

Ravi Ravindra

## TIME IN CHRISTIAN AND INDIAN TRADITIONS

ONE OF THE MOST important conceptual differences between the Indian and the Christian traditions centers around the notions of *time*. In time unfolds the history of the cosmos, as well as our own individual histories. Time is the essential ingredient of all experience and thought. One of the most distinguishing features of human consciousness is its awareness of temporal order—past, present and future. We are in time, i.e., there was a time when we were not and there will be a time when we shall not be any more. *Kāla\** (Time) is also *Yama* (Death). Children of Chronos, we shall be devoured by him. Death: cessation of personal history in time. Awareness of this dissolution of self is the source of all metaphysical anxiety. Our limitation in time creates our demand for purposefulness of action, and search for meaning.

Nor dread, nor hope attend  
A dying animal;  
A man awaits his end  
Dreading and hoping all.

— W. B. Yeats

But what is time? When we reflect on this subject we are dealing with something which is at once very intimately related with us and at the same time is very elusive. As Saint Augustine said, "What then is time? If no one asks me, I know: if I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not."<sup>1</sup> It is very paradoxical. We are in time, but we don't know what we are in. "It is impossible to meditate on time and the creative passage of nature," writes Whitehead, "without an overwhelming emotion at the limitations of human intelligence."<sup>2</sup> Whatever one's understanding of time, it is hardly likely that one can escape being conditioned by the prevalent attitude to time in one's

\* $\acute{a}$  is used in this case and throughout the article to represent barred  $a$  which the printer was unfortunately unable to reproduce. Similarly  $\bar{i}$  is used to indicate barred  $i$ .

culture.<sup>3</sup> We cannot pursue here the multi-faceted subject of time in general. We shall concentrate on the understanding of time in the Indian and the Christian traditions.

What strikes us, first of all, is the immense gulf between the two time scales. Until a century ago, a majority of people in the Western world—including secular scientists—accepted Archbishop Ussher's estimate of the age of the world—based on the Genesis story—as 4004 B.C. A much vaster time scale was postulated by Lyell in his *Principles of Geology* (1835) and utilized by Darwin in suggesting a mechanism for biological evolution in the form of natural selection, in his *Origin of Species* (1859). The ensuing battle over the possibility of this change and the consequent revolution in thought has been well documented<sup>4</sup> and need not concern us here.

According to Indian speculation, one day for *Brahmá*, the period of existence of a universe, and one night, during which this universe arrives at dissolution, are each equal to 4,320,000,000 human years. And these daily creations and dissolutions of universes will continue for a hundred years of *Brahmá*. A state of re-absorption then prevails for a *Brahmá* century. After that other gods will arise and other universes. There is a marvellous story in the *Brahmavaivarta Purána*<sup>5</sup> (*Krishna-janma Khanda*, 47-50-161) that dramatically illustrates the stupendous scale of Indian cosmology, and the distinctiveness of Indian attitude to time:

*Indra*, the king of gods, was becoming too self-important. *Vishnu*, the Supreme Being, visited him disguised as a small boy. When asked, *Vishnu* said, ". . . Ah, who will count the universes that have passed away, or the creations that have risen afresh, again and again, from the formless abyss of the vast waters? Who will number the passing ages of the world, as they follow each other endlessly? And who will search throughout the wide infinities of space to count the universes side by side, each containing its *Brahmá*, its *Vishnu*, and its *Shiva*? Who will count the *Indras* in them all— those *Indras* side by side, who reign at once in all the innumerable worlds; those others who passed away before them, or even the *Indras* who succeed each other in any given line, ascending to godly kingship, one by one, and one by one, passing away? King of Gods, there are among your servants certain who maintain that it may be possible to number the grains of sand on earth and the drops of rain that fall from the sky, but no one will ever number all those *Indras*. This is what the Knowers know.

". . . Beyond the farthest vision, crowding outer space, the universes come and go, an innumerable host. Like delicate boats they float on the

fathomless, pure waters that form the body of *Vishnu*. Out of every hair-pore of that body a universe bubbles and breaks. Will you presume to count them? Will you number the gods in all these worlds—the worlds present and the worlds past?"

