on the presupposition of detachment from all personal, subjective attachments to the universe becomes impossible. By paraphrasing the words of T. Torrance, formulated in a theological context, it is sheer attachment to the universe that detaches us from our preconceptions about it; while detaching ourselves from our preconceptions we become free for the universe, and therefore free for true “knowledge” of it (Torrance 1996, p. 36). Then philosophical cosmology is constituted in conversation and communion with the universe which *communicates itself* to us in acts of donation and while gazing at us it *requires of us an answering relation* in receiving, acknowledging, understanding, and in active personal participation in the relationship it establishes between us (Ibid., p. 39). It is this answering relation in receiving, acknowledging, understanding, and active personal participation in the relationship with the universe that constitutes the “I”.<sup>45</sup> Certainly within a theological sensibility one must not assign any para-hypostatic features to the universe as actively invoking in us a conscious response. The response is provoked by the fact of our inseparability with the created universe, but as an action and event it is rooted in the ability of man to articulate its own existence and the existence of the universe which does not obviously follow the logic of consubstantiality, but originates in the Divine image as a particular mode of enhypostasization of the human formation of the universe by the Logos.

When cosmological imagination positions itself outside the universe either in an attempt to “see” the universe in its entire spatio-temporal span, or, alternatively, when the idea of multiverse is invoked, as if the mind could gaze upon the



universe from the other-worldly-multiverse position, consciousness attempts an impossible act. In both these cases, since consciousness cannot quit its communion with this universe, all appeals to other worlds have a rhetorical and simply eidetic character, because their imagery derives from the rubrics of consciousness embodied in this universe.<sup>46</sup> Thus the very logic of transcending this universe has traces of presence of incarnate human subjectivity, so that the transcendence remains in the conditions of immanence. This last thought can be accentuated phenomenologically.

In the natural attitude the universe as a whole, being a synonym of creation, is posited as existing objectively out there, transcendent to the field of consciousness. Thus the universe as a whole is subject to a phenomenological critique. However, this critique does not simply imply that the question about its reality must be suspended and cosmology is brought to a methodological halt. It is important to realise that transcendence of the universe takes place not through an ascending series of the worldly astronomical phenomena or theoretical causation (which had been critically exposed by Kant), but through observing *teleologies* of explanation which rather characterise the activity of consciousness. Hence the phenomenological reduction exercised with respect to the universe cannot reach its goal for it disregards the universe as an ever-going accomplishment related to the teleology of the human spirit (implanted in the promise of salvation and eternal life). Here phenomenology does not discern the difference between the universe as a mental construction which is subject to such an operation of consciousness as reduction and the universe as communion whose presence in consciousness is exactly that *ontological* link which makes this consciousness possible at all and which can be cut off only in abstraction.<sup>47</sup> One cannot bracket or reduce the *universe as*

*communion* by using this consciousness because by insisting on this, this consciousness deprives itself of the conditions of its embodied existence and hence destroys itself as the intentional consciousness of the universe.

The transcendental reduction of the universe as a whole performed by classical phenomenology in order to neutralise the natural attitude points to a simple fact that the representation of the universe as completely transcendent to consciousness cannot acquire an ontological quality, remaining “transcendent” but only within the immanence of consciousness. Phenomenology rightly suggests the dismissing of all intellectual idols of the universe as pretending to exhaust the reality of the universe as communion: any discursive image of the universe remains only an image and thus incomplete. This returns us back to the principle of *apophaticism*: in the apophatic approach the discursive reason struggles with the idea of creation, or the universe as a whole, because this reason cannot position itself with respect to the universe in terms of “closer” or “far”. The universe is present in the background of existence through relationship and communion in such a way that allows one to express this presence ecstatically through music, painting, poetry etc.<sup>48</sup> However, this experience cannot be verbalised and expressed in definitions of physics and mathematics. It is exactly this paradoxical “presence in absence” of the universe as a whole which allows the human spirit to make the distinction between what is absent (and hence always suspected in the inadequacy of its expression in concepts and then legitimately bracketed away), and what is present (that is, what is left after the bracketing of conceptual idols) and hence allegorically expressed in mundane language without any risk of being mixed with the ineffable essence of the universe. In fact, one can say that the very bracketing of the conceptual idols of the universe is possible only because the resulting conceptual

