

UNIVERSE, INCARNATION, AND HUMANITY: THOMAS TORRANCE, MODERN COSMOLOGY, AND BEYOND

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Abstract: *The paper discusses the sense of the spatial paradox of the Incarnation along the lines presented in T. F. Torrance's book *Space, Time and Incarnation* and accompanying papers. The aim is to elucidate the paradox in modern cosmological terms, as well as to give its further interpretation based on modern philosophical developments. It is argued, in particular, that the paradox of the Incarnation resembles a well-known philosophical paradox of embodied subjectivity in the world, thus elucidating an epistemological commensurability between the universe and humanity in the Divine image. As an extension and development of Torrance's reasoning, a phenomenological interpretation of space as the explication of personal relatedness to God is proposed. This interpretation implies the refusal of the natural attitude with respect to space and the need for the acquisition of the mind of Christ through whom and by whom the non-extended wholeness of space is revealed to humanity.*

I. Introduction

In 1969 Thomas Torrance published his seminal work, *Space, Time, and Incarnation*,¹ where he drew the attention of theologians, philosophers, and scientists to the fact that, if Christian theology is to have a real impact on the state of knowledge and mind of humanity, it should reconcile its teaching on the presence of God in the world through the Incarnation with the scientific views on the structure of the universe. One must admit that the impact of this book on modern studies in science and theology has been minimal. Apart from some generic references to this book and the complete ignoring of two associated

1 T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time, and Incarnation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).



papers,² one cannot find any serious development of the problems formulated there. It is sad that Torrance's frame of thought has not been fully understood nor accepted by modern participants in the dialogue between science and theology. It appears that Torrance's explicit theological commitment remains unpopular among scholars who follow the so-called "bottom-up" pattern of this dialogue. Interestingly enough, it is exactly because of their explicit theological commitment that Torrance's ideas come very close to the heart of Eastern Orthodox thinkers working on the interface of science and theology. Thomas Torrance knew Greek Patristics well and in his personal contacts with the present author he clearly indicated that in his perception of Christianity he was an orthodox with a capital "O".

The most intriguing issue in Torrance's theology is the meaning of the Incarnation of the eternal Son as fully human as this relates not only to the interaction between God and humanity, but, in fact, to the interaction of God with the whole universe. In other words, Torrance posed a question concerning that which in modern theological thought can be termed "deep incarnation." According to the idea of "deep incarnation," "the incarnation of God in Christ can be understood as a radical or 'deep' incarnation, that is, incarnation into the very tissue of biological existence, and system of nature."³ From this perspective the Divine Logos has assumed not merely humanity, but the whole malleable matrix of materiality by uniting himself with the very basic stuff of creation. The flesh that was assumed in Jesus is not only that particularisation of a physical human, but also the entire realm of humanity in its connection with all created matter, and ultimately with the cosmos, including its attributes which characterise this matter as existent. Jesus Christ was "not of this world" (John 17:17), i.e. the world in the state of human sin, but he conjoined fully with the material world in which he was "at home" (John 1:11).

It was Thomas Torrance who more than forty years ago anticipated a Christology along the lines similar to a "deep incarnation" idea, when he related the whole spatial structure of the universe (which, according to the modern anthropic

2 T. F. Torrance, "The Relation of the Incarnation to Space in Nicene Theology," in *The Ecumenical World of Orthodox Civilization, Russia and Orthodoxy*, vol. 3, *Essays in Honor of Georges Florovsky*, ed. A. Blane and T. E. Bird (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), 43–70 (reprinted as ch. 10 in T. F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 343–73); "The Greek Conception of Space in the background of early Christian theology," in *Divine Meaning*, 289–342.

3 The term "deep incarnation" was coined by Danish theologian Niels Gregersen in his paper "The Cross of Christ in an Evolutionary World," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 40 (2001): 192–207. See also his paper "Deep Incarnation: Why Evolutionary Continuity Matters in Christology," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 26 (2010): 173–87.

cosmological inference is responsible for the necessary conditions of the human existence and thus for the possibility of embodiment) to the Incarnation. Here Torrance went to the core of the created world by linking creation and Incarnation in a sophisticated dialectic of contingency and necessity, introducing into theological discourse a question of a double order in creation: on the one hand, its contingency, originating in *creatio ex nihilo* through the unconditional love of God with respect to the world, and, on the other hand, in its "necessary" Divine order, following from the Incarnation of the Logos as foreseen before all ages, as a mechanism of the union between God and humanity. To assume all aspects of creation is to assume its expression in terms of space and time. Theologically, to assume space and time implies that creation needs to be healed. But this means that the assumption of space-time parameters of human existence in the Incarnation always presupposed that those properties of space and time that are due to the Fall can be redeemed and overcome in Christ himself.⁴ Thus by being in space he was always beyond it in that "nowhere" from "where" the unity of "all in all" of the extended physical space has been preserved.

The assumption of spatio-temporal forms of the universe through the Incarnation of the Logos of God "in flesh" gives to all Christological discussions two dimensions. On the one hand here is the problem of the knowability of God: since the created world is permeated by the Incarnation which has been foreseen before the creation of the world, there must be signs of the Divine in the world through the fact that the world was prepared to accommodate the coming of Christ.⁵ Correspondingly, the relationship between the Father and

4 The idea that the perception of extended space and time of the physical universe corresponds to the postlapsarian state not only of humanity, but the universe itself, corresponds to the theologically understood loss of such a communion with God in which the whole universe was given to humanity as "all in all." In some studies it was suggested that the very expansion of the universe originating in the Big Bang, which is obviously associated with extensions of space, can be considered as the human perception of the event of the Fall projected onto a cosmic scale. See, for example, B. Rodzyanko, *Theory of the Universe's decay and Faith of the Fathers: Cappadocian Theology – The Key to Apologetics of Our Time* (Moscow: Palomnik, 2003, in Russian); S. Sokolov, *The Other World and the Time of the Universe: Time and Eternity* (Moscow: Kovcheg, 2008, in Russian).

5 St. Athanasius of Alexandria develops the thought that by becoming human, the Word of God "became visible through His works and revealed Himself as the Word of the Father, the Ruler and King of the whole creation," *De incarnatione* 16 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 45. However, despite the fact that the Father provided the works of creation as a means by which the maker might be known, this did not prevent humanity from wallowing in error. *De incarnatione* 12, 14, *idem.*, 39, 42. Because of this, the Word of God descended to humans in order to "renew the same teaching." However one must admit in the vein of our argument that in order to send the Word for

the Son is implanted in the structure of the world and is recapitulated in the Incarnation of the Son in flesh. Thus to know God means to comprehend the fact of his existence through the world, but retaining in this comprehension a transcendent element not compromising God's otherness to the world. This is related to the "spatial" element in the Father-Son relationship. The physical forms of space and time which were assumed by the incarnate Logos do not manifest the actual relationship between God and the fully human Jesus, but those forms of comprehensibility of the Divine which were set up by God in order to know him. Torrance speaks of the theological field of connections in and through Christ "who cannot be thought of simply as fitting into the patterns of space and time formed by other agencies, but as organising them round Himself and giving them transcendental references to God in and through Himself."⁶ Torrance argued that the space-time forms of the world in their totality are relational upon the Divine activity whose "axis" has, so to speak, a vertical dimension with respect to the horizontal dimension of the space-time of the world.⁷ He implicitly employed an analogy with physics which claims that its immanent space-time forms are relational upon the material agents and their dynamics.