A procession of ants had made its appearance in the hall during the discourse of the boy. In military array, in a column four yards wide, the tribe paraded across the floor. The boy noted them, paused, and started, then suddenly laughed with an astonishing peal, but immediately subsided into a profoundly indrawn and thoughtful silence.

When *Indra* appealed to him with humility, the boy *Vishnu* disclosed the "secret that smites with an axe the tree of worldly vanity, hews away its roots, and scatters its crown," and said, "I saw the ants, O *Indra*, filing in long parade. Each was once an *Indra*. Like you, each by virtue of pious deeds once ascended to the rank of a king of gods. But now, through many rebirths, each has become again an ant. This army is an army of former *Indras*."

"Life in the cycle of the countless rebirths is like a vision in a dream. The gods on high, the mute trees and the stones, are alike apparitions in this phantasy. But Death administers the laws of time. Ordained by time, Death is the master of all. Perishable as bubbles are the good and the evil of the beings of the dream. In unending cycles the good and evil alternate. Hence, the wise are attached to neither, neither the evil nor the good. The wise are not attached to anything at all."

In addition to the vastness of time scale, what is striking in the above story is the cyclical nature of time.<sup>6</sup> Universes arise and dissolve with their own *Brahmas*, *Indras* and other gods. Evil and good increase and decrease in never ending cycles. As the Jains say, the serpent-cycle of time (the world-bounding serpent (*sarpini*), biting its own tail) will go on revolving through ascending (*ursarpini*) and descending (*avasarpini*) periods forever. The world drama is repeated again and again. There is nothing unique to our present age (*Kali Yuga*)—which is the last and the worst (i.e., has the least amount of *Dharma*—in the present cycle (*Mahá Yuga*) which has a period of 4,320,000 human years, equivalent to one thousandth part of a single *Brahmá* day. The present *Kali Yuga* is computed to have begun on Friday, February 18, 3102 B.C., and will last for a total period of 432,000 years. The moral and social degradation of the *Kali Yuga* is characterized in a passage of the *Vishnu Purána*: "When society reaches a stage, where property confers rank, wealth becomes the only source of virtue, passion the sole bond of union between husband and wife, falsehood the source of success in life, sex the only means of

enjoyment, and when outer trappings are confused with inner religion . . .”<sup>7</sup>

However this too shall pass. And, after the dissolution, another golden age will begin—which will gradually deteriorate. So on, forever, the wheel of time will keep on revolving—without pause, without mercy. The cosmic dance of Shiva goes on—different steps heralding creation and destruction of the worlds. The world, then, according to the Indians, is not progressing towards perfection under the direction of God—in contrast to the typical Western view. The Judaic-Christian evaluation of time is teleological. The well known hymn succinctly characterizes it: “God is working His purpose out, as year succeeds to year.” Yahweh made His covenant with Abraham at a particular historical time, and the hopes of Jews were bound up with the fulfillment of this covenant in the future.

Hebrew philosophy of history comprehends the whole course of time, from the very moment of the world’s creation to its final apocalyptic end, and the whole vast panorama of events is seen as the gradual unfolding of Yahweh’s purpose, viz. the final triumph of His chosen people, Israel.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most important single legacy passed on by Judaism to Christianity was this conviction that the course of historical events has a profound significance. This no doubt has been of immense importance in the development of worldly sciences in Christian countries.

Time here is viewed completely linearly. Temporal events move in a linear progression towards their completion in eternity. In Tennyson’s words, we find a classic expression of this view:

One God, one law, one element,  
And one far-off divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.<sup>9</sup>

The Old Testament opens, “In the beginning of creation, when God made heaven and earth . . . (Genesis 1.1)” and in the last section of the New Testament we find, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22.13)”. Thus, the whole history of the world, from beginning to end, is conceived as dependent upon God, who is antecedent to it and who interferes in history when He considers it necessary. That history will soon come to an end, with the Second Coming of Christ,<sup>10</sup> was a very definite conviction with the early Christians. “For the hour of fulfillment is near (Revelation 1.3).” “I am coming soon (Revelation 22.7 and 22.20).” Probably the most ancient liturgical prayer is “Our Lord, Come!” (“*Maranatha*”) Similar notions about the imminence of the end of the world

continued for a long time. Thus Luther declared, "The world will perish shortly. The last day is at the door, and I believe the world will not endure a hundred years."<sup>11</sup> This element of impatient waiting about the end of the world was used as an exhortation to repent. Even today we find this exhortation on revivalist placards.