absence of the universe, which always bedazzles human imagination, is compensated by the reality of its concrete presence, manifested in the very possibility of thinking about the universe.<sup>49</sup> The implicit *presence* of the created universe in all acts of the incarnate human subjectivity cannot be phenomenologically reduced (that is bracketed as transcendent and “non-real”) because if this could happen, the incarnate consciousness would be bracketed away and hence eliminated. Obviously this would entail the destruction of the factual consciousness itself, and thus lead to a sheer existential contradiction. J. Sharon compared this inseparability of a human being and the universe with its attachment to the universe as its mother, the attachment through “love, but not only by reason” (“*par l’Amour et non par sa seule raison*”) (Charon 1974, p. 14). Humanity, in spite of its non-attunement and

homelessness in the astronomical universe is predisposed to love the universe through the inherent Divine image in man, for through love of the universe as good creation of a good God that man loves God as his Father. It is in this love as a theological commitment that ultimately lies in the foundation of cosmology as the study of the created universe.

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<sup>1</sup> For introduction to the theological discussion of creation see a classical paper (Florovsky 1976, pp. 43-78). See also (Florovsky 1949, pp. 53-77). There are many modern books dealing with creation that have a historical, as well as systematic character. See, for example: (May 1994), (Ward 1996), (Torrance 1998), (Pannenberg 1993), (Davies, 2004), (Pannenberg 2008), (Theokritoff 2009), (Barker 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Talking about Divine presence in the world we imply Christian panentheism: God is present in the world without losing his transcendent essence (he is present in absence). Correspondingly the language of God as “wider reality” in which the world is embedded is metaphorical: the world is contingent upon God, who by being present in its signs in the world, yet remains beyond the world. See (Clayton, Peacocke 2004).

<sup>3</sup> The idea of the multiverse in modern cosmology corresponds to a perennial philosophical problem of plurality of worlds. For a detailed account of the ongoing discussion see a volume (Carr 2007). For a recent scientific critique of the idea of the multiverse see (Ellis, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> See more details in (Marion 2010, pp. 253-69).

<sup>5</sup> As was stated by V. Lossky, “the mysteries of the divine economy are thus unfurled on earth, and that is why the Bible wants to bind us to the earth [that is our universe, AN]. ... it forbids us to lose ourselves in cosmic immensities (which our fallen nature cannot grasp anyway, except in their aspect of disintegration), ... it wants to win us from usurpation of fallen angels and bind us to God alone... In our fallenness we cannot even place our world amidst these spiritual immensities” (Lossky 1997, p. 64).

<sup>6</sup> Since “the Divine image of the world always remains above and beyond creation by nature” (Florovsky 1976, p. 72), what is implied here is the retaining of the image of the world in the archetype of Christ *through grace*, that is without compromising ontological boundaries between God and creation. In different words, the Divine image of the world can be linked to its enhypostasized identity. However, since there remains a transcendent gulf between That who is enhypostasizing and that which is enhypostasized, all human conjectures about the identity of the universe, even if they are accompanied by the graceful enlightenment do not reflect the image of the world as it is present in the Divine nature. We are capable of “seeing” the image of the world, its identity only, “as puzzling reflections in a mirror” (1 Cor. 13:12).

<sup>7</sup> This co-relation with the “community” of all things in the world was characterised by the French philosopher and writer Paul Claudel in terms of “catholicity”. Without having an idea about such a co-relation, that is without a universal, catholic idea, it is impossible to understand the sense and meaning of life; see (Claudel 1934, p. 9).

<sup>8</sup> A critical analysis of such a hermeneutics related to cosmological models of Hawking and Penrose was undertaken in (Nesteruk 2003), chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>9</sup> The idea of the unity of humanity as humanity’s hope to acquire knowledge of this unity in an eschatological limit is discussed in the paper (Goutner, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Hermann Weyl expressed, in a different context, a similar thought that “...the mere postulation of the external world does not really explain what it was supposed to explain, namely, the fact that I, as a perceiving and acting being, find myself

placed in such a world” (Weyl 2009, p. 50). Weyl linked the question of the world’s reality to the question of the origin of its mathematical harmony and the possibility of its grasp by human reason.

<sup>11</sup> This English translation is from (Sherwood 1955, p. 192).