However it was clear that unlike physics, which predicts some definite geometrical shapes for the given dynamics of matter, theology, because of its open-ended character based in the ongoing revelation of the Divine, cannot construct a causal dynamics between God's activity and the structure of space. This was the reason why Torrance did not attempt to propose a constructive interpretation of space-time of the universe as related to the dogma of the Incarnation, but rather discussed the possible methodology of such a theological science which, being informed of the natural scientific development, could lead to such a synthesis where the sense of space would be clarified not only physically, but theologically. Despite a generic theological conviction that the immanent forms of space and time must have their foundation in the otherness of the world, upon which the world is contingent, the dogma of the Incarnation implies an immanent paradox which relates the spatial milieu of Christian history to the whole universe, thus subordinating cosmic history to the history of salvation.⁸ Here a certain reversal with respect to the naturalistic view takes place: it is

the renewal of God's teaching there must have been the conditions for the very possibility of the Incarnation related to the fact of existence of humanity.

6 T. F. Torrance, *Space, Time, and Incarnation*, 72.

7 *Ibid.*, 75.

8 See a systematic exposition of this point of Orthodox cosmology in O. Clément, *Le Christ Terre des Vivants: Essais Théologiques*, *Spiritualité Orientale* 17, (Bégrolles-en-Mauges: Abbaye de Bellfontaine, 1976), 90–94.

cosmic history which becomes an event of the history of salvation and thus it is cosmology which becomes, in a way, subordinated to Christian anthropology.

The objective of this paper is to demonstrate that the paradox of the Incarnation, being intrinsically present in any articulation of the universe through the divine image in humanity, is, *de facto*, explicated in modern cosmology's portraying the universe as evolving from the idiosyncratic originary state of the Big Bang, whose idea, whatever this means, marks the ultimate limit in human understanding of the origin of the world mimicking the intuition of creation. We argue that the paradox of the Incarnation, asserting the *theological homogeneity* of the universe, is present in modern cosmology under the disguise of the cosmological principle of *spatial and material homogeneity* of the universe, which ultimately becomes a major epistemological requirement for the knowability of the universe as a whole. The fact that the paradox of the Incarnation implies the principle of knowability of the universe leads us to another dimension of the dogma of the Incarnation, namely to its contribution to the theory of the *Imago Dei*, that is the divine image in human beings which makes knowledge of the universe possible in its totality. Thus the second objective of this paper is to link the paradox of the Incarnation to the perennial philosophical issue of the ambivalent position of humanity in the universe, being part of the universe and being the centre of its disclosure and manifestation. We argue that the resolution of the paradox of human subjectivity in the universe depends upon the dogma of the Incarnation, which provides a pointer towards the Divine-given capacity of embodied human beings to be commensurable with the infinite, open-ended horizon of the Divine manifestations in the world. And finally, in order to elucidate the sense of space in its relation to the Divine, whose expression was attempted by Torrance, we employ some phenomenological ideas, borrowed from the discourse of space-constitution by human subjects.

II. Incarnation and its Space Paradox: A Cosmological Elucidation

It is worth taking a closer look at the space paradox which arises from the theology of the Incarnation as articulated by T. F. Torrance. On the one hand, Jesus Christ, being in his nature fully a man, lived in the world and was located in a body in a particular place and time in the earth's history. On the other hand, being fully God, he did not leave his "place" at the right hand of the Father; thus, being God, he was present not only in Palestine two thousand years ago,

but was always present in all locations and ages of the universe created by him. We have here a non-trivial temporal and spatial relationship between the finite “track” of Jesus Christ in empirical space and time and the whole encapsulated history of the universe as the unity of “all in all” of spaces and times sustained by the Logos-Christ.

Historically it was Origen who first reflected on the extraordinary position of Christ, being man and God, in the universe conceived of in terms of space:

Though the God of the whole universe descends in his own power with Jesus to live the life of men, and the Word which “*was in the beginning* with God and was himself God” comes to us; yet he does not leave his home and desert his state.⁹

Origen stresses here the point that God, who is the creator and governor of the whole universe, by becoming incarnate in the flesh in Jesus Christ did not cease to be, as God, the provider of existence and intelligibility for everything at every place in the universe. Being incarnate in the flesh, that is, being a man among humanity, Christ as God was still ruling the whole universe and holding together the entire creation. By creating the universe and giving it meaning so that it could receive his Son in the flesh, God has prepared a place for himself,¹⁰ but in such a way, that while descending into the created world in a particular place and time he still holds the entire creation together (through *enhypostasizing* it), being hypostatically present in all possible “places” of the universe. Thus the Incarnation recapitulates not only human nature but the whole of creation in the totality of its spatial and temporal spans.

By being incarnate at one point of space and at the same time not leaving his “place” as transcendent Creator, and by holding together the wholeness of space, God demonstrates that his relationship to space is not a spatial relation. Origen asserts this explicitly:

The power and divinity of God comes to dwell among men through the man whom God wills to choose and in whom he finds room without changing from one place to another or leaving his former place empty and filling another. Even

9 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4 in *The Early Christian Fathers*, trans. and ed. H. Bettenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1969), 213, emphasis added.

10 Here it is appropriate to establish a linguistic parallel with G. Marcel’s meditations on the sense of the term “receptivity.” When we said above that God prepared a place for himself this must not be understood as “filling up some empty space with an alien presence, but of having the other person(s) [that is humanity] participate in a certain reality, in a certain plenitude.” In this sense to receive humanity means to “to admit someone from the outside to one’s own home.” To make space for God means to invite persons to participate in the Divine reality. G. Marcel, *Creative Fidelity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 90–91.

supposing that we do say that he leaves one place and fills another, we would not mean this in any spatial sense.¹¹

Athanasius of Alexandria expressed the unity of the divine and human in Christ appealing to the analogy of space in terms similar to those used by Origen:

Then the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God entered our world. In one sense, indeed, he *was not far from it before*, for no part of creation had ever been without him who, while ever abiding in union with the Father, yet *fills all things that are*.¹²

Athanasius argues in this passage that in spite of the fact that the Son-Word of God descended to Earth in order to live with men, *he did not become closer to us* by doing so, for he *is always in everything* in the universe, which was made by him. "Space" is a predicate of the Word of God; it is determined by his agency and is to be understood according to his nature. This means that the "spatial relationship" between the Father and the Son is in no way analogous to the spatial relations among creaturely things. Human nature in Christ always operated within the reality of empirical space and historical time, whereas his divine nature was always beyond the empirical and intelligible aeons in the uncreated realm from where Christ the Logos of God coordinates the empirical space in which he dwelt in the body with the rest of the created universe. The Christ-event, being thus a manifestation of the spatio-temporal relationship between God and the physical universe expressed as an open-ended interaction between God and man, recapitulates the humankind-event in the universe, making the latter an expression of the interaction between humanity and God and of a contingent happening in the eternity of God.