The key events in the history of the world, the great mythical moments, are unique in the Judaic-Christian view of time. The world was created at a definite time; Jesus was born, crucified and resurrected at specific historical moments—unique and momentous. Uniqueness of these events—particularly of the Incarnation, required a belief that history is a straight line sequence guided by God.<sup>12</sup> Pagan belief in purposeless temporal undulation was entirely unacceptable to early Christians. The idea of the cosmic repetitive cycles was the worst of blasphemies. Origen argued that from such a theory it follows that, "Adam and Eve will do once more exactly what they have already done; the same deluge will be repeated; the same Moses will bring the same six hundred thousand people out of Egypt; Judas will again betray his Lord; and Paul a second time will hold the coats of those who stone Stephen." "God forbid," cried St. Augustine, "that we should believe this. For Christ died once for our sins, and, rising again, dies no more."<sup>13</sup> Thus, with the rise of Christianity, the prevalent doctrines of undulation and recurrent cycles vanished from the Mediterranean world. "No more radical revolution has ever taken place in the world-outlook of a large area."<sup>14</sup>

In one of the Puranic accounts of the deeds of *Viṣṇu* in his Boar *Avatār* (Incarnation), we find the Boar, carrying on his arm the goddess Earth whom he is in the act of rescuing from the depths of the sea, passingly remark to her: "Every time I carry you this way . . .". Giordano Bruno, on the other hand, is said to have been burnt at the stake by the Christian church in the 16th century for believing in the infinity of worlds, for it implied multiple betrayals and crucifixions of Jesus.

As mentioned already, along with the uniqueness of the key events and linearity of time, the Judaic-Christian world-view is permeated with the thought that history is going somewhere.<sup>16</sup> There is no antagonism here between time and God. God rules over history and works his plan out in time. Both in the history of the Church and in the life of an individual, the divine purpose is still being worked out. Ultimately, this divine purpose would reach its culmination, and Christ would return, the dead would be raised, and the Final Judgment enacted, with eternal beatitude for the saved and eternal punishment for the damned.<sup>17</sup> What is of profound psychological importance here is that

there is only one chance for the individual and that his death is a moment of very crucial importance in his redemptive history.

Eternity: one can hardly utter the word without wonder, reflection and inward silence. Whenever contemplation deepens and thought matures, what concerns serious men is eternity. In the closing pages of *Steppenwolf*, Hermann Hesse expresses it simply:

"Time and the world, money and power belong to the small people and the shallow people. To the rest, to the real men belongs nothing. Nothing but death."

"Nothing else?"

"Yes, eternity."

"You mean a name, and fame with posterity?"

"No, Steppenwolf, not fame. Has that any value? And do you think that all true and real men have been famous and known to posterity?"

"No, of course not."

"Then it isn't fame. Fame exists in that sense only for the schoolmasters. No it isn't fame. It is what I call eternity. The pious call it the kingdom of God. I say to myself: all we who ask too much and have a dimension too many could not continue to live at all if there were not another air to breathe outside the air of this world, if there were not eternity at the back of time; and this is the kingdom of truth . . ."

In this passage, we have a hint of two distinct concepts of 'eternity'. One is: continuation in time. Thus 'eternal' means forever, endless, without break in time, ceaseless, everlasting, changeless. It is essentially a linear notion where the time variable tends to infinity. This is the common understanding of the word, wittily expressed in a popular cookbook as; "eternity: two people and a ham!".

