

Know Thyself!
The Imperative for Tertiary Education and Beyond

Martin J. Schade

The intrinsic nature of education is to enhance the student in the fullness of one's own personhood. Education is to enable a person to be a more complete human being, for as Socrates reminds us "the unexamined life is not worth living." We, at the Tertiary level of education, regardless of the academic discipline in which we are engaged, must aid our students in critically reflecting on their individual Self while they journey on their academic quest. In this paper I shall examine a travesty of education which I find in our method and practise of education here in the English speaking Caribbean and offer a philosophy of the Self so as to assist in guiding students to better "Know Thyself".

The dichotomy of the human person found in most of Western philosophy also needs to be examined so as to come to a more complete and holistic understanding of who we are. Humans are not a dichotomy whereby we call ourselves intellectual or spiritual beings in a physical body. Human beings, as well as the totality of reality, are incarnational beings, beings which are inherently and intrinsically united as one. The dualism and separation of matter from spirit, human from divine, organic from inorganic, nature from grace, categorical from transcendental is increasingly found to be an illusion. Both Eastern philosophies and now Modern Physics provide evidence of this illusion. The philosophy of Dialectical Incarnation will offer a new perspective of the Self in the world, where the Self is now understood as the centre of the universe, united by one dialectical whole. As agents in our tertiary institutions I offer a reflection on our system of education and an aid in bringing our students to a life worth living.

For over 25 years, I have been involved in teaching at the Tertiary level in Jamaica, via St. Michael's Seminary, United Theological College, UWI Mona and now presently the University of Technology, Jamaica. Through these years I have discovered a travesty of education which has come to the English speaking Caribbean educational system by way of the colonial philosophy and method of education brought to us by the former British Empire.

Even though Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, call themselves "free" from British colonialism we have all maintained a philosophy and method of education which is contrary to our so-called "independence", be it as a Republic or a member of the Commonwealth. The old British philosophy of education, as I have discovered it, and which the English speaking Caribbean unfortunately still uses in its own educational system, is that education is actually not for all, as Michael Manley intended it to be in Jamaica. A thorough education remains available only for a portion within the larger society. The method of education is a corollary of this philosophy which is a method of screening out, from early age (the former Common Entrance Exam, now renamed as GSAT in Jamaica) those who will continue and in what capacity. Although Jamaica's independence (assuming other former British colonies as well) has proclaimed "free

education for all” one can easily observe that it is not so. It is certainly not free, and clearly not for all.

As a previous expatriate, but now a proud naturalised Jamaican, I was and still remain dumbfounded with the travesty of education I find in our “independent” nation. As a teacher I feel it to be an unjust method of education when students do not see the corrections and marks of their exams nor, in most occasions, the course work papers University students have written. I say this from my own experience as a student at UWI, Mona and from many other UWI students who have told me the same. This travesty is not merely at the University level but begins with the first traumatic educational event of ten, eleven and twelve year old students who go through the GSAT. In the High School level, students never see the exams that are the evaluating instruments of their five to seven years of education. A student receives a grade without knowing what he or she did properly in the exam which determines so much of their future life. To contest that grade would then require a very complicated and bureaucratic process. This method of education is still screening students by the results of their exams without seeming to be concerned with making sure students are aware of what they did correctly or incorrectly. Moreover, this system inhibits the more complete discovery of one’s entire Self.

Education is to “educere”, that is, to draw out from students an inherent knowledge and guide them by indicating their progress in the particular academic areas. This travesty needs to be addressed and eliminated. Besides being an educational injustice, it is also a terrible waste of time, energy and paper in the ways that every aspect of the exams is privately guarded from external query. In this colonial, teacher-centred, selective, system, when the exam was the only means of evaluating students in a year long course, one can understand how the system worked. Now we must move toward a student-centred method and philosophy of education and that is where the necessity of understanding the Self becomes paramount in Tertiary education and beyond. It is here that I offer a philosophy of the Self so as to encourage and guide students to better “Know Thyself” in their role as the one who is the centre of their own learning process. With this hope I offer a reflection of the Self from a new perspective, one which breaks down the dualism of Western Philosophy and which offers a student a fuller understanding of who they are. This travesty of education, of which I address, carries over into a failure of bringing our students to a greater awareness of who they are as critical thinkers and the primary agent in their own education. We, at the Tertiary level of education, cannot continue to inhibit a student’s process in his or her search for the full discovery of knowing one’s abilities and errors and thus the whole of one’s Self.