One can use a different analogy in order to illustrate this point. Indeed, extended space and time are perceived by human beings from *within* creation and can be treated as "internal" forms of the relation of the universe with the transcendent Divine (the "extended" corresponds here to the old Patristic term *diastema*). The Greek term *diastema* meant in Classical Greek geometry the distance between two points, in music the interval between two notes. In the theological context the term *diastema* was used by Gregory of Nyssa in order to characterize the created world as extended in space and in time. He used this term in a negative sense in order to predicate about God by affirming that there is no *diastema* (that is, no extension of a spatio-temporal kind) in the being of God. It is more

11 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.277, trans. H. Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1953), 187.

12 Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 8 (Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1996), 33; emphasis added.

important for us to point out a different usage of the term *diastema*, which Gregory applied in order to describe the theological distinction between God and the world. This distinction contains an asymmetrical dialectic in the relationship between God and the world: on the one hand there is the *diastema* between God and the world, which is unbridgeable from within the world; on the other hand, God knows the world, which he created. The *diastema* in this case can be represented by an asymmetrical, one-way extension in relationship between God and the world: indeed, there is a basic *diastema* if one attempts to cross the gulf between the world and God from within the world; on the other hand, there is no extension, i.e. there is no *diastema*, in the Divine hypostatic holding of the world. Then the question arises as to how the extended internal space-time of the universe is maintained in relationship with the divine "environment" (that is, its non-extended "external" form) in which it is "embedded" (in the sense of being created). Here an analogy with the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ can be used. Indeed, it is because of the hypostatic union between the divine and the human natures in Christ that one can argue by analogy that the interplay between the space and time of the universe (their internal form) and its uncreated ground (its external form) is also upheld hypostatically by God in the course of the "economy" of the Incarnation, when the link between the humanity of Christ (in the space of the created world) and his divinity as the Logos (who is beyond space and yet holds all space together) was established. This leads us to the assertion that the universe in its spatio-temporal extension manifests its christologically evidenced hypostatic inherence in the Logos.

This theological understanding of the extended space-time structure of the universe as a manifestation of the relationship between God and the world, God and humanity, can cause discomfort among modern scientists who can easily conceive that space and time are relational upon the matter content of the universe (this is the main idea of General Relativity). To conceive of the whole spatial structure of the universe as expressing its relationality upon other-worldly Divine agency would be very challenging for them. In particular, it would be difficult for them to conceive the meaning of that Patristic phrasing that the incarnate Word of God, that is the person of Jesus Christ, *was not far from the world before the incarnation*: for no part of the created universe had ever been without him who, while ever abiding in union with the Father, yet *fills all things* without leaving his *home* and deserting his state. It seems here that any logic is broken if Christ is approached only as an incarnate and corporeal being whose appearance in the universe took place at a very late stage of its evolution. However, that which is asserted in theology is not a physical statement but

the assertion of that relationship between the universe and its otherworldly foundation which can be described by using the language of subsistence, or inherence, in the person of God. Inherence implies a different type of presence which escapes properties of spatial and temporal extension.

Interestingly enough, modern cosmology, in spite of the fact that it deals with the universe extended in space and time, characteristically implies, by its theory of the Big Bang, that whatever is physically seen as extended in space and time, in fact, evolved from an originary state beyond the extended space and time. In this sense, all extended places in the universe that we observe in the sky point towards this original state with no space and time: thus we are, on this planet, in the same "place" as we would have been at the Big Bang. If now we explicate this simple mathematical fact theologically, one can realise that the words of Athanasius that Christ as the Logos *was not far from the world before the incarnation* can receive a literal interpretation.

If, for simplicity, we adopt a model of the evolution of the universe from the Big Bang, it can receive a pictorial representation through the following diagram:

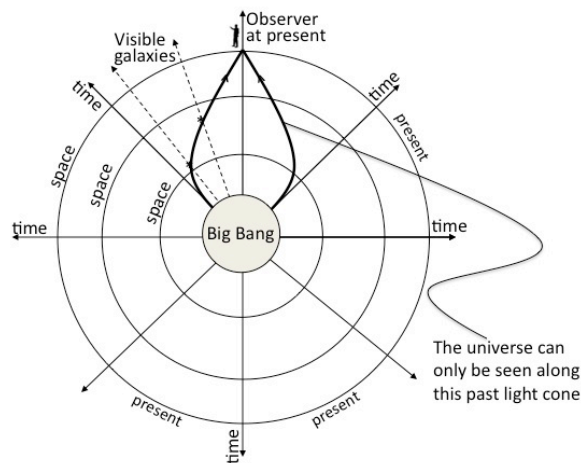


Fig. 1 The unity of the universe as generated from the Big Bang

This diagram attempts to express the unity of space and time as being generated from their non-originary origination "event" depicted by a circle of the Big Bang at the centre of the diagram. The diagram consists of a series of expanding concentric circles which aim to represent spatial sections of space-time. The circles expand from the initial zero point that symbolizes the origin of the universe. The radii correspond to the world lines of particular objects (clusters of galaxies, for example) which originate at the singularity (corresponding to zero linear scale) and diverge in all directions. The fact that the spatial sections

(that is, the concentric circles) in this diagram are compact must not be interpreted as an assumption of a topologically closed universe. If these imaginable circles are associated with some structural units of the universe (galaxies or their clusters), their expansion reflects only the process of the mutual recession of galaxies.

The major conceptual difficulty with the interpretation of this diagram is to conceive the meaning of the point of origin of the world lines. One must not treat this diagram as if it depicts the actual process of expansion in pre-existent space or time. Actually this origin is not *in* space and *in* time, so that its depiction as a point in the plane of the page is a metaphor. However, the diagram as a whole can be treated as representing the global structure of space and time within the context of natural human attitude, i.e. as if they existed objectively and independently of the human observer who appeared in the universe at its late stage. The distinction between past, present, and future has a purely symbolic nature (associated with the radius of a circle, or progression of the world line) as divisions in abstract "objective" time.

What is important in this diagram is that the spatial position of the human observer depicted at the top of the diagram is absolutely the same as if it would be at the very beginning of the universe in the Big Bang. It corresponds to a constant radius commencing at the Big Bang and going straight to the observer. The fact that the observer is situated exactly at the same place where the Big Bang took place is also confirmed by the curvilinear past light-cone (depicted as an onion shape), which has its origin in the Big Bang: indeed, whatever we observe in the sky is coming to us from the Big Bang. Why are these last two points important for our discussion of the Incarnation? The answer is simple: if we assume that the Big Bang is the point of origination of the universe as we see it and which we interpret as related to creation, then one can expect that the Divine Logos was "present" at this point as the creator. But, as we have seen, this point of creation is now exactly where humanity is situated: thus the Logos was never "absent" from the "point" of creation and its extension in space, including our present location. Correspondingly, if the Incarnation happens at the same point of space where we are, then one can say that this is the same point where the Logos was present from the beginning. Then the phrasing of Athanasius that Christ as the Logos *was not far from the world*, i.e. the human world on this planet, *before the incarnation* indeed receives a literal interpretation: the Incarnation has happened at the same location in space where the Logos was "present" from the beginning of the world. Thus cosmology involuntarily reproduces in a geometrical language a simple theological truth

that the universe, as being created, is related through all its ages and locations to the Logos-Creator who became incarnate at the same location where he was present from the beginning. Interestingly enough, the issue of the contingency of the event of the Incarnation in space loses in this picture any sense: the Incarnation happens in such a location in the universe, which remains the centre of its expansion and being geometrically and physically equivalent to all other points of the universe (the universe is theologically homogeneous).

