To what extent was O'Neill able to discern the profound mysteries of the universe? Was O'Neill a theist or an agnostic or an atheist? How far has he been able to delve into the realms of the intractable and only partly penetrable and partly discernible aspects of the cosmos? The sources for the answers to these questions are to be sought in his biography, in his conversations and in his literary works. But we cannot give any definite answers to some of these questions especially the question of his belief in God, since nobody can be sure of what he thought privately on these subjects. But his concept of God can be pieced together from his thoughts, actions and conversations, both recorded and unrecorded in his biography. In finding an answer to this question and to the other ones, we must rely on the thoughts and dialogues of the characters in the literary works.

In O'Neill's conception of God and the cosmos one finds a romantic imagination and this appeals to the aesthetic sense while realistic imagination appeals to the rational sense. O'Neill's speculation of God and the cosmos is both rational and romantic on different occasions in different plays. It is often a medley of imagination and speculation in literary works whereas in philosophy and theology it may be simply speculation. It is the indiscernible aspects in the conception of God and the mysteries of the universe that leave
room for a fusion of reasoning and imagination in his thoughts on God and cosmology in his plays.

Since the birth of the unconscious, the intentional fallacy, and the biographical fallacy, it has become an accepted doctrine that a writer cannot possibly know what his plays say or do not say about himself. So any attempts to base the answers to the questions mentioned earlier on his biography or in the words uttered by his characters would lead one to one or other of these fallacies.

Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to analyse O'Neill's various imaginative and realistic speculations and tenets relating to the mystery of human life and also his different perspectives of viewing God and the cosmos. O'Neill's different cosmologies in different plays can be said to have some semblance to Albert Einstein's views of God and the cosmos and his opinions on the functions and the role of religion. It is proposed to relate the speculations and opinions of Einstein on God, cosmos and religion to those of O'Neill as such a comparison is pertinent to the extent it serves to bring out O'Neill's inferences and to verify their validity and objectivity. First let us see what O'Neill thinks of God, of the mysterious universe, of religion, of destiny, of goodness, values etc.

As mentioned earlier, an analysis of his plays would show that O'Neill in his different plays had changing and shifting concepts of God and the cosmos. He was not a cosmologist in the proper sense of the word. Consciously and unconsciously, he usually thought of the world, both teleologically and as a meaningless chaos. There were periods in his life,
however, when he was a God-seeker; also as a playwright he created dramatic
universes in which there are cosmologies, sometimes theistic, sometimes
scientific. This phase is largely confined to his midcareer, the plays of the late
1920s and early 1930s, and culminated in his two most explicitly religious
plays *Dynamo* which is scientific in approach and *Days Without End*, in which
there is invoked, unambiguously and for the only time, the orthodox, benign
Christian God.

In the play *Marco Millions*, O'Neill's God is different. In it God is not a
personified Being governing the universe from Olympian heights but one who
approximates to Einstein's concept of God. Einstein's God is a subtle God.
When Ben Gurion asked Einstein whether he believed in God, Einstein with
his great formula about energy and mass replied: "There must be something
behind the energy."
1 A similar concept of God is implicit in the following
passage from a dialogue of O'Neill's character, Kublai Kaan, in *Marco
Millions*:

My hideous suspicion is that, God is an infinite insane energy
which creates and destroys without other purpose than to pass
eternity in avoiding thought. Then, the stupid man becomes
the perfect incarnation of omnipotence and fools are true children
of God! (Vol. II, MM 426)

Here O'Neill's belief is in a God rather intangible and impersonal.

However, Einstein's God was not the God of most other men.
Replying in 1929 to a cabled enquiry from Rabbi Goldstein of New York, he
said that he believed "in Spinoza's God who reveals himself in the harmony of
all that exists, not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and actions of men." Einstein was satisfied with the mystery of the eternity of life and with the awareness of the marvellous structure of the physical world of which we can have only glimpses. Much of Einstein's writing gives the impression of belief in a God even more intangible and impersonal than a celestial machine minder, running the universe with indisputable authority and expert touch. Instead, Einstein's God appears as the physical world itself with its infinitely marvellous structure operating at atomic level with the beauty of a craftsman's wristwatch, and at stellar level with the majesty of a massive cyclotron. This was belief enough. It grew early and rooted deep. Only later was it signified by the title of cosmic religion. Einstein's God thus stood for an orderly system obeying rules which could be discovered by those who had the courage the imagination, and the persistence to go on searching for them.

On another occasion a New York sixth-standard student wrote to Einstein in 1936 to ask whether scientists prayed, and if so, for what. To this he wrote in reply:

I have tried to respond to your question as simply as I could. Here is my answer: scientific research is based on the idea that everything that takes place is determined by the laws of Nature, and therefore this holds good for the actions of people. For this reason, a research scientist will hardly be inclined to believe that events could be influenced by a prayer, i.e., by a wish addressed to a Supernatural Being.
However, it must be admitted that our actual knowledge of these laws is only imperfect and fragmentary, so that actually, the belief in the existence of basic all-embracing laws in nature also rests on a sort of faith. All the same, this faith has been largely justified so far as by the success of scientific research.

But on the other hand, everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the universe—a spirit vastly superior to that of man and one in the face of which we with our modest powers must feel humble.\(^3\)

In O'Neill's play *The Fountain* (1921) similar notions of cosmology are presented. In it the character Juan says: “This is a strange world with many wonders still undiscovered” (Vol. III, *The Fountain* 417). On another occasion in the same play Juan speaks to Luis: “I believe in Nature. Nature is part of God. She can perform miracles; since this land was discovered, have we not found wonders undreamed of before?” (Vol. III, *The Fountain* 421). Here in this play we get the impression that O'Neill's concept of God is pantheistic.

But O'Neill's view of God in his play *God's Chillun Got Wings* is quite different. In this play when Ella asks her husband, “Will God forgive me, Jim?,” he replies: “Maybe He (God) can forgive what you've done to me; and maybe He can forgive what I've done to you. But I don't see how He is going to forgive Himself” (Vol. II, AGCGW 341). Here God is just as human and inhuman, as we all are, and this passage also throws light on O'Neill's views on the human predicament. Here in this context, God is conceived to
be indifferent, inexorable, horrible and even cruel and the universe is perceived to be purposeless from the human point of view. What O'Neill means in this passage is that in giving out punishment and rewards to man, God would be passing judgement on Himself.

Similarly, Einstein could not conceive of a God who has a will of the kind similar to what we experience in ourselves, or of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures.

Again in his play *Strange Interlude*, the Deity is invoked several times either as a 'sardonic humourist' or as 'sheer indifference' (Vol. III, SI 41). In the mind of Marsden, God is contemptuous of man: "everything in life is so contemptuously accidental! . . . God’s sneer at our self-importance" (Vol. III, SI 24). In *Lazarus Laughed*, also, O'Neill speaks of man’s self-importance and insignificance through the character Lazarus: "The greatness of man is that no God can save him until he himself becomes a God!" (Vol. III, LL 289-290). He further says: "Laugh yes to your insignificance! There will be born your new greatness!" (Vol. III, LL 309). In *The Great God Brown* Dion calls God the 'Ancient Humourist' (Vol. I, GGB 282).