Understanding the Self within Dialectical Incarnation

Once again, understanding the Self is the imperative before, during and after one’s Tertiary education. Any psychology, sociology, philosophy and theology must begin with an anthropology, in which the starting point is the subject. The Self is the agent in the search; the Self is the active condition in which the world is known and in which one has a relationship with all of reality. The Self is the learner, the one seeking to know him or her Self and the world in which he or she exists. What is this Self and the impact of Tertiary education in the discovery of one’s Self?

As we begin this quest to know the Self as a necessary aspect of education, but specifically of Tertiary education, it is worthwhile to hear what R.G. Collingwood states about the Self in his *Idea of History*.

[Humanity], who desires to know everything, desires to know [one]self. Nor is he [or she] only one (even if, to [one]self], perhaps the most interesting) among the things [one] desires to know. Without some knowledge of [one's] self, [one's] knowledge of other things is imperfect: for to know something without knowing that [one]knows it is only half-knowing, and to know that one knows is to know oneself. Self-knowledge is desirable and important to [humanity], not only for its own sake, but as a condition without which no other knowledge can be critically justified and securely based (p. 204).

With this understanding of the Self as the centre of all other knowledge, a person must be awakened from the slumber one finds in the cave of ignorance of which Plato speaks in the *Republic*. We, as the teachers at Tertiary institutions, must commit ourselves to bringing our students to a more complete understanding of who they are as persons in the world. This objective of education is not primarily for instrumental reasons, i.e. to enable our students to find work and make greater financial growth. Rather, the primary objective in education is the very intrinsic nature of education itself, that is to be a more learned individual. This begins with a knowledge of who one is. By understanding one's Self, one's complete human nature, one will be that more open to question and critically reflect upon one's own role in the world. Dialectical Incarnation, and the Self within it, breaks down the dualism fortified by Rene Descartes and formulates a oneness between idea (spirit) and matter, transcendence and immanence, subject and object, epistemology and metaphysics.

Within the intention of breaking down the separating dualism of the past, a philosophy of the human person, of education, of the world and of God begins with the necessity of understanding the Self. The discovery of the Self intrinsically necessitates a discovery of Nature. A new cosmology has surfaced where not only does epistemology and metaphysics unite but now physics, metaphysics and mysticism are seen as ONE reality. Why do philosophers feel the need to debate, *ad nauseum*, the nature of the world and matter and the nature of God and spirit in exclusive, limiting ways? It is now the time to "know" more dialectically, where the opposing force is not an enemy, but a friend. The strong individualism which began with the Modern era must be seen as one with a dialectical harmony of the person found with the common good and the total nature of the world. The task at hand is to discover the Self as an incarnational being, a person who is dialectically one with the universe and with the divine.

When one thinks of epistemology, be it of the Self, the world or of God, one automatically understands it as a philosophy of the mind. The body/mind dualism, which has been historically antagonistic, erupts again. Throughout Western history, it has been evident that when one "knows" within the realm of the mind or spirit, it is the body which

is viewed as corrupt and perhaps even evil, as is manifested in Manichaeism and in so much of the Christianity found in the Caribbean. Dialectical Incarnation, therefore, is not a philosophy of the mind, nor is it a philosophy of the body; it is a philosophy of the heart. A philosophy of the heart is a synthesis within body and spirit. Body and spirit are the conditions of the possibility for the heart to live and the heart to love, for the heart to “know” and for the heart to feel. That which the heart will feel is the harmony of love which is found in the entirety of the Self, the universe and God.

One knows things mentality through the mind, but the mind does not exist without the body. The body, with all its emotions, and the mind, with all its endless capacities, are united in a philosophy of the heart, a philosophy of incarnation, a philosophy of love and relationships. The heart is the symbol of the Self in its being with the world and with divinity. The Self is a particular, individual being. This harmony of love, of which G.W. Leibniz himself identifies in his philosophy, is found in all of reality and requires individual beings, i.e. humans, as conscious, whole, incarnational entities. It is in this paradigm of the oneness of all of reality that the human Self can be identified as the centre of the universe.