Since the universe was created by the Logos and through the Logos, one can say that it is subsistent (inherent) in the Logos, not on the level of physical substance, but hypostatically, that is, in his person (the universe does not have its own hypostasis and thus, as it was said in Patristic times, is *enhypostasized*).¹³ This entails that the Logos is hypostatically present everywhere in the universe. However, the Incarnation makes a further reification to this saying. Since Christ receives human flesh, he turns out to be in a double position: as the person-Logos he is present everywhere; however, as being fully human Jesus is subjected to physical causality. This means that he has access to that part of the universe which contains the physical conditions for corporeality and is subject to restrictions on the knowability of the universe following it. Christ's presence everywhere manifests the lack of *diastema* in the God → world direction, whereas his subjection to the worldly causality manifests exactly the opposite, namely the *diastema* between humanity and God in terms of extended space. Theologically, the *diastatic* perception of space which pertains to humanity corresponds to the state after the Fall. Correspondingly, the extended universe perceived by humanity can be treated as originating in the human incapacity to actualise the archetypical vision of the universe as "all in all" (which is discursively disguised under the name of the Big Bang).

Christ, being human, but devoid of any affections by the Fall, experiences the universe in the conditions of space-time extension, but this extension, having nothing to do with human sin, is not in any tension with his hypostatic perception of the universe as a whole. If in Christ the overcoming of the tension between the perception of the universe as extended and instant has an ontological character, because of the hypostatic union of his two natures, then in human beings, who

13 The Greek words *enhypostatic* or *enhypostasis* were introduced into theology by Leontius in the context of Christological discussions of the sixth and seventh centuries AD. Their meaning, according to *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (ed. G. W. H. Lampe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 485) can be described as: "being, existing in an hypostasis or Person," "subsistent in, inherent." *Enhypostasis* points towards something which is not self-contingent, but has its being in the other and is not contemplated as it is in itself. *Enhypostasis* is the reality in the other hypostasis.

have the archetype of Christ, this happens only epistemologically. This means the following: since humanity is physically prevented from communion with the whole universe, it develops its intelligible image whose possibility proceeds from the Divine image in humanity itself. If in Jesus Christ the intelligible image of the universe does not share the phenomenality of objects, because this universe is inseparable from the Logos-Christ consciousness, then in human beings the intelligible image of the universe does appear in the phenomenality of the already created objects. Human beings can *enhypostasize* the universe, that is, make it articulated, on a different level through knowledge, but still the universe will remain an object of humanity's intentions for finding its accomplished mental representation. This point can be illustrated as a mental transition from the ontological principle of *theological homogeneity* of the universe (which is effected by the Logos) to the epistemological principle of the *spatial and material uniformity* of the universe, i.e. the cosmological principle, which justifies all speculations about the universe as a whole in physical terms. In a way, this cosmological principle acts as a principle of explication of the universe which has some *teleological* overtones: for the universe to be know by human beings it must be uniform, and this uniformity proceeds from its theological uniformity confirmed by the Incarnation.

The split in human comprehension of the universe as extended physical reality, which contains human beings corporeally, and as an integrated intelligible image of the universe as a whole, which stands in front of humanity in its articulated form, creates a paradox in the human condition similar to the paradox of the Incarnation.

III. The Paradox of Human Subjectivity and the Paradox of the Incarnation

We now focus on the paradox associated with the ambivalence of the human position in the universe. If one tries to articulate the grandeur of the world in terms of typical sizes, putting atoms, molecules, DNAs, etc. together with mega-objects like planets, stars, galaxies, clusters of galaxies, and even the whole universe, then human beings find themselves in a somewhat strange situation because the inhabited planet Earth occupies a tiny portion of the space of the volume of the visible universe. Also, the spatial scale of the human body is negligible as compared to the size of the visible universe. In a similar way, it is not difficult to realize that the phenomenon of humanity came into existence at a very late stage in the history of the universe, so that the universe was

devoid of human life and hence devoid of its self-expression during most of its "history." If human presence in the universe is judged from the point of view of its spatial and temporal dimension, human beings turn out to be a contingent and *insignificant* part of the universe.

The paradox which is present here arises when one realises that the very representation of the universe as a whole, and all particular objects in the universe organized against a spatial grid, are the products of human intellectual activity. The paradox is obvious: the finite, even insignificant embodied human agencies in the vast universe articulate the entire universe from a point-like position in space and time. Humanity actualises in knowledge the totality of the universe as its intentional correlate and this manifests a fundamentally non-local essence of the human presence, being a quality and a mode of being which transcends the finitude of its corporeality, as well as all particular objects and laws associated with it. In this sense the famous characteristic of humanity as "microcosm" (based simply on the observation of the consubstantiality of human bodies and the universe)¹⁴ is fundamentally inadequate.¹⁵ There is a mystery of the

14 The so-called "anthropic inference" in cosmology refines assertions about humanity's position in the universe, asserting consubstantiality of the universe and humanity in quantitative terms pertaining to a specific embodiment. Anthropic inference deals with the so-called "fine-tuning" establishing a balance between the physical constants responsible for the large-scale structure of the universe and conditions of biological existence. The literature on it is vast, so that we refer only to the classical monograph by J. D. Barrow and F. J. Tipler, *The Cosmological Anthropic Principle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); see also J. Barrow, S. Morris, S. Freeland, Ch. Harper, ed., *Fitness of the Cosmos for Life: Biochemistry and Fine-Tuning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). The anthropic inference deals with the necessary conditions for physical and biological existence of humanity and does not cover the realm of its sufficient conditions, related to humanity's intellectual capacity. The sufficient conditions become actual in the present state of technology when humanity effectively can control the factors of life's existence on the planet Earth from the side of, so to speak, "negative conditions": indeed, humanity is in capacity to exterminate life on Earth so that the future continuation of life depends not only on the natural conditions and possible disasters which can terminate this life, but also on a conscious desire to have this life. This desire, however, belongs to the sphere of human morality and humanity's vision of its own destiny; that is why it is not entirely controlled by the physical factors. In this sense the sufficient conditions of the existence of humanity in the universe depend on humanity's own vision of its place in the universe, its importance or non-importance for the fate of the universe itself. See discussion in A. Nesteruk, *Light from the East* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 195–208.

15 Being popular in classical Greek philosophy, the idea of microcosm was strongly criticised in Christian literature because it did not take into account those dimensions of human existence which endow it with intellectual abilities to disclose the sense of the universe. Consubstantiality is triviality and, according to Gregory of Nyssa, "there is nothing remarkable in Man's being the image and likeness of the universe, for earth passes

articulating consciousness which cannot be accounted for through any references to consubstantiality. The natural attitude of consciousness, which effectively attempts to explain the origin of this consciousness as the epiphenomenon of the physical and biological, fails to recognise that it attempts to explain itself from itself.¹⁶ It is because science cannot accommodate the dimension of personhood that it has to abandon the reference to hypostatic embodiment in totality and to treat consciousness as a medium of access which is hypostatically uniform (and thus non-observable), so that the human presence becomes irrelevant to the universe, so that sciences themselves become obscure.¹⁷ In a similar vein, Merleau-Ponty writes:

Scientific points of view, according to which my existence is a moment of the world's, are always both naïve and at the same time dishonest, because they take for granted, without explicitly mentioning it, the other point of view, namely that of consciousness, through which from the outset a world forms itself round me and begins to exist for me.¹⁸

The ambivalence in assessing humanity's position and role in the universe can be expressed in terms of a famous philosophical *paradox* asserting that while being *in* the universe, humanity is not *of* the universe; i.e. in a certain sense, it transcends the universe by "holding" it through humanity's grasp. Any cosmological discourse has to reconcile the locality and contingency of the cosmic position of humanity with its abilities to transcend this locality and encompass in theory the universe as a whole. Consciousness manifests its "irreducible

away and the heavens change ... in thinking we exalt human nature by this grandiose name (microcosm, synthesis of the universe) we forget that we are thus favouring it with the qualities of gnats and mice." Quoted in O. Clément, *On Human Being: A Spiritual Anthropology* (London: New City Press, 2000), 34.