<sup>12</sup> A famous example of such a hypothetical law is R. Penrose’s Weyl Curvature Hypothesis postulating the low gravitational entropy in the beginning of the universe. See, for example, Penrose’ classical paper (Penrose 1979), or a more recent book (Penrose 2005, pp. 726-32, 765-68).

<sup>13</sup> According to St. Augustine this cannot be a “beginning” as if it would be “seen” from the outside of the world. Augustine in *Confessions*, XI addressed the problem of the origin of time directly affirming that: “The way, God, in which you made heaven and earth was not that you made them either in heaven or on earth....Nor did you make the universe within the framework of the universe. There was nowhere for it to be made before it was brought into existence.” (Augustine1991, p. 225). According to Augustine the universe was not created by God in time, but was created with time Augustine, *City of God*, XI:6. This is the only consistent expression of the Christian affirmation of *creatio ex nihilo*. The *nihilo* could not be something, it could not have any attributes of created things, it must be an absolute philosophical no-thing.

<sup>14</sup> It is interesting to note that the first ‘scientific’ ideas on the origination of the universe in pre-existent space and time were proposed by Newton who intended to reconcile the Biblical account of creation, where the world had to have a beginning, with his view that time could have neither beginning nor end. Newton asserted that the visible universe was brought into existence by God in the past which is separated from us by finite time, but this took place within the absolute and infinite space and time. E. McMullin points out that the position of Newton was a departure from the medieval Aristotelians who were not inclined to separate creation of matter and time (McMullin 1998, p. 44). The creation of matter in Newton’s model is detached from the creation of time. One sees here a fundamental difference not only with the contemporary views based on General Relativity, where space and time are relational upon matter (so that the split in origination of matter and time becomes theoretically inconsistent) but even with Maximus the Confessor for whom space and time were inseparable elements of the creaturely nature of the world; see (von Balthasar 2003, p. 139).

<sup>15</sup> In modern cosmology such an interpretation corresponds to different models of the multiverse. It has also particular connotations with Penrose’s old suggestion that the special initial conditions of our universe responsible for arrow of time in it, are set up from outside through choosing them out of many other possibilities, which could lead to different universes; see (Penrose 2005, pp. 726-32).

<sup>16</sup> Cosmology claims that the universe is expanding with acceleration so that its “volume” will increase indefinitely.

<sup>17</sup> On the one hand, being inseparable from reality in virtue of its embodied intentional consciousness, human persons can exist only in the context of their immediate non-distance from reality. On the other hand, being a hypostatic formation, that is being fundamentally different from other material things, human persons are “infinitely” distant from those other things. The ability to distance themselves from outer things (even, in abstraction, from one’s own body), makes human persons equally positioned with respect to all objects in the universe, so that they can be articulated by human subjectivity as different and uniformly distant from it. Paradoxically the infinite ontological distance from all things in the universe makes human subjectivity to be equally commensurable (and thus close) with respect to all objects in the universe, including the universe as a whole.

<sup>18</sup> A famous Russian scientist and priest P. Florensky wrote in the same vein: “Nature and man are both infinite. And it is because of being infinite, that they are commensurable and can be parts of each other...Man is in the world, but man is complex to the same extent as the world. The world is in man, but the world is also complex as man” (Florensky 1994, p.186); “Man is the recapitulation of the world, its summary; the world is the disclosure of man, its projection. (Ibid., p. 187).

<sup>19</sup> The meaning of the term *enhyposis* and *enhyposstatic* is discussed in (Nesteruk 2003, pp. 110-17; 2004).

<sup>20</sup> It is implied here that a glance at nature and the universe as created by God is accessible to humanity only through the Holy Spirit. Correspondingly, for being sure that one indeed deals with the spiritual vision of the universe through the prism of Christian faith it is necessary to make a distinction between Christian spirituality rooted in ecclesial practices implying the invocation of the Spirit, and all other non-Christian and arbitrary appeals to generic spirituality. See in this regard a paper (Shmaliy 2012, pp. 79-94).

<sup>21</sup> Here one can point towards S. Bulgakov’s thought who advocated that the adequate description of the relation between the world and God cannot be established on the grounds of mechanical causality, that is that God is the cause of the world. This relation is that of the creator and the created. The act of creation of the world is rather an ecstatic transcendence of God through this creation. Creation manifests itself through relationship between God and humanity. This relationship does not subordinate to the constituting constraints of its manifesting historicity. This relationship, as well as the relationship between God and the world is subordinated only to the promise of God for salvation and eternal life, that is of renewed creation (Bulgakov 2002, pp. 221-22).