In light of this paper’s intention of identifying the Self as the centre of the harmony of love found in the totality of reality, it is very interesting, that Modern Physics and Quantum Mechanics recognizes that this oneness of all is, as Fritjof Capra says in *The Tao of Physics*, a “Path with a heart.” There are “relationships” going on in the subatomic world. An understanding of the world and divinity, seen through the eyes of Dialectical Incarnation, involves relationship, a relationship of the heart and therefore of love, even in the microscopic, previously “unknowable” world.

There is no question when doing a historical philosophy of the Self that it was Rene Descartes who started a new movement which began with the *cogito*. The “I” of Descartes is a thinking being, aware of existing. An innate idea of God emerges within this “I” and the extended world is recognized and confirmed, but as opposing and dualistic. Descartes, with others, started Modern Philosophy with its individualism and ego-centric movement. Descartes was right in starting with clear and distinct ideas of the thinking mind in establishing his philosophy. But the problem is that he started with the “I” as a thinking being rather than the Self as a whole being. The human person is not just a thinking being when he or she starts his or her earthly, living, thinking existence as a physical, biological, emotional, spiritual and whole being. The human person is an incarnational being. One cannot escape one’s emotions and one’s passions, as Baruch Spinoza clarifies in his *Ethics*, but one can be free with them and welcome them as the uniqueness of one’s human personhood. Passions are great testimonies to one’s humanness, but humans, especially many Christians, have interpreted passions as evil. One needs, according to this earlier perspective, to eliminate them from one’s human life. The human being is a whole, a body, a mind, and a heart; for any complete “knowledge” of Nature, of God, and “others” it is through the subjectivity of a whole being. Humanity has tried endlessly to rid itself of the “evil” body and share in the Idea of God as the Divine Mind. But now is the time to *see* and to know with the fuller vision, and fuller

being of which Teilhard de Chardin challenges humanity to have in his celebrated work, *The Phenomenon of Man*.¹

Descartes also did well in starting his philosophy with the *Method of Doubt*. Yet, it is reactionary, fighting against the “non-clarity” of the body and the senses. Descartes, in his seeking clarity, even questioned the authenticity of God, yet he had to admit the inevitable Truth of God if one is going to call God, God. The proactive method of Dialectical Incarnation goes beyond mere doubt in the discovering of Truth, God, Nature, and the totality of reality. This method goes to the Self as a whole, incarnational, self-reflective, critically thinking being. “To be” is to be reflective and critical, discovering the dialectical strife of the harmonious love of the totality of reality. Why must humanity dichotomise all of reality and why must humanity fight in the “knowledge” of the divine in the world by the on-going anthropomorphism of God? Although God is Nature, and humans are the “crown” of Nature, God *qua* God is not to be limited by the limitedness of the human mind.

Within the dialectical understanding of the world and God one begins with the imperative, “Know Thyself!” One cannot look at the Self as merely a subjectivity. The Self of the human person is intrinsically in relationship with the “other.” A psychological and philosophical description cannot omit an understanding of the “Self and the Other.” A person is not a subject until he or she knows another so as to be in relationship. D.W. Hamlyn reminds us that “knowledge of oneself is impossible without an awareness of one’s relationship to other people.”² The relationship with the “Other-than-Self” involves other individuals, the community, the environment, Nature and God as the totality of reality. Tunde Bewaji also speaks directly of this communal nature of the Self when he quotes J.S. Mbiti:

What we are saying here is simply this: Descartes crafted what is intrinsically the psychology of the Western person, centring everything around and about the self, the ego consciousness and the individual identity; thus he successfully pioneered the making of reality self-determined, “knowledge” personal, and morality ego-located. On the contrary, there are other cultures in which it is insane, arrogant and irresponsible to build all “knowledge”, reality, morality, social constructs, cultural issues and possibilities around the lone self because primordially, the self has no meaning except those constructed for it by the immediate human family and society, nor can the self know any reality except as has been constructed by society and culture. The important morale derivable from the above is represented in the proverb “*I am, because we are*”; for there can be no *I* had there been no preceding and nurturing *we* –

¹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1975), pp 31, 33.