In the second concept, unlike in the first, there is a qualitative difference between 'time' and 'eternity'. ('Eternal' is thus timeless.) In fact, it is not really a *concept* because mind functions only in time. One can't *think* about timelessness—as Kant pointed out some time ago, and many others long before him. "Thought cannot know the timeless; it is not a further acquisition, a further achievement; there is no going towards it. It is a state of being in which thought, time, is not."<sup>18</sup>

*Everlasting* and *timeless* are two understandings of *eternal*. But, they are in different spheres of experience. Everlasting is not timeless. Anything that is everlasting is still within the finite-infinite dichotomy, whereas timeless transcends this contradiction, for the whole category of time does not apply to it. One cannot *say* anything sensible about the timeless realm—as has been

stressed by, among others, Plato, Kant and Wittgenstein. One cannot *philosophize* about it—if philosophy is to deal only with propositions with logical sense.<sup>19</sup> Mystical utterances are not the examples of philosophical clarity. But, what is clearly expressible is not necessarily meaningful, except in the purely logical sense. In the sense that a human being is 'condemned to meaning'—to use Merleau-Ponti's phrase—, a logically meaningful proposition has hardly ever mattered. What is of significance, may not be *said*, but it can be *shown*<sup>20</sup> by actions or a life-cycle; it can be hinted at by symbols, phrases, icons. We don't express everything in words; colour, touch, silence—they speak volumes. Even in language, logic isn't all; poetry,<sup>21</sup> so often, is profound when it manages to capture a glimpse of the timeless, beyond the veil of time and language.

Men's curiosity searches past and future  
 And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend  
 The point of intersection of the timeless  
 With time, is an occupation for the saint—  
 No occupation either, but something given  
 And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,  
 Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.  
 For most of us, there is only the unattended  
 Moment, the moment in and out of time,  
 The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,  
 The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning  
 Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply  
 That it is not heard at all, but you are the music  
 While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,  
 Hints followed by guesses; and the rest  
 Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.

— T. S. Eliot<sup>22</sup>

As was mentioned earlier, in the New Testament there is no opposition or antagonism between God and time. There is no attempt to break from the domination of time. The Last Judgment and the Kingdom of God are anticipated to be in time—in the very near future. Then there will be eternity—which will continue for all time. One must repent and come to Christ so that one may not be condemned to everlasting suffering. But, all repentance, faith and hope are in time, not out of it. Thus, here is no denial or turning away from this world, which is in space and time. Every section of the linear time—in which the individual redemptive history takes place—is of significance in the divine plan. But the goal and concern of the Christian is with eternity

which is in the future, after his death. Thus there is neither world denial, nor world affirmation; there is repentance now in the hope of a future reward of everlasting bliss. Primitive Christianity was essentially an eschatological movement,<sup>23</sup> taking its origin from the message of Jesus. "The peculiarity of Christian theology," according to Moltmann, "can be defined as follows: *Christian theology speaks of God historically and of history eschatologically.*"<sup>24</sup>

The eschatological drama, however, takes place in a thoroughly chronological progression. This is true of the Apocalypse and the Pauline eschatological passages. The entire process is characterized not as timeless but rather as occurring in time.<sup>25</sup> Primitive Christianity knows nothing of a timeless God. The word for time (*chronos*) in the New Testament is not used as in Greek philosophy.<sup>26</sup> According to Cullman,<sup>27</sup> even the well-known passage in Rev. 10:6, where it is said there will be no more *Chronos*, is not to be understood as if the era of timelessness were meant; rather it should be translated as: "There will be no more delay."<sup>28</sup> The "eternal" God in the New Testament is he who was in the beginning, is now, and will be in all the future, "who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev. 1:4). Thus, eternity in Primitive Christianity was expressed and understood in the simple terms of endless time.

Naturally, with the increasing influence of Greek thought, the other understanding of eternity—viz. timelessness—has sometimes entered Christian theology. The best example is that remarkable work *Theologia Germanica*. However, in spite of a certain coexistence between the two understandings, the general tradition has tended to interpret the 'eternal' as everlasting rather than timeless.<sup>29</sup> This is indeed the reason why questions keep arising about the activity of God before the creation. Augustine, Calvin, Luther and others have considered similar answers. "God was not idle, but was creating hell for curious questioners" (Calvin). And Luther: "God went into the woods and cut rods with which to punish good-for-nothing questioners."