Again in *Strange Interlude* Nina’s imagination gravitates between the concept of a Mother God, and a Father God, who is sometimes amused, and sometimes omnipotent, sometimes judging: “Yes, God, the Father, I hear you, laughing . . . you see the joke I’m laughing too . . . it’s all so crazy, isn’t it” (Vol. III, SI 194). She says again: “Strange interlude! Yes, our lives are merely strange dark interludes in the electrical display of God, the Father” (Vol. III, SI 199). But Darrell himself thinks of God as merely indifferent. “Oh, God, so
deaf and dumb and blind! . . . teach me to be resigned to be an atom” (Vol. III, SI 199).

But O'Neill’s own spiritual-intellectual peregrinations were best summed up by himself, mockingly, in the patently autobiographical *Days Without End* (1934) in which the protagonist, John Loving, is a persona for the playwright.

O'Neill seemingly could not escape from the question: “What shall I do to be saved?” In 1933, at the end of his first long productive period, some critics decided that in *Days Without End* he had returned to the faith of his father. O'Neill himself knew better. His own reaction to the positive ending at the altar of “an old church”—a final scene, which recalled the theme of *Lazarus Laughed*—was typical of his mental attitude of agonising about past decisions, of attempting to pursue two opposing logics at the same time, and of then feeling guilty for the logic he chose. Carlotta recalls:

> Gene would walk up and down the beach, painfully wrestling with the problem. He couldn’t make up his mind whether or not to have the man go back to the Church. At one point he thought of, having him shoot himself at the Church altar, and he discussed the idea with the Jesuit priests and they persuaded him not to use it. He finally ended with the man going back to the Church.⁴

The Roman Catholic critics generally agreed in their opinion that *Days Without End* refers to O'Neill’s return, if not to the Church, at least to faith. Arthur Hobson Quinn writes:
*Days Without End* was a profound study of the conflict in a man's nature between his finer spiritual qualities and a cynical superstructure based upon Atheism wedded to Socialism . . . living in free love with Anarchism, with a curse by Nietzsche to bless the union. It is significant that *Days Without End* closes with the words 'Life laughs with God's love again.'

Although O'Neill's concern for God was perhaps mainly constitutional, it may well have been accentuated by the religious upbringing O'Neill received as a child and the conflict he was eventually to experience between the faith he was taught to believe in and the realities around him. Like most Irish Americans, O'Neill's parents were devout Catholics. "As a girl, his mother had dreamed of becoming a nun," his famous actor-father, who was frequently taken for a Catholic priest, played the part of Christ in a play called *The Passion* with such intensity that people fell on their knees in prayer. From his seventh to thirteenth year of age, O'Neill received abundant religious instruction at the Catholic boarding school he had attended. On receiving the Holy Communion at the age of twelve, he believed that he had achieved union with God.

But the shattering discoveries that his father had an illegitimate child, that his brother was turning into an alcoholic, and worst of all that his mother had been a drug addict for years, contributed to work a spiritual change in him. He had become a renegade at the age of thirteen. In 1902, at the age of fourteen, the year that according to O'Neill himself marked the turning point
in his life, he entered a non-sectarian boarding school. A year later he stopped attending Church. At the age of thirteen he had become a renegade.

Although O'Neill was never to return to childhood faith, there is ample evidence that he always felt an urgent desire to return to believe in a benevolent God. In 1918, at the age of thirty recently married to Annie Boulton, by a Methodist Minister, he told a friend, "I caught myself wishing I could believe in the same gentle God he seemed so sure of." 

In 1932, at the age of forty-four he told Philip Moeller, the director of Days Without End, that the hero's return to his Catholic childhood faith was a wish fulfilment on O'Neill's part. And in 1946 at the age of fifty-eight, when the question whether he had returned to Catholicism was posed, he replied "unfortunately no." Throughout his mature life O'Neill remained "an agnostic . . . in search of redemption," a renegade "haunted by the God whom he had discarded." And nobody knows whether he died as a believer in God.

O'Neill's view of life and of tragedy bears an unmistakable kinship with that of Nietzsche (1844-1900). O'Neill became acquainted with Nietzsche's writings in 1902 at the age of fourteen. Nietzsche's initial attitude in The Birth of Tragedy has blossomed into the daring philosophy of a tragic poet. According to him, it is the will to power, i.e., the liberation from the ego which makes life beyond good and evil.

Further O'Neill was very much interested in the philosophy of Schopenhauer (1788-1860) who advocated the 'Doctrine of the Primacy of the Will,' which demands humble resignation and submissiveness to sorrow.
While Neitzsche made him accept life with a bold revolution to transform pessimism into optimism, Schopenhauer’s book *The World as Will and Idea*; however, opened the eyes of O’Neill to the harsh realities of human existence. It nurtured the agnostic turn of his mind and shook his faith in God. Schopenhauer’s belief that “the crime behind all crimes of tragic plot is the crime of being born,” finds an echo in *The Long Day’s Journey Into Night*, in which Edmond Tyrone, who is O’Neill in real life, speaks:

> It was a great mistake being born a man. I would have been much more successful as a seagull or a fish. As it is, I will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong, who must always be a little in love with death! (LDJN 135).

In *Days Without End*, Father Baird, a benign Catholic priest who wishes to bring the apostle John Loving back to Catholicism, gives a good-natured but satirical account of the spiritual wanderings of John Loving (which were also the wanderings of O’Neill himself and many of his generation) after his apostasy from Catholicism. John Loving is a militant sceptic and constantly communicates with Father Baird as he discovers each new spiritual-intellectual panacea. He had begun with unadorned atheism, but this soon became wedded to socialism, which in its turn and because it was too “weak-kneed,” gave way to anarchism, “with a curse by Nietzsche to bless the union” (Vol. I, DWE 502). Then came 1917 and the Bolshevik dawn and a new love affair with Karl Marx. He was further exhilarated by the practices of the Russian state, especially by its attempt to banish marriage and by its official
atheism. But the inevitable disillusionment set in, with a consequent general
disgust for all sociological nostrums. After a long silence Father Baird finally
hears again from Loving, who had by then found a new "hiding place" as far
away from home as possible, namely, Oriental mysticism, beginning with
China and Lao-Tze but passing on to Buddha and the ecstasies of solitary
contemplations—"I had a mental view of him regarding his navel frenziedly
by the hour and making nothing of it!" (Vol. I, DWE 503). But the lure of the
East does not last and Loving soon turns westward once more, to Greek
philosophy, especially Pythagoras and numerology. Finally—the last Father
Baird had heard—Loving comes to rest in evolutionary scientific truth, a
confirmed mechanist. Father Baird's rather lengthy exposition delineating the
conflict in the mind of Loving is not only amused and satirical; it also has a
point of view, namely that O'Neill himself was flirting with the Catholicism at
that time and to which he brings hero back at the end of the play. There is no
doubt that in the play O'Neill was trying out the possibilities of a
rapprochement between eastern and western thought, rather than discovering
new spiritual-intellectual panacea or sociological nostrums. There are many
to whom the apparent nihilism and escapism of the oriental thought must
always seem repulsive, and to whom the invitation to escape from nature and
desire to a realm of spirit beyond conception, is a fantastic example of human
concept and self-delusion.

O'Neill did not perhaps have any appreciation for such an escapism.
This may be the reason why he shifted from his quest for truth in eastern
thoughts, to some other realms of thought for refuge. The message may be
that every man must choose from the storehouse of truth that which answers his individual needs.