² D. W. Hamlyn, *The Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1970) p. 246.

ontologically, epistemologically, psychologically, logically, morally, socially, politically, etc.³

One is not a subject until one knows another so as to be in relation. This displays the relationship with the “other-than-self,” which is the community, the environment, and now, the new age of technology. Knowledge of the Other presumes self-knowledge. And, once a self-knowledge is recognised there is the need for a “free relationship” with whatever or whoever the other is, be it God, Nature, other humans or as Martin Heidegger reminds us, in the world of today, technology. In understanding the Self and the Other, one will begin to recognise that the Self of Dialectical Incarnation is not a mere individual, but a person. Upon reflection, it seems Descartes’ *cogito* was thinking itself as an individual, not a Self, nor a person. As we shall see.

The Self as Person: Individualism vs. Personalism⁴

Since the Modern Era, as mentioned, the dominant philosophy of Self has been individualistic, according to which each is basically "out for" him or herself, and so "self-interest" becomes the motive power of each one person. Since the interests of a single person could seldom act alone, people tend to group for common purposes, according to what is felt to be shared interests. On a positive side, individualism favours the growth of democratic systems by which the power of government is entrusted to majority groups. Nevertheless, individualism has led to an understanding of social life as a struggle among rivals, with progress to be governed by a law of the *survival of the fittest*.

As history has indicated, the abuses of this philosophy, because of the evident injustices it produced, primarily in the socio-economic field, led to the development of collectivism. Collectivism is an economic or political-social philosophy where the life of the individual is seen in subordination to the interests of "the people" or the social whole.⁵ If the failures of individualism were so evident that they led to collectivism, the deficiencies and abuses of collectivism, especially at the end of this last century, has become so evident that the pendulum has seemed to swing back again.

The philosophy of the Self behind Dialectical Incarnation is not leading back to individualism. With the anti-social elements of individualism, its seeming unlimited selfishness, its lack of a genuine solidarity and its exploitation of the less powerful, one

³ John Ayotunde (Tunde) Isola Bewaji, *An Introduction to Theory of Knowledge (in an intercultural perspective) or (toward a pluricultural analysis)* (University of the West Indies, Department of Philosophy) unpublished work, p. 3. He is actually quoting J.S. Mbiti, *African religions and philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), p. 108. One could question Dr. Bewaji’s statement “the self has no meaning except those constructed by society and culture.” The thesis understands that the Self has innate elements because all is one.

⁴ Much of the following has been gleaned from two particular sources. The first is Cormac Burke, *Man and Values - a Personalist Anthropology* (Scepter, 2006), 15. Appendix II. Individualism and collectivism; personalism and community. Hereafter cited as Cormac Burke; found at <http://www.cormacburke.or.ke/node/175>. The second resource is *Roots of the Catholic Worker Movement: Emmanuel Mounier and Personalism*. Hereafter cited as Mounier; found in <http://www.cjd.org/paper/roots/remman.html>.

⁵ Cormac Burke.

can find a remedy in another vision of the human person and the Self which is called *personalism*.

Personalism suggests a philosophy centred on the human person. It distinguishes itself from individualism because of its relationship with the common good. The common good is the “sum total of all those conditions of social living—economic, political, cultural—which make it possible for women and men readily and fully to achieve the perfection of their humanity.”⁶ Is any movement to centre life on a person taken individually in logical opposition to collective or community interests? The person, the Self of Dialectical Incarnation says No. There is no logical opposition between the true interests of the person and those of the community or society. There is a natural harmony, a “harmony of love” in all. This becomes more evident when one understands the true nature of personalism, and the radical way in which it is to be distinguished from individualism.

Personalism represents a view which underlines the person’s dignity prior to any and every social grouping. In the dynamism that characterizes the human person, it sees a call to self-fulfilment through the free expression of transcendent and lasting values. Personalism takes particular account of freedom: the freedom of the individual and the freedom of others. In this freedom it takes no less account of personal responsibility. In personalism,

[t]he person is a whole, not however in a closed sense, since he [or she] must be open. The person is not a small god without doors or windows like Leibniz's monad, or an idol that does not see, nor hear, nor speak. The person tends by nature to social life and communion.⁷

Personalism maintains a keen awareness of the dignity and rights of the person, and invites everyone to defend them against any type of violation perpetrated against oneself or against others. It proposes that whoever recognizes his or her rights, must also be aware of his or her duties and responsibilities.