As Cullman reminds us,<sup>30</sup> even if eternity is conceived as infinite duration in time, and not something radically different from time, the Primitive Christianity was aware that eternity was a divine attribute, which can be stated by men but not understood by them. The feeling of man's incapacity to conceive or survey the "age of ages" is constantly present. God alone can conceive of the endless line of time. Only to Him does eternity belong.

In India too, as in the West, there is a certain definite tension between time and eternity. But it has a different quality. Time is itself an aspect of *Brahman*. "There are, verily, two forms of *Brahman*, time (*Kāla*) and the timeless (*Akāla*)" (*Maitrī Up.* VI, 15).<sup>31</sup> "From time all beings flow, from



time they advance to growth; in time they obtain rest (they disappear). Time is formed and formless too" (*Maitrī Up.* VI, 14). In the *Bhagavad-Gīta*, *Krishna*, an incarnation of *Vishnu*, says to *Arjuna*: "I am the devourer of Time" (8.33), and "I am the inflamed Time, the destroyer of the worlds" (XI. 32). *Shiva*—a major deity of the Hindu pantheon—is given many names by his devotees. Among them are *Kāla* (Time), *Māha Kāla* (Great Time), *Kāla Rudra* (All Devouring Time), *Kāla Samhār* (Destroyer of Time). The timeless *Brahman* creates, sustains and destroys the multiplicity of worlds through *Vishnu*, *Brahmā* and *Shiva* (*Mahesh*) who are lords over time, everlasting and endless.

The destructive process of time is deeply rooted in the Indian mind. *Kāla* is often identified with *Yama* (King of death). Mankind is seen as in bondage to the fetters of *Kāla*. The whole existence is seen as full of suffering; and deliverance from suffering is possible only in deliverance from the whole sorrowful weary wheel of time. In time, there is no escape from misery and anguish of birth and death, for one will be born again and again.<sup>32</sup>

"For to one that is born death is certain,  
And birth is certain for one that has died."

— *Bhagavad-Gīta*, II. 27

Men will be reborn endlessly; in different forms and in different worlds, as beasts or as gods (*devas*),<sup>33</sup> depending on their *kāma* (desire) and *ṛarma* (actions). This is the Indian doctrine of *samsāra*. "Piety and high deeds elevate the inhabitants of the world to the glorious realm of the celestial mansions, or to the higher domains of *Brahmā* and *Shiva* and to the highest sphere of *Vishnu*; but wicked acts sink them into the worlds beneath, into pits of pain and sorrow, involving reincarnation among birds and vermin, or out of the wombs of pigs and animals of the wild, or among trees, or among insects. It is by deeds that one merits happiness or anguish, and becomes a master or a serf. It is by deeds that one attains to the rank of a king or brahmin, or of some god, or of an *Indra* or a *Brahmā*. And through deeds again, one contracts disease, acquires beauty and deformity, or is reborn in the condition of a monster."<sup>34</sup>

Deliverance from this ceaseless cycle of births and deaths is *mokṣha* and *nirvána*. *Nirvána* is not in time, it is not endless nor everlasting (peace); it is indeed freedom from time, escape from the everlasting vicious circle of dying and being born. *Nirvána* is *kāla-vimukṭa* (time-freed).<sup>35</sup> And *mokṣha* is what the Indian seeks. The way to *nirvána* is *yoga*. *Nirvána* way is what the

Buddha taught. That too is the aim of the teachings of the Jain *Tirthankras*—"the crossing-makers through the torrent of rebirth to the yonder shore."

This crossing to the yonder shore, deliverance, is not in the future. The future will not be radically different from the present, or the past. There is no sense in India of the Day of Judgment as a future event, or the coming Messiah with whom will come the Kingdom of God. In fact, there are no saviours in the vast mythology and literature of India. There are only guides, teachers, lamp posts. What is given in India is not *redemption*, but *ways* to it. God, therefore, will not come at the end of history and establish His kingdom of goodness and justice. In India, *Vishnu avatárs* (incarnates) do appear occasionally in mythic history to set the balance of good and evil aright<sup>36</sup> but not to destroy the evil completely. Both good and evil ascend and descend in cycles throughout all time—without end. There is no blessed eternity or eternal damnation at the end of an individual life. There are many heavens and hells<sup>37</sup> in India but one doesn't stay in them for ever. Nor is heaven the ultimate good of a human life, for all that is in time and space has seeds of anxiety, suffering and bondage.