In *Days Without End* we see O'Neill searching for a faith in a world which shows all the signs of intellectual and spiritual bankruptcy and he becomes one among the millions of searchers of the God that failed them, for ideals, beliefs, causes, and truth in general that kept on changing, shifting, eluding, and vanishing. In the 1920s a large group of intellectuals rediscovered the values of tradition and the functions and rules of religion; T. S. Eliot is one among them. It seems O'Neill dramatised these two voices of ethical values and spiritual decline when he split John Loving into two characters and these characters could easily serve as symbolic representations of the two forces at war within O'Neill himself. According to Croswell Bowen, O'Neill had lost his faith in religion when he was thirteen years old, but he also tells us that he “struggled to regain it ever since.”12 But John Anderson claims to have predicted some years before that O'Neill who was then “singing an ecstatic paganism,” would ultimately return to the Church. Apparently in Anderson’s view, *Days Without End* is the fulfilment of his prophecy.13

Although in *Days Without End*, sociological nostrums are none of O'Neill’s concern, it is noteworthy that the Russians are described by Father Baird as “erring school boys throwing spitballs at Almighty God” (Vol. I, DWE 503) and the Russian state as “a slave-owning state” and socialism as “the most grotesque God that ever came out of Asia.” (Vol. I, DWE 503).
Underneath the mood of doubt or the intermittent attempts at belief, it is not easy to find in O'Neill’s plays a cosmological principle and it seems, O’Neill himself was not aware of the ambiguity of his outlook in this respect. Up through *Days Without End*, the last play of the first period, some kind of cosmology, God-filled or Godless, purposeful or Hardyesque, is generally assumed to exist and to have some relationship to and bearing upon human life. This cosmos can be and is apprehended in either theistic or scientific or intuitive terms. Yet however various are the ways of apprehending it, the universe does exist and human life is part of some larger scheme of things, be it God or the evolutionary process or whatever scientific and rational concept.

The longing for a universal design that O’Neill dramatised over and over again from different perspectives in the first phase of his career disappears in the later plays and the ambiguities and perplexities of human existence become in the late dark masterpieces uniquely and solely human. In *Long Days Journey Into Night*, Edmund quotes Nietzsche: “God is dead: Of His pity for man hath God died” (LDJN 67). Like Margaret Fuller, O'Neill finally came to accept the universe and having accepted it, ceased to worry about it.

We find that in O’Neill’s plays till *Days Without End*, there are several different kinds of cosmologies, sometimes purposeful, sometimes not. As already stated, O’Neill’s universe is a disorderly place, mostly teleological more often blind and purposeless than not. In most of his early plays, God does and does not exist and does and does not rule the cosmos. Moreover God is portrayed as having different sets of attributes.
In *Beyond the Horizon*, there are in the minds of the characters at least three different portraits of God. One is the traditional Calvinistic God of nineteenth century New England who is simultaneously and paradoxically the relentless deity who visits man with punishment for his sins and the Eternal Reference who merely watches over his free subjects. This God, who is both an offensive and defensive weapon, is invoked by Mrs. Atkins, the peevish, chronically-ill mother of the heroine. In act 1, scene 2, she rebukes Mrs. Mayo for finding excuses for the ineptitude of her own Robert as a farmer. Anyone, says Mrs. Atkins, can help anything if they have a mind to and as long as they are not like herself, helpless "through the will of God."

In the same play, on another occasion, O'Neill speculates on the non-existent deity of the twentieth century appropriately through the doomed protagonist Mayo: "I could curse God from the bottom of my soul—if there was a God!" (Vol. I, BH 148). Finally, at the end of the play just before his death Robert Mayo invokes the limited deity of the Manichaean religions. This God participates in part in the wrong doings of mankind but he also allows some individuals to create freely their own particular hells. Like the Calvinist God, He is paradoxical, both determining and undetermining.

In spite of the apparent dramatic directness *Desire Under the Elms* also is essentially, like his other plays, a philosophical tragedy about man and God rather than a naturalistic chunk of life depicting the mores of a bunch of clumsy New England rustics. In this play, too, as in many of his other plays, we can see O'Neill's attempt to find God or at least some justification for the flagrant inconsistencies of the human condition. His interest was less in
psychology than in metaphysics. In the play we see O'Neill's allusion to the Puritan concept of God and Satan. Simeon traces the psychological or moral force by referring to "something," (Vol. III, DUE 207), that is to say one of those mysterious things which impel man to act this way or that, whether they like it or not, whether they are aware of it or not. This is simultaneously a form of determinism and a modified form of Puritan concept. All men are sinners in the clutches of Satan—or of God who is always, as Eben says to Cabot, "nagging his sheep to sin" (Vol. III, DUE 227), the better to punish them afterwards, always ready "to smite his undutiful sons with His worst curse" (Vol. III, DUE 227).

O'Neill's reference in *Desire Under the Elms* to that "something," is to be viewed as the creative force, or the power that pervades the whole universe, or the spirit manifest in Nature. It is the expression of his speculation of the impersonal, pantheistic God, present in all things or the life-giving spirit without which, Nature cannot go on. "That something" is quite impersonal and Eben refers to it in the neuter: "I kin feel it growin' in me—grown' an' growing’—till it'll burst out" (Vol. III, DUE 210)—"Ye kin feel it burnin' into the earth—Nature—makin' thin's grow—bigger 'n' bigger—like a tree—like them elums" (Vol. III, DUE 229).

Roger Asselineau has said:

The desire which flows through the elms and drips from them and pervades everything under then is God—though the word is never used. It is not, however, the God of the Christians, but rather a dynamic, impersonal, pantheistic or panpsychistic deity present in
all things, whether animate or inanimate, breaking barriers between individuals as in the case of Eben and Abbie, dissolving their lonesomeness and making them feel one.\textsuperscript{14}

This omnipresent God is fundamentally a cosmic spirit manifest in all things in Nature and in the marvellous structure and the all-embracing laws of the universe. The pantheistic aspects of O'Neill's speculation on God have some semblance to the idea of God conceived by Spinoza and Einstein.

In subsequent plays O'Neill's imaginative speculations on God undergo changes and God appears and reappears in various guises. In \textit{The Great God Brown}, Billy Brown is "one of God's mud pies" (Vol. I, GBB 272). Dion Anthony inverts the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit graves! Blessed are the poor in spirit for they are blind!" (Vol. I, GGB 273). And the Golden Rule to him is: "Hate them! Fear thy neighbour as thyself!" (Vol. I, GGB 294). Brown, in the dead Dion's mask, proclaims: "This is Daddy's bedtime secret for today. Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue!" (Vol. I, GGB 318). According to Brown "God has become disgusted and moved away to some far ecstatic star where life is a dancing flame!" (Vol. I, GGB 319). In \textit{Lazarus Laughed}, God is a dreamer, Miriam before she dies says that God "must be a dreamer, too, or how would we be on earth" (Vol. III, LL 347).

Side by side with these various metaphors for the Deity, there evolved in some of his plays, the cosmological outlook of the Pascalian nightmare, which is a conception of human existence as made up of several individuals existing in soundless solitude and in infinite time and space in a boundless
and meaningless universe. In Act II of *Strange Interlude*, Nina says to Marsden: "I tried hard to pray to the modern science God. I thought of a million light years to a spiral nebula—one other universe among innumerable others. But how could that God care about our trifling misery of death-born-of-birth? (Vol. III, SI 41). But it only served to make her, and all humans appear trifling and meaningless. Michael Cape, the O'Neill persona of *Welded*, is similarly obsessed by all those light years and all those spiral nebulae and those terrible spaces and silences, of Pascal which frighten them. Dion Anthony has a cosmic vision of mankind as haunted, haunting ghosts who "dimly remember so much it will take us so many million years to forget" (Vol. I, GGB 291).