Personalism insists on duties towards others, and understands that the fulfilment of these duties also means personal development and self-fulfilment. The person grows as he or she enriches himself or herself through relations with others. These must be open and generously receptive relationships. Without this dynamic the consequence is what Karl Marx called alienation which is both a social isolation and a human degradation. In genuine personalism there is a natural alliance between the person, as an individual human being, and the community.

A personalist point of view does not simply propose “the centrality of the human subject,” as is sometimes stated.⁸ This could more easily express an individualistic view,

⁶ Peter Henriot, Edward DeBerri and Michael Schulteis, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 23.

⁷ J. Maritain, *Les droits de l'homme et la loi naturelle*, p. 11. Found in Cormac Burke.

⁸ Cormac Burke.

but it is inadequate for personalism. Within a dualism between immanence and transcendence, individualism suggests immanence within the concept of the human person; while true personalism always leads to transcendence. Karol Wojtyla, more commonly known as John Paul II, says in his *Person and Community: Selected Essays*:

In philosophical anthropology, transcendence - in keeping with its etymology *transcendere* - signifies a surpassing (a going-out-beyond or a rising-above), to the extent that this is verifiable in the comprehensive experience of the human being... Transcendence is the spirituality of the human being revealing itself.⁹

Personalism does not answer simply to one's Self. One's own inner resources are not adequate to fulfil him or herself. It is the capacity of self-transcendence which can lead one on to a new and higher level of existence. Personalism is not to be confused with subjectivism, nor does it suggest a type of individualist autonomy. Personalism transcends any form of individualism, subjectivism, and egoism in that the community and the common good are always intrinsically considered. The challenge we have is in making sure that our students recognise that they are a "person" and not merely and "individual".

Individualism and personalism are not mere variations of similar philosophical notions. They are in direct contrast and produce opposed consequences for social as well as personal life. From the social point of view, one can be a personalist and at the same time be fully centred and integrated into the community. One cannot be an individualist and maintain an authentic spirit of solidarity with society and the community.

In understanding the relationship between individualism and the community, it is worthwhile to hear from Karol Wojtyla again, this time from *The Acting Person*. He states that from the individualist perspective

the good of the individual is treated as if it were opposed or in contradiction to other individuals and their good; at best, this good, in essence, may be considered as involving self-preservation and self-defense... For the individual the "others" are a source of limitation, they may even appear to represent the opposite pole in a variety of conflicting interests. If a community is formed, its purpose is to protect the good of the individual from the "others". This is, in broad outline, the essence of individualism.¹⁰

The Self of Dialectical Incarnation is a person in the world, a person with and in a community, a person who necessarily considers the common good in all of his or her actions. Although the person is an individual, the philosophy of individualism is not the paradigm of Dialectical Incarnation, nor can it be understood as a type of personalism. For the individualist, the common good is a concept to be ignored, or at most to be

⁹ Ibid., note 2.

¹⁰ Ibid., note 4.

understood in materialistic terms, reduced to standards of living and public services. The community and the common good are valued according to economic and ideological parameters, not according to sincerity, loyalty, fidelity, justice and mutual respect. Alasdair MacIntyre informs us that “modern society is indeed often... nothing but a collection of strangers, each pursuing his or her own interests under minimal constraints”.¹¹ The tendency in an individualistic society is for persons increasingly to regard each other not only as strangers but as rivals. Everyone is held to be fundamentally selfish and an atmosphere of mutual distrust becomes generalized. To be “only concerned with me” is the only safe philosophy for the individualist.¹²

Critical Thinking within the Self

To know oneself one must be open to critical thinking, otherwise one falls victim to fear and the “Shadow Self.” This is a crucial element of the Self which tertiary education must enhance in aiding our students attain a fuller education. What is critical thinking?¹³ Critical thinking can be seen as having two components: a set of skills to process and generate information and beliefs, and the habit, based on intellectual commitment, of using those skills to guide behaviour. This is to be contrasted with the mere acquisition and retention of information alone, the mere possession of a set of skills and the mere use of those skills without acceptance of their results. As people responsible for education at the Tertiary level, our intention must be to create an atmosphere of critical thinking.