<sup>22</sup> This philosophical motive is developed in (Levinas 1987, pp. 39-57).

<sup>23</sup> “Thus then, in accordance with the likely account, we must declare that this world came to be, by the god’s providence, in the very truth a living creature endowed with soul and reason”: (Plato 1965, p. 19).

<sup>24</sup> “Wise men say...that the heavens and the earth, gods and men, are bound together by fellowship and friendship, and order and temperance and justice, and for this reason they call the sum of things the ‘ordered’ universe (kosmos), ... not the world of disorder or riot.” (Plato1963, p. 279).

<sup>25</sup> “For this world, having received its full complement of living creatures, mortal and immortal, has become a visible living creature embracing ball that are visible, and an image of the intelligible, a perceptible god, supreme in greatness and excellence, in beauty and perfection...”: (Plato 1965, 92c 5-9, p. 138).

<sup>26</sup> “Taking thought, therefore, he found that among things that are by nature visible none that is without intelligence will ever be better than one that is rational, when each is taken as a whole, and further that intelligence cannot be present in anything

other than soul. Because of this reasoning, when he constructed the universe he fashioned reason within soul and soul within body, to the end that the work he was accomplishing might be of its nature as excellent and perfect as possible.” (Plato 1965, 30b 1-6, p. 19).

27 One can invoke an allegoric parallel: if one sees stars and their constellations in the sky in a dispassionate curiosity, one does not “hear” the music of the heaven which manifests the universe in its beauty (one sees the script, but does not hear the melody).

28 (Heidegger 1998, p. 266) (emphasis added). The terminology of clearing of being can receive a strictly physical interpretation by referring to the present discussions in cosmology that the present state of the universe, as we observe it, is unique because it is only now that we can observe such features of the universe as its evolution and its enormous large-scale structure. In this sense we indeed have a sort of clearing of being, its unique unconcealment to us. See in this respect, for example, (Abrams, Primack 2012, pp. 105-119).

29 Geometrically, the light from remote objects which reaches us on Earth, forms a light cone of the past which selects a particular part of the universe which is accessible to observations.

30 More detailed description of the phenomenality of events can be found in (Marion 2010, 244-308).

31 On the basis of summation of astronomical objects: (Kant 1933, A163/B204).

32 Sometime the universe as a whole is depicted through a geometric shape as if one could position oneself outside it (see, for example, “classical” Hawking’s imagery of the universe with imaginary time (Hawking, Penrose 1996, pp. 86, 97, 102), or recent Penrose’s representation of the universe through the cylindrical cycles (Penrose 2010, p. 148).

33 See, for example, the model of Penrose from (Penrose 2005) quoted above.

34 If there are infinitely many different initial conditions, the a-priori probability for taking place of those which correspond to our universe is zero:  $p=0$ . Correspondingly the informational uncertainty related to the choice of these conditions is infinity:  $I = \infty$  so that one needs to invoke the idea of an omniscient being (Creator in Penrose’s terms) who overcomes this informational barrier and makes the choice. However from the point of view of human beings the choice of such conditions remains a sheer impossibility.

35 One could treat the “cosmological fluid” of clusters and galaxies as such a substance which gives rise to its contingent accident, that is our galaxy, solar system, the planet Earth. In a temporal sense such a substance could be associated with the Big Bang, containing in the encapsulated form all consequent realisations of matter formations.

36 J. A. Wheeler advocated a view that the temporality of the past is constructed, that is the ‘past’ is theory. The past has no existence except as it is recorded in the present. By detecting what questions our quantum registering equipment shall put in the present, we have an undeniable choice in what we have the right to say about the past (See, for example, (Wheeler 1988, p. 13)). This thought must be placed into even more general conviction that in the ultimate scheme of things there is no time or temporality at all. Temporality is the human construction: “The word Time came, not from heaven, but from the mouth of man, an early thinker, his name long lost. If problems attend the term, they are of our own making” (Wheeler 1994, p. 6).