In Act I of *Welded*, Michael Hope explains his passion for his wife, and she replies for him, in cosmological terms, specifically in a modern scientific explanation of Plato's parable that mankind had once been androgynous, had been split into male and female by the fall, and ever since had eternally desired to unite once more. Similar to the idea behind the Big Bang Theory of the origin of the universe, Cape's version is that 'life,' "began with the splitting of a cell a hundred million years ago into a "you" and "me," leaving an eternal yearning to become one life again (Vol. II, Welded 448).

In Act III of *Strange Interlude*, Mrs. Evans, the wife of a man who fell a victim to hereditary insanity and the mother of Sam, who could go the same way, explains to Nina the meaning of life: Mrs. Evans had once believed in God and worried about what was God's and what was the devil's, but after having been punished so much for only having loved her poor, mad husband,
she had to conclude that there was no “Him.” The closest one can come to knowing what’s good “is Being happy, that is good! The rest is just talk!” (Vol. III, S.I. 64).

In *The Great God Brown*, the vision of human existence as alternating between opposites and yet being circularly repetitive, abstract as it is, is about as close as, O’Neill’s seeing a consistent meaning and design in the universe. “Rhythm” was his name for these basic dialectical and repetitive movements and, side by side, with the speculations on God and existential loneliness in the plays of his first career, there was also developing a kind of poetic mythology concerning the “religion or rhythm,” particularly in *Welded, Lazarus Laughed, Strange interlude* and especially in *Dynamo* in which the polarities, in its manifestation in the physical phenomenon of electricity are made explicitly into a religion. The characters in these plays are always talking about “light years,” “splitting cells,” “electrical displays,” “positive and negative poles,” and so on, in short in the language of the layman’s version of the modern physical sciences, which are then substituted in place of the lost God.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had perceived two forces operative in Greek tragedy before Euripides. The first of these he identified as Dionysian, its psychological analogue being the state of drunkenness. The other was the Apollonian, whose physiological analogue was ‘dream’ (illusion). As a disciple of Nietzsche, O’Neill thus found a way to dignify his pathological tendencies. Nietzsche had a special appeal for O’Neill. Among his favourite writers was Strindberg, whose temperament and genius were
strikingly similar to Nietzsche's. The Gelbs have reported that Nietzsche and Strindberg were O'Neill's literary heroes and "became in some ways a pattern for O'Neill's life."\textsuperscript{15}

To American critics and writers Nietzsche offered a religion and an aesthetic, a mythology and a psychology. He provided a formula for those who had repudiated both scripture and Darwinism—substitute Dionysius for Christ, the satyr for the ape. He not only anticipated Freud; he helped to clear the way for Freudianism. To the artist who wished to escape from realism he lent support by disparaging the "naturalistic and inartistic tendency." He offered the doctrine of 'Eternal Recurrence,' his own version of death and rebirth. And to those who, like O'Neill, suffered from world-weariness and life-sickness, he taught struggle in the place of resignation, ecstasy in the place of denial. Such was the Dionysian way of life that O'Neill tried to adopt.

In his effort to resurrect Dionysius, O'Neill had the co-operation of his friends and associates Kenneth Macgowan and Robert Edmund Jones, who shared his apocalyptic fervour. The three of them took charge of the Provincetown Playhouse in 1923. In 1921 Macgowan had published a manifesto called The Theater of Tomorrow—it was a plea and a plan for the restoration of the theatre to its original and proper function namely "instinctive expression of godhead." "The problem," said Macgowan, "is to find a way for the religious spirit independent of the Church," a way to make the theatre itself religious. The drama, to achieve this end, must recognise man's destiny with the "vast and unmanageable forces which have played through every atom of life since the beginning."\textsuperscript{16} Once he recovers "a sense of unity with
the dumb, mysterious processes of nature,”¹⁷ man once again will belong. Intoxicated by these grandiose conceptions, O'Neil set out to implement them.

*Desire Under the Elms* was the first of many plays in which O'Neill presented the discordant unholy trinity of the father, the son, and the mother—the father usually menacing, the son at odds with him, the mother usually the protective and loving ally of the son. In this play, Ephraim, the father, is the embodiment of harsh paternity, full of physical strength (although he is seventy-five). He is invincible and indestructible, part Jehovah, part satyr. He was on good terms with all the creatures of his farm except his sons. His young wife, Abbie, was the personification of fecundity and of tender, sinister maternity. Eben, the youngest son, was the victim of maternal deprivation and of the father, who scored his weakness. By winning Abbie, the son triumphed at last over the father and gained a mother.

If Nietzsche stimulated O'Neill's imagination and helped him to release his inhibitions and write of deeply personal feelings, Freud and Jung illuminated the results. O'Neill knew the work of the analytic psychologists but perhaps in perfect sincerity denied their influence. His position was that of other writers before Freud became known outside his profession, writers of fiction and of drama who concerned themselves with the idea of father-son enmity, mother-son affection. Nevertheless, Freud's speculations on the origins of religion and morality in *Totem and Taboo* (1912), translated in 1918, had an interesting relevance to the work of O'Neill. In that study, Freud reconstructed "the conditions of the primal horde,"¹⁸ described "a rebellion of
the sons against the violent primal father who stood in the way of their sexual
demands and of their desire for power.”

Eben’s repeated plaintive appeal to his Maw was the earliest indication
that O’Neill was to enlist the services of the mother in the struggle against the
father and against God. In this he was a good, if unconscious, Jungian. For
Jung, too, assigned the predominant role in the instinctual and spiritual world
to the mother rather than to the father. The mother, he declared, “is the most
immediate primordial image.” The patient who “seeks to leave the world and
to regain the subjectivity of childhood,” the universal “secret pinging for the
maternal depths,” “the childish longing for the food-giving mother,” “the
personification like Mother Earth, Mother Nature, Mother Church”—these
were all signs to Jung “of the presence of a universal wish to enter the
mother’s womb a second time and be born again.”

In *The Great God Brown*, Dion Anthony had been at odds not only
with his father, who, he mockingly said, “imagines he is God, the Father”
(Vol. I, GGB 260), but also with himself with God, with wife, and with sons.
O’Neill began the play as though he intended to reveal the predicament of the
American artist, stiffed by a Philistine culture; but it became a personal
allegory of the ordeal of the playwright himself. It became the lament of the
shy, lonely, misunderstood young man, forsaken by his mother when she died
and disappointed to find his wife an inadequate substitute. The mother,
dominated by her “ogre” of a husband, was remembered by the son for her
“purity.” She was “stainless and imperishable.” The wife, unfortunately, was
“oblivious to everything but the means to her end of perpetuating the race”
and therefore could offer neither understanding nor protection. The son had suffered his first great shock when he was four years old, after which he became an atheist. His playmate, he explained, had hit him with a stick, destroyed the picture he had drawn in the sand, and laughed when Dion cried. "I had loved and trusted him," said Dion, "and suddenly the good God was disproved in his person and the evil and injustice of man was born" (Vol. I, GGB 295). Longing to become a child again, Dion could not help but take a dim view of childhood.