Critical thinking is, therefore, the practice of processing this information in the most skilful, accurate, and rigorous manner possible. It then leads to the most reliable, logical, and trustworthy conclusions, upon which one can make responsible decisions about one's life, behaviour, and choices with full knowledge of assumptions and consequences of those decisions. This is a must for humanity today. This understanding of oneself as a critical thinker is the means for humanity to be free in their relationship with the world, especially with the creation of technology. If one is not a free, critical thinker one will become the sorry victim of one's own creation, one's own production.

A clear example is to see what is happening in the world and how humans are responding to it. There is global warming. There is the extinction of animals and the change of the entire ecological system. There is war with massive destruction. There are all forms of misuse of the technological advances which have been made through the computer and cyberspace. If humanity does not adhere to the great imperative of “Know thyself!” humanity will be creating its own destruction. The evidence is already demonstrating this. Humanity can no longer wait.

¹¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Second Edition (Notre Dame, Indiana University of Notre Dame Press, 1984): pp. 250-252.

¹² Cormac Burke.

¹³ See *Defining Critical Thinking*,

(A statement by Michael Scriven & Richard Paul for the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking Instruction), found in: <http://www.criticalthinking.org/aboutCT/definingCT.shtml>.

Understanding the Self from a philosophical perspective

The Romantic movement of the 19th century assumes that humanity has a true Self and that life is about discovering and expressing it. On the contrary, the post-modern approach assumes that there is no essential Self at all. The human person is either a product of the environment or the human person creates himself or herself through one's own free choices. Both Romantic and post-modern philosophies are designed to liberate people from various forms of oppression. Yet, the greatest possible forms of oppression can be the falling victim to an anthropomorphism of God, superstitious religion and technology.

The temptation is to believe that one's personalities and one's actions can be separated. However, the human being is a unity. Humans conform to the values of the crowd. They defend their selves by playing the roles publicly required of them while remaining unaffected at heart. Yet, humans cannot live double lives without being harmed by the separation they create. Writing on post-war Poland, Czeslaw Milosz, in his acclaimed book *The Captive Mind* (1950), noted that many people had lost the ability to distinguish between their real and their false selves. "A [hu]man grows into [one's] role so closely that [one] can no longer differentiate [one's] true self from the self [one] simulates."¹⁴ Therefore, it is dangerous to think that one will be unaffected by the games one plays and the world one creates.

Understanding the Self within the World and God

It has been demonstrated that the Self is the centre of the philosophy of Dialectical Incarnation. It is to Nicholas of Cusa and Baruch Spinoza that we turn in understanding the Self in the World and God.

According to Nicholas of Cusa, *learned ignorance* distinguishes the learned from the unlearned or uninstructed, while at same time this ignorance elevates the learned to the level of the "wise." It is the Self who recognises his or her "ignorance" when the tendency to anthropomorphise God surfaces. The human Self should not assume a knowledge it does not have outside of him or her Self.

Nicholas of Cusa goes on and recognizes the imperative of "Know Thyself" as central to his philosophy. He begins by stating that the Incarnation of God is the centre and the circumference of a circle and a circle is a perfect figure of unity and simplicity.¹⁵ The unknowable mystery of God can only be "known" through the centre which is the subject of awareness but which is also God as God's Self-as-Other. The centre of an infinite circle is the point of self-awareness of the subject who has the entire cosmos, and Nature, i.e. God, as its "infinite horizon." As Karl Rahner explains, the human person, the Self, is a

¹⁴ *Self and Identity in Everyday Life*, (International Society for Self and Identity) offered by Rick Hoyle, University of Kentucky rhoyle@pop.uky.edu; found in <http://www.psych.neu.edu/ISSI/daily.htm>

¹⁵ Nicholas of Cusa *Of Learned Ignorance* translated by Fr. Germain Heron, O.F.M., Ph.D. with and introduction by Dr. D.J. B. Hawkins, D.D., Ph.D. (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd: 1954). Hereafter cited as *Ignorance*.