37 The concept that there is not past and future, but an ever ongoing present was developed in (Comte-Sponville, 1999).

38 This is a natural consequence of the inherent apophaticism in comprehension of the universe: since signifiers do not exhaust that which is signified, the signifying chain of cited words used to express the experience of the universe in a given context cannot be controlled by that what is aimed to be signified.

39 This is similar to the Fichetian foundational thought that from the initial unity “A=A” (implied in the identity of one’s “I”: “I=I”) it follows its split in itself posing the “not A”.

40 A typical example of such an aberration is the so called dark matter and dark energy, which are predicted theoretically, but whose material existence has not yet been confirmed experimentally.

41 Indeed, the body, which is consubstantial only to 4 percent of matter of the universe can be said to be nowhere.

42 One can draw an analogy with the Kantian sublime: the experience of the sublime indicates not so much the classical dualism of finite sensibility and infinite reason as the irreducible heterogeneity of human faculties.

43 The constitution takes place on the grounds of free will through which humanity attempts to overcome its finite circumscription by the conditions of nature.

44 This existence was described by P. Brockelman as “the continuous eruption into being of those myriad forms, the active *that-ing* and *is-ing* of everything which emerges into consciousness in the experience of wonder” (Brockelman 1999, p. 79).

45 It is worth making a parallel with mystery: the universe is a mystery, for human beings contemplating it are involved in it without any chance of distancing themselves from it. “Mysteries are not truths that lie beyond us; they are truths that comprehend us” (Keen 1969, p. 25).

46 What happens in all such abstractions from reality is that consciousness imposes itself as a qualitatively different state of being, including not only the physical world as such, but the conditions of consciousness’ hypostatic incarnation. The difficulty here is that consciousness not only disembodies itself, but deprives itself of personal, characteristics. In this case the noetic pole of all predications about the universe degenerates into an impersonal and anonymous awareness which wanders at liberty upon that physical reality, which, while being by construction the intentional correlate of this consciousness, cannot limit or condition the very foundation of this intentionality.

47 It is the undeniable communion with the universe which, as was asserted by Kant, makes its articulation by reason (which imagines the universe as object) intrinsically antinomial.

48 C.f. with theology where the expression of the experience of the Divine invokes all forms of visual and performing arts. The art represents an acute form of expression of communion with the universe; see, for example, (Grosz 2008, pp. 23-24). There are numerous examples when the presence of cosmic immensities caused different poetic expressions either of the sense of awe and unity with the cosmos or the horror of being lost in the hostile universe.

For example, one can refer to the lyrics of Ruben Dario for whom to understand humanity, meant to understand the universe and thus to affirm the unity of “all in all” in the universe in a pantheistic fashion; see, for example, (Jrade, 1980, pp. 691-98).

- <sup>49</sup> The presence of the universe is ineradicable from the very fact of our consciousness. If one submits what is named “the universe as a whole” to the reduction only in so far as one defines it by transcendence (and insofar as one compares this particular transcendence with that, in fact quite different, of the object in the natural attitude) one exercises here an act of a *radical immanence to consciousness*, and in this sense the universe as communion would be confirmed by a reduction.

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## **Вселенная как насыщенный феномен: Концепция творения мира в свете современной космологии и философии**

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*В этой статье мы развиваем учение о так называемых насыщенных феноменах современного французского философа Жана-Люка Мариона, применяя его к космологии, а именно к представлению о вселенной как целом. Такой подход соответствует сдвигу в рассмотрении “вселенной как целого” как эстетической, а не рациональной идеи. Развивается аргумент, что избыток интуиции вселенной по сравнению с ее дискурсивным представлением позиционирует ее как насыщенный феномен. На этом основании делается вывод о неразделимости содержания сознания о вселенной и самого сознания. В той мере, в какой вселенная не может быть осознана интеллектуально, сознательный субъект формируется вселенной, приобретая тем самым статус микрокосма в очень нетривиальном смысле. Поскольку понятие вселенной в целом коррелирует с богословски понимаемым творением мира из ничего, показано, что любой подход к творению в естественной установке сознания невозможен, ибо сотворение артикулируется из сознания, которое тоже является сотворенным. Таким образом, сотворение входит в определенность сознания, которое сформировано ее насыщающей данностью сотворенного.*

*Ключевые слова: сознание, космология, творение, событие, опыт, человечество, бесконечность, насыщенный феномен, вселенная.*

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