Dion Anthony, in whom the "creative pagan acceptance of life" was at war with the masochistic, life-denying spirit of Christianity, became a tortured and torturing demonic ironist. Destitute of faith, he was terrified with Scepticism. Longing for love—to be loved and protected—he was afraid to love. As death approached, Dion had become a child again. When his 'alter ego,' William Brown, was dying, Brown was soothed by the Earth Mother, for he, too, was a sleepy child. A moment later he died, but only after he had experienced an ecstatic mystic insight concerning the Gospels. "Blessed are they that weep, for they shall laugh!" (Vol. I, GGB 322). The child entered the kingdom of a heaven that resounds with laughter. The old God who was dead was replaced by a new one conceived in the image of Zarathustra the "godless," he who beseeched the "higher men" to learn how to laugh. As if such joy were not enough, O'Neill also invoked Nietzsche’s doctrine of Eternal Recurrence, the "highest formula of affirmation that can ever be attained." "Always spring comes again bearing life!" the Earth Mother intoned. "Always again! . . . life again! Summer and Fall and death and peace again!" Spring
bearing the intolerable chalice of life gain!—bearing the glorious, blazing crown of life again!” (Vol. I, GBB 322-323).

In *Lazarus Laughed*, O'Neill ended his discipleship to Nietzsche, while making his last and most strenuous attempt to write for the "Theater of Tomorrow." *Lazarus Laughed* was concerned with the rebirth of Dionysius, its theme being affirmation of life, denial of death. When Lazarus returned from death, his father was delighted to have him reborn to him. Thereafter, scene by scene, Lazarus became progressively younger, eventually to become a child and then to be born again without dying. Friction between father and son soon began when the former, whose God, like Ephraim Cabot's was Jehovah, cursed the son for being of Jesus' party. When Jesus died, Jew and Christian alike displayed a vengeful fanaticism; and this was the occasion to replace both Jehovah and Christ with Lazarus, whom O'Neill then revealed to be Dionysius, whose prophet was Zarathustra. Zarathustra had preached his sermon not on the mount but as he descended, exhorting Man, who was "once an ape" and who "remains more of an ape than any of the apes" to surpass himself, "to become the Superman—a yea sayer and a laughter. "Laughing have I consecrated!" spake Zarathustra. "Ye higher men, learn, I pray you—to laugh!" This was why Lazarus laughed. And yet he was Nietzsche's Dionysius with a difference. Although he was a yea sayer to laughter, a lover of eternity, an exemplar of the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence, he was also loving, compassionate, maternal, and full of rapturous other-worldliness. Lazarus was, in short, the masculine counterpart of the Earth Mother and the pagan equivalent of Christ—the Mother and the son in one person. O'Neill reconstructed everything to fill the heart's need,
the conception of the Mother, the philosophy of Nietzsche, the teachings of Freud.

A spiritual Epicurean, Lazarus rejected the egoistic belief in the immortality of the soul and argued that death was merely change, that Man must joyfully co-operate with the divine plan by willing his own annihilation. Having identified himself with the universe, the universe with himself, Man would belong and cease to be lonely. The tragedy was that he was unable to surpass himself, to accept the religion that Lazarus preached and for which he sacrificed himself. Appearing collectively as the crowd, individually as Caligula (who squatted “monkey-wise” and referred to himself as “a trained ape”) (Vol. III, LL 360) man remained an ape—neither evil nor important, only despicable. The basic metaphysical assumption of *Lazarus Laughed* is that mankind lives, inescapably, in the middle of Manichaean antimonies. The laughter in the play is symbolic of the spirit of man rising above bodily pain and corporal limitations.

After *Lazarus Laughed*, O'Neill stopped writing plays for pagans. He continued to write plays in which he carried on to diagnose the sickness of today without prescribing a Dionysius: *Strange Interlude* was a case in point. The imagination of Nina in this play with the obsessions with rhythm and polarity congeals into a kind of mythology about the existence of a Mother God. A neurotic, Nina was a portrait of the woman suffering from the sickness of today. As mother, wife, mistress, she combined attributes of Abbie, Cybel, and Livia; as daughter she was twin sister to Dion Anthony and a portrait of the artist as a young lady. She complained during the long interlude of many
things, none of them tragic. Her passion spent, she declined into a gloomy pathos of self-pity. She discovered that happiness is ephemeral and therefore illusory; that words are merely sounds, appearances without realities; that the dead lover had been, after all, a mythical hero, the product of her romantic imagination, and that her search for God was unrewarding. Having rejected the "modern science God" for his indifference to her "misery of death-born-of-birth," Nina concluded that the mistake had begun "when God was created in a male image" (Vol. III, S.I. 42)—God the Father—"whose chest thunders with egotism and is too hard for tired heads and thoroughly comfortless" (Vol. III, S.I. 43). She continued:

We should have imagined life as created in the birthpain of God the Mother. Then we would understand why we, Her children have inherited pain, for we would know that our life's rhythm beats from Her great heart, torn with the agony of love and birth. And we would feel that death meant remain with Her, a passing back into Her substance, blood of Her blood again, peace of Her peace. (Vol. III, S.I. 42-43)

In *Lazarus Laughtered*, O'Neill had tried to deny death. In *Strange Interlude*, he had denied life but comforted his doctrine with recrudescence of childishness. Having long since discharged Dionysus, O'Neill diminished the role of the Mother, pushing first to write two plays, *Days Without End*, in which he went through the motions of returning to the faith he had abandoned as he entered adolescence and *Ah, Wilderness!*, in which he recalled the summer of 1906, not as it was, but as he wished it might have been.
From now on, in O'Neill's subsequent plays we find the Godless world and a cosmos, whose mysteries which once haunted his plays now dim and fade away. Man occupies the whole stage, absorbs all meanings, and embodies all mysteries and complexities; henceforth; man is to be the measure of all. Considered in this light Dynamo and Days Without End, as drama, were unqualifiedly salutary for O'Neill. First they exercised his God-mongering and universe-mongering; second, they turned him permanently to the past and freed him from the yoke of contemporaenity and "modernity" and in them he attempted to find a general meaning to modern man, modern life, and the modern cosmos. From this time on, his plays would be set in the past and would let the universe go its mystifying ways. He would begin then the American history cycle-plays and would finally come to write The Iceman Cometh, A Long Day's Journey Into Night, Hughie, and A Moon For the Misbegotten. The only generalisation that remained was the principle of polarity, for he could never see human experience except in terms of antimonies, alternations, and repetitions.

We have seen that O'Neill's imaginative speculations on God took different shapes in different plays and the ambiguous God appeared and reappeared under various guises. In Desire Under the Elms, God is "hard not easy" in Marco Millions, God is "insane energy." In The Great God Brown, God becomes a cosmic joker and "that ancient humorist" where Billy Brown is "one of God's mud pies." In Strange Interlude, God is invoked as "a sardonic humourist" or as "sheer indifference." In Lazarus Laughed, God is "a dreamer." It was with Dynamo that O'Neill's attempt to make science a religion reached a climax. But O'Neill's encounter with God was not yet over.
It is in *Days Without End*, his only Catholic play, that he tried, as we have already seen, to get back to the simple, comprehensible and benign God of his father.