16 On accentuating the personal dimension of embodied consciousness A. Gurwitsch comments: "what is decisive and of crucial importance is not whether the existence of consciousness is conceded or denied but rather that, even if this existence is conceded, consciousness and whatever pertains to it are considered as 'private' and thus not on principle subject to scientific investigation." A. Gurwitsch, *Phenomenology and the Theory of Science* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 133.

17 *Ibid.*, 399–400.

18 M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962), ix. Apart from an inadequacy in comprehension of the foundations of science, the whole stream of thought can be supplemented by a spiritual sentiment, namely that separating the world and the universe from the conditions of the functioning of human subjectivity, science based on the natural attitude – using the words of the Russian philosopher S. Bulgakov – "acquires lifeless intentionality and orientates us in the kingdom of dead things." S. Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 207, in Russian.

ambiguity," which follows from the fact that this consciousness is *in* the world, as well as *of* the world insofar as it is consciousness of the world.¹⁹ Any naturalistic attempt to suppress or subvert the essential ambiguity of consciousness distorts the sense of the created universe.

The abovementioned paradox was coined by E. Husserl as "the paradox of human subjectivity being a subject for the world and at the same time being an object in the world."²⁰ However, the paradox has been known since ancient times, and Kant, for example, expressed it in his *Critique of Practical Reason* as the difference in appreciation of "the starry heavens above and the moral law within."²¹ The paradox received numerous formulations and interpretations²² and we would like to make a few generalizing and clarifying references. E. Fromm gave to this paradox a status of "existential dichotomy," arising from the fact that humanity emerged in being as an "anomaly" and "the freak" of the universe, whose being exists in a state of constant and unavoidable disequilibrium, anxiety, dissatisfaction, and restlessness, which follow from being part of nature and transcending it.²³ Similarly to Fromm, R. Ingarden describes the existential dichotomy as a very special and doubly-complexioned perception of being: on the one hand, each person is quite alien to everything that happens in nature independently of them, so that he sees himself deprived by it of any kindly help and almost loses trust in fate; on the other hand, "in his pure and autonomous essence he feels himself to be something that stands out above nature, something that is so much more dignified than purely physical processes or what transpires in animals, that he cannot feel in solidarity with nature and live fully happily by being united with it in its domain."²⁴ According to Fromm and Ingarden's insights, humanity, when it narrows its perception of the place in the universe to the status of a thing among other things, dooms itself to depression and anxiety over its own insignificance in the vast cosmos, because life is enslaved and controlled by it. Contrary to this, the cosmos acquires some inward meaning if humanity sees itself as the centre of its disclosure and manifestation. Then the universe receives intrinsic human

19 A. Gurwitsch, *The Field of Consciousness* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 160.

20 E. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 179.

21 I. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Trans. and ed. T. K. Abbott (London: Longmans, 1959), 260.

22 See D. Carr, *Paradox of Subjectivity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

23 E. Fromm, *Man for Himself* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 40.

24 R. Ingarden, *Man and Value* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1983), 17–18.

qualities, thus being united to humanity: the question then is not of being positioned in the universe, but that of living here and now in communion with the universe. But this communion means that a human being can “transcend” the universe while retaining its immanence with the universe. As was asserted by M. Scheler:

Only man, because he is a person, can rise *above himself* as a living being and make all to be its subject of knowledge, including himself, as if he would be a single centre on *the other side* of the space-time world. But this centre of human acts appropriating the world, its own body and its psyche cannot be itself a “part” of this world, that is, it cannot have any definite “where” and “when”; it can only be in the highest foundation of being. Thus man is a being which is above himself and the world.²⁵

The paradox of human subjectivity was understood long before by Patristic theologians as well as by recent Christian thinkers.²⁶ Here is a passage from St. Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzus) with a characteristic formulation of the paradox:

the Logos created man as a single living creature from both elements. On the one hand He took the body from already pre-existing matter, on the other He endowed it with breath from Himself, which Scripture terms the intelligent soul and the image of God (Gen. 1:27; 2:7). He set man upon the earth as a second world, a great world in a little one ... both earthly and heavenly, both transient and immortal, both visible and invisible ... situated between greatness and lowliness, at the same time both spirit and flesh.²⁷

In Maximus the Confessor the paradox was interpreted in the context of faith in God who created man in his own image and likeness, so that initially man was “like” God, that is, he was “all in all” (cf. Col. 3:11). For example, Maximus the Confessor described this presence of humanity in all things in terms of a potential unity of all creation, which was to be realised by human persons as originally created: “man was introduced last among existent things, as the natural bond mediating between the extremes of the whole through his own parts, and bringing into unity in his own person those things which are by nature far distant from each other.”²⁸

25 M. Scheler, *Die Stellung Des Menschen im Kosmos* (Moscow: Gnosis, 1994), 160.

26 The detailed discussion of the paradox of human subjectivity in a theological context can be found in my *The Universe as Communion: Towards a Neo-Patristic Synthesis of Theology and Science* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 175–84.

27 Gregory Nazianzus, *Oration 45, On Easter 7* in Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997)), 203.

28 Maximus, *Ambigua 41 (PG 91:1304-1312B)* in *Deification in Christ*, 212.

Humanity was created in order to mediate between all divisions in creation, for example between the sensible (visible) and intelligible (invisible): "As a compound of soul and body he [man] is limited essentially by intelligible and sensible realities, while at the same time he himself defines [articulates] these realities through his capacity to apprehend intellectually and perceive with his senses."²⁹

Some Russian Orthodox thinkers of the 20th century also contributed to the recapitulation of a theological sense of the paradox. According to N. Berdyaev, "Man as personality is not part of nature, he has within him the image of God. There is nature in man, but he is not nature."³⁰ The human is not only an object in this world, first of all she is a subject which cannot be deduced from an object. Taken with this, the relation of the human to the cosmos is defined by its being a microcosm in a non-trivial sense: she enfolds cosmic history from within human, God-driven history. Humanity cannot be a part of something, it is the whole. Through the spiritual in it, humanity is not subordinated to nature and independent of it – although natural forces can kill it.³¹ If humanity would be just a natural and finite being, its death would not be so tragic: what is tragic is the death of an immortal being who aspires to infinity. Only from an object-perspective is the human part of nature; from the perspective of man's spiritual interior, nature is in him. Humanity is both a slave of nature and its lord.³² 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.³³

And further, "Man is the recapitulation of the world, its summary; the world is the disclosure of man, its projection."³⁴ S. Bulgakov contributed to the same stream of thought: "On the one hand, man is potentially all, the potential centre

29 *Ambigua* 10:26 (PG 91:1153B) in "Various Texts on Theology, the Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice, Fifth Century" 71 in *Philokalia*, ed. G. E. H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, and K. Ware (London: Faber, 1981), 2:277.