According to the Indian notions, then, death is not necessary for deliverance<sup>38</sup>—in marked contrast to Christian ideas of Salvation and the Day of Judgment. Death does not have a crucial importance and therefore does not produce acute anxiety. Whenever one is totally freed from the space-time tentacles of the ego, one has attained *nirvána*. This deliverance (*mukti*) may be when the aspirant is out of the bodily form (*videha-mukti*) after his death, or during his lifetime (*ñvan-mukti*). Mukti is no more in the future than in the past.<sup>39</sup> It is here and now, eternally, whenever one wakes up and see through the veil of illusion. In *nirvána*, *Yama* has no hold. There is no longer any anxiety, nor any searching for meaning. To hope for fulfilment in future, then, is like expecting the purpose of a symphony to be the finale. Ultimately, therefore, there is no antagonism between eternity and time, *Shiva* and *Shakti*, *nirvána* and *samsára*. The way to the former is in and through the latter.

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#### NOTES

1. *Confessions* XI. 17 (trans. E. B. Pusey).

2. A. N. Whitehead, *Concept of Nature* (Cambridge University Press, 1920) p. 73.
3. Even within the same culture, personality traits—especially the achievement motive—correlate significantly with people's attitude towards time. See, for example, R. N. Knapp and J. T. Garbutt, *Journal of Personality*, V. 26, 1958, p. 426.
4. Loren Eiseley, *Darwin's Century* (Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1958), C. C. Gillespie, *Genesis and Geology* (Harper and Row, New York, 1959), and S. Toulmin and J. Goodfield, *The Discovery of Time* (Penguin Books, London, 1967).

The most recent cosmological estimate, according to the Big Bang Theory of the creation of the universe, is that the universe began 10 billion years ago. There are obvious philosophical problems about the beginning of the universe as well as of time, which cannot be entered upon here. See M. Scriven, 'The Age of the Universe', *Brit. Jour. Phil. Sci.*, 1954; and N. R. Hanson, 'Some Philosophical Aspects of Contemporary Cosmologies', in B. Baumrin (ed.); *Philosophy of Science—The Delaware Seminar V. 2, 1962-63* (Interscience Publ., New York, 1963).

5. For the full story, see Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*; (ed.) J. Campbell (Harper Torch Books, New York, 1962), chapter one.
6. It may be objected that we should not say *cyclic time*, but rather *cyclic universe* in time, i.e., the universe goes through similar stages repeatedly in time. Like the recurring spring every year, the entire history of the universe will repeat itself again and again. This view, however, gives priority to time which somehow is and *in* which the universe evolves. If we do not view time as an absolute, i.e., independent of events, there is not much difficulty in the notion of cyclic time. Greco-Roman antiquity held to various notions of cyclical time. Plato talks about it in his dialogue *The Statesman* (269b-270c), Aristotle in his *Physics* (4:14) and Nietzsche in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Part 3(2)). Among others, Vico, Spengler, Toynbee have thought of time as cyclical; see Peter Hughes: *Spots on Time* (CBC Publ., Toronto, 1969), particularly chapter III.
7. Zimmer, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
8. For a detailed discussion of Jewish and Christian philosophies of history, see S. G. F. Brandon, *History, Time and Deity* (Manchester Univ. Press, Barnes and Noble, Inc., New York, 1965), Chapters 5 and 6.
9. *In Memoriam*, Conclusion, stanza 36.
10. In the New Testament, the "second coming" is mentioned only once—in Hebrews 9:28. Otherwise, there is no sense of the presence of living Christ among the people. Thus, there could be no awareness of the *second* coming. It's only the imminent coming of the Lord which is stressed. I owe this to a lec-

ture given by Prof. Stendahl of the Harvard Divinity School in Halifax on March 16, 1970. Here I follow a more familiar though anachronistic terminology.