In expressing the varied imaginative speculations on God, O'Neill's chief source of inspiration might be the romantic philosophers, Nietzsche, Strindberg and Schopenhauer. As a dramatist, O'Neill's imaginative conceptions of God however appeal to one's aesthetics, and we should bear in mind that these speculations appear in pieces of literary works. But a careful reader of O'Neill's works can perceive his rational conceptions of God and can distinguish them from the imaginative speculations on God. O'Neill had such shifting, vanishing, changing, and substituting speculations on God that it is difficult to assert his state of mind regarding his concept of God while writing each play. He might be either a pantheist or an agnostic or a theist on different occasions. One can be certain about his agnosticism since an agnostic can be a pantheist and even a theist if required, whereas a pantheist need not always be agnostic and cannot be an atheist since atheism does not always mean the disbelief in a personal, benevolent God, but refers to the belief that there is no God. Going deep into the thoughts of an agnostic it is natural to find in him an inner desire to believe in a benevolent and omniscient, benign God who watches over, governs and shapes the destiny of every creature in the cosmos. O'Neill himself has more than once expressed this inner desire in his life as has already been pointed out earlier.

Now let us analyse how far the oriental mystical visions of Eastern thoughts have influenced O'Neill's conception of God and religion.
Generalisations regarding the classification into “Eastern” and “Western” thought can be arbitrary and misleading. Nearly every concept found in oriental mystical religions is duplicated somewhere in occidental philosophy, particularly that of the last two hundred years. To O’Neill what was most attractive in the Eastern tradition, was the primary belief shared by Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism that an impersonal spiritual force or state, an ultimate reality beyond all human thought or language is available to man. It is termed Brahman by Vedantic Hindus, Nirvana by Buddhists, Tao by the Chinese. All three “ways” have as their goal, the mystical union with force or state by passiveness, or resignation or egolessness etc. Man’s rational faculties, however, cannot achieve this union. The human attempt to define and categorise the phenomenal world with his faculty of reason is a mistaken endeavour based on man’s ignorance of the mysterious, seamless unity of the universe. The major false distinction created by rationalism is that of the separate ego. This concept—vital to Western thought—is repudiated by all three systems which perceive the phenomenal universe including human identity in an eternal flux that frustrates our normal human desires and even instincts. Hence, all three systems of thoughts urge an attitude of non-desire that will liberate one into a blissful state where action is no longer required. This renunciatory ethic is shared by Christianity to some degree; but unlike Christianity, oriental mystical faiths relegate the human will to a limited role in the process of arriving at the desired bliss. One is enjoined to assume a passive, meditative stance that allows an intuitive apprehension of the oneness of the universe. That knowledge—not selfless love, or pursuit of the
good—permits liberation from the pain and confusion of normal human existence, as well as freedom from its artificial ethical categories.

We find the expression of O'Neill's mystic vision of the oriental thoughts in many of his plays. In the sea-play's like *Anna Christie* and *The Moon of the Carribbees*, O'Neill presents the renunciating view of life that Christianity and oriental mysticism preach. Though O'Neill had largely moved beyond Christian dogma at this time, he still found part of himself attracted to the world-denying plane where Eastern and Western faiths meet.

O'Neill saw in the sea and the natural world a possible escape from the self into a pantheistic meaningful whole. Wherever it originated the sea-God of *Anna Christie* resembles the *Brahman* described by Vedanta. Secretly unifying the world of time and space, it nonetheless appears as *Māyā* beguiling man into various false assumptions about reality. While the Hindu *Māyā* refers to misconceptions about the phenomenal world, *Anna Christie* emphasises our illusions about actions and their consequences. The difference is that while *Brahman* mysteriously transcends our moral conceptions and it is reachable through knowledge, Christie in *Anna Christie* cannot find peace through his knowledge. Thus O'Neill's conception of God reverts to his Greek tragic models in a final, crucial respect: the strong sense of relentless combat between this force and man. Despite the pull towards Eastern monism, the play's recognition of man's separation from God and Nature finally prevails. Nevertheless the sea-God of O'Neill has some intriguing Vedantic features reappearing in the *The Fountain*. 
The Fountain represents O'Neill's quest for a religious experience that might soothe his own haunted soul. Juan looks to China to fulfil this need, the solution he discovers finds expression in a "forever flowing, ever returning" (Vol. III, The Fountain 448) fountain that gives him an oriental serenity in the play's closing scene. Dramatising the spiritual journey of a divided European toward a mystical unity with nature The Fountain offers its mysticism in a more concentrated form. The transcendent force glimpsed at the climax by Juan manifests the all-embracing love of the Christian God, and simultaneously reveals the Mayä-like nature of our human distinctions. In spite of the Christian elements, Juan's final speech reveals him experiencing death not as a Christian passage to personal immortality, but as a pantheist's absorption into nature. Juan finds peace in a loss of identity similar to that discovered by Anna in the Fog. Here union with God involves merger with a process, for "God is a flower/Forever blooming/God is a fountain/Forever flowing" (Vol. III, The Fountain 442). This Nature God has been anticipated by Juan's earlier declaration: "I believe in Nature. Nature is part of God. She can perform miracles. Since this land was discovered have we not found wonders undreamed of before?" (Vol. III, The Fountain 421).

This pantheistic aspect of The Fountain's God contradicts Christian dogma, but corresponds to Eastern thoughts although so many Western philosophers like Plotinus and Emerson are also pantheists. Further certain features of Juan's vision nevertheless point to a specifically eastern influence. Beatrice—or rather the divine force she represents—corresponds to Brahman—the creative spirit manifest in all animate and inanimate things of nature—which projects itself into the false distinctions of the phenomenal
world (Māyā) while mystically binding all reality together into the dynamic unity. After a masked figure representing death sits beside the dying Juan Beatrice—the personified spirit of the fountain” (Vol. III, The Fountain 441)—materialises. She sings the fountain song and apparently vanishes. Actually, she disperses herself into a Chinese poet, a Moorish minstrel of scene one, Luis in his earlier role of poet and Nano. All join hands indicating the transcultural nature of the fountain myth. The figures then disappear “as if they were dissolved into the fountain which like Brahman obliterates all personal distinctions” (Vol. III, The Fountain 441). They shortly disappear, clothed new as priests (of Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Nano’s primitive religion). This transformation demonstrates the unity of all creeds: the priests dissolve into the fountain, leading Juan to exclaim, “All faiths—they vanish—are one and equal within—God! Are all dreams of you but the one dream?” (Vol. III, The Fountain 441). Finally, the elemental distinction between death and life disappears, the masked death figure dissolves into the fountain and materialises as Beatrice, who undergoes the radiant transformation described earlier. Like the elusive Brahman, Beatrice transforms herself into a series of Māyā-like manifestations ultimately absorbing all disparate phenomena into herself. By so doing, Beatrice demonstrates the meaninglessness of conventional distinctions between cultures, religions, age and youth, life and death.

With the divided vision of God of both Eastern and Western thoughts, O’Neill makes an attempt to have a rapprochement between the two. In plays like Marco Millions, Lazarus Laughed, Strange Interlude etc., we find the fusion of the eastern and western visions. In Marco Millions, O’Neill for the
first time explicitly contrasts the serene spiritualism of the East and the
destructive materialism of the West. The conflict is epitomised in the love
story involving Marco Polo and Princess Kukachin. Blinded to her love by his
monetary monomania, Marco unwittingly destroys the young princess who
clearly represents the orient that he exploits. Pointing up the apparent
incompatibility between eastern wisdom and western materialism the play
thereby reverses *The Fountain* which ended on a conciliatory note.
Moreover, O'Neill then appeared highly sceptical about the monism *The
Fountain* preached.