30 N. Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom* (London: Centenary, 1944), 94–95.

31 Cf. B. Pascal, *Pensées: Selections*, trans. and ed. Martin Jarret-Kerr (London: SCM Press, 1959), 78.

32 N. Berdyaev, "The Kingdom of Spirit and the Kingdom of Caesar," in *Spirit and Reality* (Moscow: AST, 2003), 565–671, in Russian.

33 P. Florensky, "Macrocosm and microcosm," in *Apology of the Cosmos* (St. Petersburg: Russian Christian Humanitarian Institute, 1994), 186, in Russian.

34 *Ibid.*, 187.

of the anthropo-cosmos, which, although, not yet realised but is being realised, on the other hand man is the product of this world, of the empirical."³⁵

If the paradox of human subjectivity reflects the intrinsic feature of the human condition in general, then, according to the Chalcedonian Definition, Christ himself, by being fully human, i.e. through his belonging to the created world, must have experienced and exhibited the presence of the above paradox. By his human nature Christ was contained in the universe, while because of his Divine nature it was him who contained the universe in his divine hypostasis. The two natures were united in the hypostasis of the Logos, thus manifesting the mutual co-inherence of two different senses of space – as containing Jesus and as being contained by Christ. The power of upholding the entire universe by the Logos-Christ while being on this planet (which can be seen as the explication of co-inherence between the geography of the Holy history and the entire universe) can be interpreted as an anticipatory sign (type) of what humanity, made in the image of God, is endowed with. By the power of comprehension, human beings can hold the entire universe in the integrity of their intersubjectivity, suspending its apparent spatial extension and differentiation, thus relating the universe to its transcendent Creator. The Incarnation of the Logos in Jesus Christ thus revealed to human beings that the mystery of their paradoxical existence in the world is rooted in their special origin in God, who himself, through his Incarnation, provides humanity with the only possible reference for spiritually comprehending and ascetically overcoming this paradox.

In the same way as the presence of Christ in a particular location in space and time in the universe did not prevent him, as the Logos, from being hypostatically present everywhere in the universe, the physical presence of humanity in a particular location in the universe does not preclude it from being "present" everywhere through articulating the entire universe by exercising its Divine image, i.e. the archetype of Christ himself.³⁶ One should understand, however, that the universe as an intentional correlate of human subjectivity is not an "ontological" mode of being in the same sense as the hypostatic inherence of the universe in the Person of the Logos. The universe is created by the Logos and that is why it is ontologically contingent upon and derivative from the Logos. Whereas humanity discloses in language and thought what it means that the universe in its entirety is created in such a shape and with such content that the Incarnation of the Logos became possible.

35 S. Bulgakov, *Philosophy of Economy* (Moscow, Nauka, 1993), 160, in Russian.

36 Here an implicit transition from the perceived *theological uniformity* of the universe to its *cosmographic uniformity* takes place.

The Incarnation of the Logos in human flesh at one particular point of the universe, and his simultaneous presence everywhere in the universe, provides us with the archetype of how the all-penetrating human subjectivity can claim its "presence in absence" in the entire universe while remaining corporeally at a particular location in the cosmos, i.e. on the planet Earth. It is through our inherence in the Logos who assumed the humanity that human beings share an ability to articulate the world as inherent in the Logos. T. F. Torrance called this inherence in the Logos a "vertical relation to God." According to him, without this relation "man has no authentic place on the earth, no meaning and no purpose, but with this vertical relation to God his place is given meaning and purpose."³⁷

IV. Space as the Explication of Personal Relatedness to God

Finally we would like to explicate Torrance's intuitions about the sense of space as the form of comprehensibility and communion with God in phenomenological terms, taking into account methods of constitution of space by human subjects. The paradox of human subjectivity can be formulated in terms of space, i.e. in terms of humanity's topological position in the universe. The formulation in terms of space is achieved through a metaphor of the container and of the contained: on the one hand, by its physical and biological parameters, humanity is contained in the universe, on the other hand the universe itself is "contained" by human hypostatic subjectivity as its intentional correlate. In this formulation the ontological centrality of humanity is contraposed to its cosmographic mediocrity (cosmological principle). The distinction between two worlds is accentuated here: the world which is affirmed by cosmology as existing whole and scientifically thematized in terms of elements and essences, and another world, associated with the immediate life of consciousness, the so called "life-world," the medium of indwelling into which every human being is brought into existence. This life-world, being "here and now" for every particular being, is linked to the planet Earth and is thus geocentric. Earth is ontologically central in a spiritual sense:³⁸ that is, in the sense of the "where" from whence manifestations and disclosures

37 Torrance, *Space, Time, and Incarnation*, 75.

38 This point was clearly articulated 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 ... 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." V. Lossky, *Orthodox Theology* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 64.

of the universe originate. In spite of the fact that astronomy and cosmology deal with Earth as an object and ascribe to it a movement in space, both cosmology and astronomy were produced by human beings on Earth, and it was here, on this planet, that scientific thought developed the definitions of motion, rest, and space understood in a general, objective sense. Cosmologists' statements concerning the indifferent position of Earth in cosmic space (cosmological principle) receive their meaning from experiences acquired here, on the planet Earth. The *here* which is the place of this initial experience *is not* therefore a place in space, since it is itself a place of origin of a notion of space.³⁹ In this sense the cosmological principle, as a philosophical hypothesis, enters into contradiction with the singular and unique "here" which is radically incomparable with any "there," thus predetermining the non-homogeneous topology of any ideation about space at large.

A phenomenological stance on space is different: phenomenology treats space not as the pre-existent objective "out there" (articulated through a subject's passive contemplation of it), but in terms of subject's comportment "in" it. This, so-called "attuned space" becomes an initial instant and a medium of disclosure of that "objective" space through relation to which this subject is constituted as corporeal existence in space. However, this relationship manifests a paradox similar to that of the container and of the contained, put in an interrogative form: how can one grasp the relationship of a particular being (subject) as if it is "in" space when this being is essentially constituted by being "over against," and hence beyond space?⁴⁰ It is interesting that this question can be easily elucidated in the context of the Incarnation: how can one grasp the relationship of fully human Jesus Christ as if he is "in" space, when Jesus Christ as the Son of God is essentially constituted by being "over against," and hence beyond space. This is related not only to the place of physical embodiment, but also to the "place" of the whole universe. Place (as space-time extension of the universe) is a predicate of the Occupant in the sense that it is predetermined by his agency. This theological thought has connections with General Relativity's stance on the space-time structure of the universe, as being relational, namely being a

39 This point has its theological reference in Christ the Logos as the source of all space by himself not being in space.

40 E. Ströker, *Investigations in Philosophy of Space* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1965), 15. This reminds me of a Kantian stance on human being as being simultaneously phenomenal and noumenal: on the one hand, space is an *a priori* form of sensibility which allows a subject to order experience; on the other hand, this form of sensibility is unfolded not from within that space which is depicted by it, that is it comes from beyond any possible spatial presentation of experience.

predicate of its "occupant," that is, the material content. This analogy between theology and physics has a very limited value for the relationality of physical space-time, which has a strictly created nature; whereas when the space-time of the whole universe is predicated in terms of the Divine activity, it has, so to speak, a transcendent meaning where the generation of space as relational upon Divine activity and nature has the sense of creation of this space out of nothing in view of the forthcoming Incarnation of the Son-Logos of God in Jesus Christ.