“Hearer of the Word” because the “Word” cannot be heard without a “hearer.”¹⁶ The centre of the circumference must be the Self-in-God who is aware of the infinite horizon. Thus, expanding and elaborating this perspective of Nicholas of Cusa it is actually the human Self which is the very centre of God and the world. The Self is the “centre of the circumference.” It is stressed again that God needs the subject, God needs the “hearer,” and God needs the “knower” so as to be a God who is “essentially love of others” and the totality of reality.¹⁷

The philosophy of Baruch Spinoza can also be used to highlight the validity of the Self as the centre of the totality of reality. In his *Ethics*, he states that the “[human] Mind’s intellectual Love of God is the very Love of God by which God loves [God’s] self.”¹⁸ The starting point of God or Nature (the world) is a knowledge of the Self. As the progression takes place for Descartes from the *cogito* to the Idea of God, to extension in the world, so too, the progression from the Self, to awareness of God *qua* God, and then to Nature *qua* extension (and also *qua* God), takes place in this understanding of the Self in the World and God.

Baruch Spinoza’s fundamental insight is that God and Nature are an indivisible, uncaused, substantial whole. This is the only substantial whole and outside of Nature (and God), there is nothing. Everything that exists is a part of Nature/God and is brought into being by Nature/God. The Self is the first active, conscious aspect of Nature. The Self makes it possible, then, for God to love God’s Self objectively in and through Nature and in and through the active, subjective agent, i.e. the human person.

Spinoza confirms this understanding of the Self when he states that “[one] who understands [one’s Self] and [one’s] affects clearly and distinctly loves God, and does so the more [one] understands [one’s Self] and [one’s] affects.”¹⁹

Spinoza goes on to say, “not insofar as [God] is infinite, but insofar as [God] can be explained by the human’s Mind essence, considered under a species of eternity; i.e. the Mind’s intellectual Love of God is part of the infinite Love by which God loves [Godself].”²⁰ The “more perfection each thing has, the more it acts and the less it is acted on; and conversely, the more it acts, the more perfect it is.”²¹ The more the human subject uses his or her mind as an active, incarnational being, he or she will also know oneself and the God who is love and the totality of reality.

Conclusion

In summary, one realizes that any endeavour to “know” the world and God must begin with the subject who is the searcher. Descartes’ *cogito* is insufficient as a mere thinking

¹⁶ Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word; Laying the Foundation for a Philosophy of Religion*, Trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Continuum, 1994).

¹⁷ Mark Lloyd Taylor, *God is Love: A Study in the Theology of Karl Rahner* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986). He states this throughout the book.

¹⁸ *Ethics*, p. 612.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, V, P 15, p. 603.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 612.

²¹ *Ibid*, V, P. 40, p. 614.

being and his separating dualism is limiting. The starting point must be the Self as an incarnational, critically reflective, loving human person who is intrinsically one with a dialectical harmony found in the common good and the total nature of the world. The mind and the body are conditions of the possibility of a philosophy of the heart in which a divided dualism is rejected, and a whole physical, biological, emotional, spiritual, conscious, critical, loving Self is welcomed. The Self becomes aware of the external world of Nature, not as a dualistic separation but as a dialectical harmonious One. Humans, created in the image of God, have love for the reason of their existence because God is Love. Love needs particulars to love and someone with whom one is in relationship. The human person, as a transcendental Self, must have the vision of Teilhard de Chardin in order to see the fullness being found in God and Nature. The Self is intrinsically open to be a "Hearer of the Word" of God and to know God. Humanity must have a "learned ignorance" through which one realizes that the only way one can come to know the world and God is through knowing the Self as the sole knower of God. God *qua* God and Nature *qua* Nature are beyond one's knowledge, therefore to know God and Nature one must see one's Self as the centre of the circumference of God-in-the-world and seek the total horizon of God as love and the totality of reality.

It is this understating of the Self offered from various perspectives within philosophy that I remind us all that tertiary education must assure its students that the unexamined life, the unreflected and non-critical life, still remains something "not worth living."