The relationship between Kukachin and Marco dramatises the polarity
of the conflict between East and West. Marco loves the treasures of the world,
while Kukachin transcends them. Marco exudes intolerance, while Kukachin
radiates the supreme tolerance of one who loves a person unlike herself. In
her final lines, when she bids farewell to Marco we find "a voice which is a
final complete renunciation" (Vol. II, MM 420). Behind all this apparent
dualism, the mystic in O'Neill strives to discover unity. Despite the numerous
allusions to oriental wisdom, *Marco Millions* is sceptical about modern western
man's ability to embrace eastern truth. Kublai's final estimate of the West as a
"pitiful land poor in spirit and material wealth" (Vol. II, MM 421) is a good
example for this and such an estimate is, to a great extent, based on his study
of Marco's personality. But in contrast to such perversion of values in the
West there is the oriental philosophy of life's mysteriousness and of tragic
exultance in the face of death, symbolised by Chu-Yin and Kublai Kaan.
Before princess Kukachin leaves for Persia for her marriage, Kublai and Chu-
Yin utter words of profound wisdom which reflect O'Neill's mystic vision of
life. Kublai says to his daughter: “all rare things are secrets which cannot be revealed to anyone. That is why life must be so lonely . . . who can ever know which are the mistakes we make? One should be either sad or joyful. Contentment is a warm sty for the eaters and sleepers!” (Vol. II, MM 400). And Chu-Yin says to Kublai: “The noble man ignores self. The wise man ignores action. His truth acts without deeds. His knowledge venerates the unknowable. To him birth is not the beginning, nor is death the end” (Vol. II, MM 401).

The tragic death of Kukachin bewilders the old king who wants to know what purpose her death has served; as quoted earlier on another context his “hideous suspicion is that God is only an infinite insane energy which creates and destroys without other purpose than to pass eternity in avoiding thought” (Vol. II, MM 426). Here it is O’Neill himself projecting his ideas about life, death, despair, and eternity: “I begin to resent life as the insult of an ignoble inferior with whom it is a degradation to fight!” (Vol. II, MM 426). Kublai seeks the help of the priests of Tao, Confucius, Buddha and Islam to know whether death can be conquered, but all of them affirm the inevitability of death which refers to the insignificance of man and to the birth-death-decay phenomena of every animate creature on earth. These priests fail to satisfy Kublai. He finds solace in his own vision of life and death and according to him, life is eternal and so Kublai advises us:

Be proud of life! know your heart that the living of life can be noble! Know that the dying of death can be noble! Be exalted by life! Be inspired by death! . . . Be immortal because life
is immortal. Contain the harmony of womb and grave within you! Possess life as a lover—then sleep requited in the arms of death! (Vol. II, MM 435-436)

Further, in the words of Chu-Yin "life is perhaps more wisely regarded as a bad dream between two awakenings and everyday is a life in miniature" (Vol. II, MM 402). The wise advice of Chu-Yin sounds hollow to Kublai because it is meant for the mind while he wants the sage to speak to his heart. Later when Chu-Yin says: "Be humble and weep for your child. The old should cherish sorrow" (Vol. II, MM 437), Kublai seems to have been enlightened spiritually. He speaks to Kukachin's dead body "with trembling smile" as if she were alive. "Open your eyes and laugh! Laugh now that the game is over" (Vol. II, MM 438). He has a queer mystical experience of the essence of life: "Take the blindfold from my dim eyes. Whisper your secret in my ear. I—I am dead and you are living!" (Vol. II, MM 438). The substance of his experience is that death must be accepted with a feeling of tragic resignation. Kukachin is dead, but the life in her is alive whereas Kublai is living death-in-life and he is dead because he is stricken with grief. The Chronicler says: "We lament the shortness of life. Life at its longest is brief enough. Too brief for the wisdom of joy, too long for the knowledge of sorrow" (Vol. II, MM 436).

In *Marco Millions*, O'Neill manages successfully a wild canvas on which are spread various sections and cross-sections of the antagonistic races, religions and cultures and their corresponding antithesis. The clash among
Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, and Taoists has been successfully dramatised within the limited scope of this three-act-play.

The next play *Lazarus Laughed*, represents O'Neill’s fullest expression of his mystical nature, so the work’s accessibility to oriental approaches is hardly surprising. In this play the protagonist rises above good and evil, male and female, even life and death—all of which he views as simply different stages in the cosmic rhythm.

*Lazarus Laughed* is a dramatic embodiment of O’Neill’s positive philosophy of life. Of the major Western sources for the play, Christianity recedes in its influence. This is ironic, given the play’s subject-matter, but O’Neill’s correspondence and revisions indicate his intention to wean the work from its Christian matrix. Despite the changes, the hero still resembles Christ: he exudes a radiance, he is loving and forgiving and suffers crucifixion after delivering a gospel that mankind cannot accept. O’Neill, however, discouraged the identification of Lazarus with Jesus since he desired a saviour who would somehow represent all faiths—hence his voluminous reading in comparative religion and mythology. If *Lazarus* is anything, he declared in a letter to Macgowan, “it’s absolutely non-sectarian.”

O’Neill himself said that the play “has no plot of any sort as one knows plot.” He said about the play that “it contains the highest writing I have done.” The canvas of the play is as wide as the universe itself. The physical duration of the play covers only a few month’s time, but the character of the play as well as the spectators are caught in the coils of eternity. Though the resurrected Lazarus is again burnt at the stake, he is able to communicate his
exalted vision to the earthlings who have converted their abode into a veritable hell of lust, greed, violence, tyranny and fear of death. The play is enacted on the stage of this world, with Bethany, Greece and Rome forming the visible background. Similarly, the whole of mankind are involved in the action though only the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans seem to participate in it. All the seven periods of life are represented in the crowd characters—"Boyhood (or Girlhood), Youth, Manhood (or Womanhood), Middle Age, Maturity, and Old Age." "The simple, ignorant, the happy, the eager; the self-tortured, introspective; the proud, self-reliant; the servile, hypocritical; the revengeful, cruel, the sorrowful, resigned" (Vol. III, LL 312) and O'Neill presents the vast panorama of seething humanity in all its bewildering variety.

Through the constant reiteration of his faith in life and the sublime ringing of his golden laughter he tries to lift man to the heights of his own affirmative "being." Lazarus's death and rebirth have enabled him to overcome man's severest devil—the fear of death—and recognise an immanent joyful God. Lazarus declared: "It is my pride as God to become Man. Then let it be my pride as man to recreate the God in me" (Vol. III, LL 352). The play's devaluation of the self, in fact, constitutes a break from the Neitzschean sources which either affirm the ego or advise a temporary retreat from it. Viewing egolessness as a desirable permanent state, Lazarus urges mankind to "let a laughing away of self be your new right to live forever" (Vol. III, LL 310). Again about man's greatness and insignificance, he says: "The greatness of man is that no God can save him until he becomes a god!" (Vol. III, LL 289-290) and "Laugh yes to your insignificance! Thereby will be born your new greatness!" (Vol. III, LL 309). But what makes a man
significant is well-explained in the following essential message to mankind emphasising the need to communicate with oneself and with one's fellowmen: “Love is Man’s hope—love for his life on earth, a noble love above suspicion and distrust” (Vol. III, LL 351-352).