What is obvious, however, is that the constitution of space, first of all of the attuned space, is intertwined with and not detachable from the fundamental aspect of human embodiment or corporeity, where embodiment or corporeity manifests itself neither as a system of some biological processes, nor as simply a body animated by the soul, nor even as a simple unity of both of them. It is a living being in relation to other beings and to the world, in whom this relation is announced and articulated in a way of its sense-reaction and its comportment, or its action in situation. In this sense, the constitution of space in all its varieties (from attuned space of immediate indwelling to mathematical space of the universe) represents the modes of explication of embodiment or corporeity through which human beings interact with the world. Thus the lived body entails a sort of lived space which bears the character of self-giveness "in the flesh." In other words, the stance on the initial point of any discourse in corporeity and associated spatiality implies a kind of knowledge as presence "in person" or "in the flesh" as a mode of givenness of an object in its standing in front of the functioning corporeity. Correspondingly, when one speaks of the Incarnation, Jesus Christ represents the lived space which bears the character of self-giveness in his human flesh, but also the foundation of this lived space in the space of the whole universe which bears the character of self-giveness in his Divine Hypostasis.

In cosmology, by articulating the entirety of the universe human beings remain corporeal, so that their corporeity as relationship to all things contains in its facticity the very premise of being physically and spatially *incommensurable* and at the same time hypostatically *commensurable* to the totality of the universe (as constituted by human agency) which humanity attempts to reveal. The attitude to this totality is two-fold: on the one hand humanity attunes to it through belonging to it; on the other hand, humanity positions itself as if it were beyond the universe, as if it "looked" at this universe as an object and depicted the latter as something being present over against "the flesh" and in person. However, since humanity cannot abandon its position of corporeal existence *in situ* on the planet Earth, all cosmological models contain the traces of embodiment even

in those cases when they predicate the universe in trans-human or even non-human (the early universe) terms. In other words, the commensurability with the universe is not *of* space, but originates *in* space.⁴¹

One may now, in order to articulate the sense of the paradox of space in the Incarnation, suspend the natural attitude with respect to space and consider a genesis of spatiality as a certain form of relation to the world formulated from within the developing subjectivity. For example, if one looks at a child's entrance into this world in the act of birth, from the external point of view his life depends on the world's conditions and in this sense is open to the world's invitation to exist. The main existential factor in this initial mysterious unseparatedness between a child and the world is the early sensual consciousness of the other – the mother who through love inaugurates in a child the sense of space. Space appears as a mode of relationship, in which, on the one hand, a loving human being manifests itself as a pre-conscious ecstatic reference; whereas on the other hand, the same human person is caught in consciousness as the other, supplemented by the spatial attributes of this otherness expressed in terms of extended (and measurable) space. This dialectical "standing in front of" and "standing apart from" in personal relation is an existential fact which cannot receive any further foundational justification. Its contingent facticity is a historical event which cannot be repeated and reproduced in experiments. This is an event of emergence of personhood through relationship and thus through "standing apart from" (expressed through local distance and other measurements) that creates a spatial dimension of this relationship.

Knowledge of other persons is possible through this "standing in front of" or "standing apart from" and implies the intuition of space either as inseparable presence or absence. This is related not only to other human beings, but also to knowledge of nature as the reality of the other. One can admire the grandeur of the visible universe by experiencing it either through the personal "opposite" of ecstatic reference (that is as presence) or as the opposite measured through spatial dimensions (that is as absence; remote objects). In this dichotomy, the presence of the personal ecstatic reference to the other, its fundamental irreducibility from sensual experience and personal consciousness, predetermines the intuition of space as a definite form of experience and subjectivity. Here the

41 For human beings to achieve the sense of commensurability with the universe, one must be in space as a delimiter of their embodiment. Interestingly, this conclusion is similar to a Christian theological stance on space in the context of knowledge of God. It is because the incarnation of the Logos of God took place in rubrics of space and time that no knowledge of God is possible outside the ways of Christ in space and time. This was a point of T. F. Torrance in his *Space, Time and Incarnation*.

"I" that cannot give an account for the facticity of its personal ecstatic reference to the world is formed by this reference which is projected in consciousness as a form of "standing apart," that is, of space. Thus the perception of space can be considered as an apophatic mode of expression of the initial inseparability in relationship between humanity and the world, which follows not only from consubstantiality, but also from the implanted Divine image sense of "all in all." Space becomes a vehicle of human involvement in the world through hypostatic differentiated embodiment, which makes possible the relationship with the world's objects as well as other persons.

The language of ecstatic reference to (communion with) the world and other persons implies in a way a phenomenological attitude because the space of personal relationship is unfolded from within events of life. In this attitude the very notion of the outer world originates from within the boundaries of the same personal relationship; thus the making of the world an abstract and independently existing object can originate only from within the condition when the very personal relationship to the world receives a status that is similar to the status of all other objects. The world as a personal "opposite" of ecstatic reference is perceived in the dialogue between humanity and the world as some other "I" hypostatically subsistent in my "I." The representation of the personal relationship with the world in the phenomenality of objects consists in the world becoming a passive object of observation and study, from which feelings and the Eros of consubstantial communion is removed. The very consubstantiality with the world becomes an abstract notion, which is not experienced through communion. The world becomes an object and the personal space of "standing in front of" the world transforms into a sheer "standing apart from" the world in space as measurable and controlled extent. Space is presented in the phenomenality of objects when the relationship with the world is transferred into the sphere of pure thought which thinks this relationship but does not experience it. It is in the conditions of this breakdown of the unity between subject and object that the representation of space acquires a more and more geometrical, measurable character associated with the boundaries of things (as objects) that fill in the universe.

It is exactly this way that cosmology thinks of space, where the measure of this space is determined by its capacity to contain astronomical objects, i.e. by the "density" of these objects as the measure of their standing apart from each other. This measure is determined by the number of light years required to "join" these extended objects in one united cosmic whole. Despite such a vision of the universe in the phenomenality of objects, the experience of *placelessness*

in the universe – the experience of the universe through an ecstatic inarticulate personal reference – remains irreducible and unavoidable. This “standing in front of” the universe as the personal “opposite” is free from any physical references and its actual, physically infinite extent, and thus remains indeterminate in the limits of scientific thinking rooted in the category of quantity and mundane geometrical intuitions of spatial hierarchy in terms of “closer” and “far;” “here” and “elsewhere,” “right” and “left,” etc. In this sense the universe as a term of personal relationship manifests its sheer presence, but such a presence that cannot be described in terms of place.