11. Quoted in S. Toulmin and J. Goodfield, *op. cit.* p. 92.
12. See Oscar Cullman, *Christ and Time*; trans. F. V. Filson (SCM Press Ltd., London, 1951) pp. 51-60.
13. Quoted by Lynn White Jr., 'Christian Myth and Christian History', *Jour. of History of Ideas*, 3, 147-158, 1942.
14. Lynn White Jr., *op. cit.*
15. Zimmer, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
16. The most striking secular expression of this attitude I have encountered was in the 1964 World Fair in New York in the General Electric Pavilion. As the massive theatre revolved, taking the spectators past the toasters and refrigerators of successive decades of this century, the theme song exulted: "There is a great, big, beautiful tomorrow!"
17. Brandon, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-5.
18. J. Krishnamurti, *Commentaries on Living, First Series*; (ed.) D. Rajagopal (Quest Book, 1967) p. 233.
19. Elsewhere I intend to discuss whether the concern for the timeless realm, which appears quite central to all spiritual traditions, is necessarily a philosophical cop out.
20. "There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make *themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, proposition 6-522.
21. When invited to speak at a meeting of the positivist Vienna Circle, after the success of his *Tractatus* among them, Wittgenstein is said to have read to them a poem of Rabindranath Tagore and kept silent.
22. *The Dry Salvages*, in *Four Quartets*, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
23. This is true for Palestinian as well as Hellenistic Christianity, see Rudolf Bultmann, 'Ethical and Mystical Religions in Primitive Christianity', in James M. Robinson (ed.), *The Beginnings of Dialectic Theology* (John Knox Press, Richmond, Virginia, 1968), pp. 221-235.
24. Jurgen Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution and the Future*; trans. M. D. Meeks (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1969), p. 203.
25. Cullman, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-7.
26. In Greek philosophy 'Chronos' is used as an abstraction—time as such, in its problematic character. For Plato there is a qualitative difference between time and eternity (which is timeless).
27. Cullman, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
28. This is how the New English Bible has it (Rev. 10:7).
29. Karl Barth lays a very strong emphasis on the temporal quality of eternity

- (*Dogmatik, Vol. II, Part I*, 1940, pp. 685ff.), although the Platonic conception of timelessness keeps emerging in his writings. Kierkegaard's emphasis on our being "contemporaneous" with the redemptive past deed of Jesus Christ also tends to destroy the time character of the redemptive process.
30. Cullman, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.
  31. Translated by S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1953), p. 828.
  32. Suicide is thus no escape from existence in time. Shakespeare expresses a similar thought in *Hamlet*.
  33. The translation of the word *deva* with "god" is justified from an etymological point of view, but it misses the real meaning. To most westerners, the idea of god (or gods) suggests faculties of a world-creator, controlling the destinies of men. Gods are supposed to be immortal and eternal. In both Hinduism and Buddhism, they are mortal and temporal like all other living beings and subject to the laws of causation. Though existing under more fortunate circumstances they are bound to their own *karma* which may lead them again to the human plane. Thus the *devas* are not even like angels of Christianity. It is held by many that the *devas* have to be born as humans again before they can break through the veil of time.
  34. *Brahmavaivarta Purana (Krishnajanma Khand, 47.50-161)*. This is part of the story which was quoted above; see footnote 5. See also *Bhagvad-Gita* 6.41-3 for similar ideas.
  35. Using Pali words, one would say *nibbana* is *kala-vimutta*.
  36. *Krishna* says in the *Bhagvad-Gita* (IV. 7 and 8): "*Arjuna*, whenever there is decline of righteousness (*dharma*), and evil increases, I send forth (incarnate) myself. For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers, and for establishing *dharma*, I am born from age to age." Evil as such is never completely destroyed by *Vishnu* for that would eliminate or disrupt the counterplay between human and demonic, productive and destructive energies. For a charming legend of *Krishna* and the serpent king *Kaliya* illuminating this point, see Zimmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-8.
  37. *Yajnavalkya* enumerates twenty-one hells, which fairly agree with the list given by *Manu*. See D. C. Bhattacharya: Penances and Vows, in S. Radhakrishnan et. al. (eds.), *The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. II* (The Ramakrishnan Mission, Calcutta, 1962), pp. 381-9.
  38. See Rene Guenon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedanta* (Noonday Press, New York, 1958), chapter 23.
  39. "If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present," Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, proposition 6.4311.