Here we find a delicate form of *presence in absence*. It is indicative that the experience of the universe as absent in terms of space and its undisclosed content turns out to be more impressively and apophatically manifesting the whole majesty of the personal ecstatic reference to the universe in comparison with any specific aspect of the universe’s presence in details of spatial objects. In both cases – either through the experience of belonging to the universe through consubstantiality with it, or through experience of its absence because of the impossibility to circumscribe the universe in forms of thought – this experience determines the space of personal relationship as a certain indeterminacy of “standing in front” of the universe (as non-extended and non-measurable). Space as relationship thus signifies the modality of life, a certain existential aspiration and interest which cannot be dissected into motivating components. Space expresses existential events of movement towards the other as manifestations of the very basic foundations of human being. However, this movement towards the other is not self-evident and indistinguishable in itself. Its revelation is possible and is taking place only in the conditions of awareness of space as a potential threat of “standing apart,” that is separation, if that movement towards the other and “standing in front” of the universe cease to function as elements of life. Here is a dialectics of space: it is always capable of being transformed from the condition of personal relationship into a soulless form of separation and quantitative measurement if the life of a hypostatic, embodied subject starts to be treated as determinative of biological survival, and the universe, instead of being a participant of the relationship, becomes an impersonified background of existing whose contingency not only cannot be comprehended, but, in fact, cannot be even detected.

Modern cosmology can hardly comprehend the sense of non-extended space of personal relationship with the universe, not only because one cannot physically transcend the universe and “look” at it as a single whole from outside, but because it does not dare to consider the unity of the universe as originating in its

subsistence in the Person of the Logos. It cannot deal with the representation of the universe from the God's eye view as a non-extended whole. Cosmology treats the universe in terms of its "elementary" constituents, such as galaxies and their clusters, and they are treated as present in physical space as if consciousness could shift itself from its home place on Earth and treat these objects in the same phenomenality which pertains to the objects on Earth. Presence here implies "standing apart," as experience of substitution of the home place. Then the very space of the universe is objectified as extension.⁴² However, the intuition of the universe as the created wholeness always functions as that invisible background (present in absence) for the natural attitude, which implies such a relationship of "standing before" when all extensional plurality of experience is reduced to null in the event of ecstatic relationship and kenotic aspiration towards the universe's creator.⁴³ There is a double meaning hidden in this event: the ecstatic personal relationship with respect to God precedes any consciousness either of his presence or absence in the universe and thus of consciousness of presence or absence of the universe as created totality. Said formally, there is no automatic assurance based in understanding, not only in objective expression of God's presence in the universe, but also in an objective existence of the universe as a whole. The existential reality of God and the world, created by him, are defined through the immediate proximity of the relationship, so that the very person and its subjectivity, not being able to verbalise and objectivise this relationship, are constituted by this relationship in "non-objectivised space."

It is this non-extended and non-measurable intimate "opposite" of the personal relationship that constitutes space as relation. The universe as "noema" of the Divine intention "stands before" God without any extension; however this "standing before," as relation, has a tendency of being expressed, in the human perception of God, as extended space.⁴⁴ On the one hand there is no space between God and the world (God abides in the human heart without any spatial connotation); on the other hand, being an embodied creature in the extended universe, human beings experience their relationship with God and

42 This thought dates back to Origen who asserted that bodily nature is needed to support the lives and uphold the movements of rational minds; bodies are needed for diversity and individuation in this world. See, for example, *On First Principles* 2, 9:6, trans. G. W. Butterworth (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973), 134–35.

43 As an example of this, one can point to the Anaphora in the Divine Liturgy, or to the prayer for the whole world of monks living in reclusion and "beyond" the world, contemplating the whole being from the cell of their solitude.

44 This is typical for all sorts of mythologies which develop a theme of a gradual and spatial relation between gods and the world.

his creation in the modality of space. On the one hand man manifests himself in the placeless totality of its own articulating hypostasis: the world is present in absence through the imitation of the Logos-given capacity; on the other hand, as functioning corporeity (i.e. as embodied being), he feels himself isolated in the world of dividing-but-present-in-presence extension.

It is because humanity, being embodied creation, exists in the world in the conditions of the paradox of its own physical finitude and theological infinity, it transfers this paradoxical situation to the event of the Incarnation of the Word-Logos of God in Jesus Christ. Since in Christ's Incarnation human nature is conjoined to the Divine nature through his person, Christ, being fully human does not experience the duality which is explicated in the paradox of subjectivity. The hypostasis of the Logos controls the conditions of its own Incarnation and the Christ-man does not experience any ambivalence of his placeless being in the plenitude of God and, at "the same time," of his existence in the conditions of the spatial extension of "standing apart from" God in his creation. Since the Logos in the Incarnation does not leave his place at the right hand of the Father, the placeless presence of God in the Christ-man means his omnipresence in the conditions of extended space.

The refusal of the natural attitude in contemplation of space, when the extension, as a physical property, becomes a non-extended "object" of an intentional gaze in the phenomenological attitude, could be paralleled with consciousness of God himself, for whom the whole world is an event-relationship. Transcendence as the overcoming of extended space and division of the objects of the world is related not to getting beyond its external cosmological limits, but to the bringing of space inside the intentional consciousness; thus reducing the problem of space to the problem of the foundation of its contingent facticity in this consciousness. Space remains an inherent element of every perception and thought in the natural attitude, being a mode of the extended world subsistent in the Logos as the unity of "all in all." It is the pole of the all-unity of space when the extension subjected to bracketing and suspension remains to be an ineradicable trace of non-spatial spatiality.⁴⁵

45 It is worth quoting Gregory of Nyssa who wrote in the context of the unknowability of God that "no created being can go out of itself by rational contemplation. Whatever it sees, it must see itself; and even if it thinks it is seeing beyond itself, it does not in fact possess a nature which can achieve this. And thus in its contemplation of Being it tries to force itself to transcend a spatial representation, but it never achieves it. *For in every possible thought, the mind is surely aware of the spatial element which it perceives in addition to the thought content; and the spatial element is, of course, created.*" Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*, sermon 7 (PG 44:730A) in *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings*. ed. J. Daniélou (New York: St. Vladimir's

The issue of the facticity of space leads inevitably to the problem of the facticity of consciousness itself. The facticity of the human embodied consciousness is exactly accompanied by the paradox which has so long been discussed. Any attempt of overcoming this paradox would correspond to transcendence of the boundaries of the very factual givenness of this paradox and this would entail either an exit beyond the embodied consciousness or an exit out of the world order. Since this is not an option for human beings – the paradox is unavoidable in the post-lapsarian condition – what is left to humanity is to find its ultimate archetype in which the “standing before” and “standing apart” in the relationship between the world and God is overcome by the Divine humanity of Jesus Christ. This archetype confirms, in words of T. F. Torrance, that “the transcendent God is present and immanent within this world in such a way that we encounter His transcendence in this worldly form in Jesus Christ, and yet in such a way that we are aware of a majesty of transcendence in Him that reaches out infinitely beyond the whole created order.”⁴⁶ By rephrasing this one can say that the transcendent foundation of the extended space and time of the universe is present and immanent within this world in such a way that we encounter its transcendence through the incarnate Christ who, while being in this world, manifests its majesty and transcendence as the Logos who reaches out infinitely beyond the whole created world. To acquire the sense of the unity of all extended space as an instant of the Divine love, one must exert a synthesis of mediation between divisions in creation and then between the world and God. The Orthodox tradition calls this way of spiritual ascent *deification*. To grasp the sense of the universe as a whole, including all of space and time, one needs to “acquire” the mind of Christ, that is to believe and love him in such a way that by being loved by him, and hence being known by him, one comes to truly know the things of the universe and the sense of its space.

Seminary Press, 1981), 127.

46 Torrance, *Space, Time, and Incarnation*, 79.