Doris Alexander points out the Indian (Buddhist) origin of Lazarus’s egolessness in his love for animals, asceticism, compassion, detachment from surroundings and contemplative attitude. We can find a parallel situation in the play Lazarus Laughed and in Buddha’s life. For instance, the seduction Pompeia offers Lazarus, corresponds to Buddha’s final temptation by Māra the Fiend, as recounted in Coomarswamy’s Buddha and The Gospel of Buddhism. Māra summons the three daughters, and they use “all the arts of seduction known to beautiful women. . . .” “But Buddha was not in the least moved” nor is the passionless Lazarus when tempted by Pompeia. Also like Buddha, Lazarus enlightens men to the impersonal divinity residing within all. The historical Buddha never claimed a unique status of God because that would have contradicted his second truth that God cannot become a particular self when the “self” itself is unreal. Buddha instead alerted others to the liberation inherent in the same egolessness preached by Lazarus.

O’Neill’s notes to Lazarus Laughed underscore the importance of the following reveries. One note copies from Angus’s Mystery Religions a quotation from Philo, a first century platonist:

All things are provided (by God, Nature, life) that are necessary for man not merely to live but to live nobly, for the latter purpose the contemplation of the heavens induces in the mind a love of a
desire for knowledge, which gives rise to a philosophy which man, though mortal, is rendered immortal.\textsuperscript{28}

Another note says that Plotinus argues that "reverent contemplation of the universe brings the soul into contact with God of the cosmos;"\textsuperscript{29} a third quotes Valerus, "I desired to obtain a divine and adoring contemplation of the heavens and to purify my ways from wickedness and all defilement."\textsuperscript{30} This gnostic approach to God constituted a major oriental contribution to western religions during the early Christian era, though it was staunchly resisted by the Christian Fathers who espoused salvation through love. Hence Lazarus is most oriental, and least orthodox Christian in his meditative nature. His temporary 'death' has enlightened him to an eastern truth: death is unreal, because the ego that perishes is illusory, inessential and non-eternal. Although, he behaves compassionately, this is a result (not cause) of liberation, and he never preaches love as a path to salvation. Rather his message reproduces that of Buddha to discover bliss, release yourself from the illusory bonds of the ego. With all the similarities between two saviours, a fundamental difference remains. Lazarus believes in peace that follows recognition of our participation in a transcendent, eternal process; Buddha preaches liberation from that flux, since from life's transience comes our sufferings.

Hinduism agrees with Buddhism that processes exist to be transcended, that beyond \textit{samsara} lies a blissful stasis that approximates non-being. Liberation succeeds the realisation that time's apparent processes are an illusion, as are all differences between sensory phenomena or individual
personalities. These false distinctions result from Maya, which the Vedantists claim to obscure the unity of Brahman, "the infinite, changeless, indefinable essence of all creation." At every man's deepest level, his impersonal atman connects him to Brahman, but above that, Maya misleads us into accepting the spurious distinctions offered by our senses and our reason. In Lazarus Laughed, the ubiquitous masks correspond to Maya. But Lazarus perceives the unity beneath the disguise of Maya.

Now with laughter give me back that gift (life) to become again the essence of the Giver!
Dying we laugh with the infinite.
We are the giver and the Gift! (Vol. III, LL 324)

he proclaims in words recalling Emerson's Brahma:

They reckon ill who leave me out
When me they fly, I'm the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt.
And I the hymn the Brahman sings.31

In the play, the representation in the mobs of seven different stages in life suggests the transitory nature of existence. Underneath the Maya veil, however, the divine atman is possessed by all, which helps to explain the universal response to Lazarus's gospel. Momentarily overcoming their individual preoccupations, the Nazarenes unite with Jews, the Romans
embrace Greeks, Caligula and Tiberius transcend their mutual hatred to laugh with Lazarus. Inevitably, however, all forget their ecstatic joy as soon as Lazarus departs, whereupon all fall prey to Maya once again. Their individual differences even push them to violent conflict with one another.

"That is your tragedy," Lazarus tells them, "you forget! you forget the God in you" (Vol. III, LL 289). Recurring throughout the play, this sentiment is last expressed in Caligula's words at the final curtain, "Forgive me Lazarus! Men forget!" (Vol. III, LL 371). Not coincidentally, this corresponds to the root definition of Maya—cosmic nescience whereby Brahman forgets his true unity as he disperses himself into the particularised phenomenal world. More pertinent to Lazarus, it also alludes to the human equivalent of this—avidya—which describes man's inability to consistently perceive, and be liberated by his identity with the universe.32

Though the message "Love is Man's hope—love for his life on earth, a noble love above suspicion and distrust" (Vol. III, LL 351-352) is there, the play's solution to the numerous unpleasant episodes is eastern liberation rather than Christian salvation. Catholicism demands that the individual soul earn eternal joy by good works in this fallen world, but Lazarus answers human evil by transcending it, reaching a realm where conventional conceptions of time and morality become irrelevant. His other liberation, from morality, corresponds to both Neitzschean and oriental thought. Zarathustra urges man to create his own moral code. Eastern mystical religions propose that conventional morality no longer applies to the liberated soul. Lazarus Laughed surrounds pathetic, tormented characters with a meaningful
cosmos. As Lazarus admonishes Caligula: “tragic is the plight of the tragedian whose only audience is himself! Life is for each man a solitary cell whose walls are mirrors!” (Vol. III, LL 309). The tragic dualistic impulse epitomized by Caligula is expressed in the countless deaths, and in the steady sorrow of Miriam. But a comic, monistic impulse resides in the death defying and ego-transcending laughter of Lazarus, “I tell you to laugh in the mirror,” he continues to Caligula, “that seeing your life gay, you may begin to live as a guest, and not a condemned one!” (Vol. III, LL 309). The secret lies in recognising the hidden unity of life and death and of man and universe, in realising, “there is no death.” From the cosmic perspective, the apparent opposition vanishes and becomes a play of interpenetrating contraries. Where western dualism tends to view existence as a contest of opposites concluded by death, eastern monism pictures the world as a play of contraries. Finally, the three mystical religions converge in the depiction of Lazarus’s liberation from time, ego and morality, and in the unique tragicomic tone. The interpenetration and alternation of life and death, as dramatised in the two major character relationships between Lazarus and Caligula constitutes the most significant Taoist contribution to the play and the rhythmic vitality is its most ubiquitous Taoist feature. Hinduism concurs with Taoism in regarding the “tragedy” of life as cosmic comedy. Buddha and Lazarus practise passiveness for similar reasons. Following enlightenment, Buddha abandons active willing because all desires appear to him unreal and he finds it better to contemplate Nirvana. According to Hinduism, the whole world appears to the human mind and intellect as Māyā and the apparent human distinctions, categorisations, and preoccupations are the emanations of his ego
and all the explications of the inexplicable phenomena are the products of the dimensions of the feeling and thinking faculties of humanity as every branch of knowledge is a matter of sensations.

His next play *Strange Interlude* returns us to a universe where conflict prevails. Only after exhausting struggle do its characters attain peace and that peace is not blissful but resigned. But we find the fusion of East and West once again in this play. We see the Mother God, Father God and Neuter God in it. The play has a stronger Buddhist colouring than does *Lazarus Laughed*. Viewing impermanence as the major cause of human sorrow, it proposes detachment from the transitory world as the only salvation. Schopenhauer also accounts for *Strange Interlude*’s assumption that man is the plaything of an irrational universal will. The play embodies his vision of the world as a conflictive place where “the will to live everywhere preys upon itself.” The characters Nina Leeds and Charles Marsden struggle through a tragicomic drama in which the will after fools and frustrates them. Only rarely does a character glimpse the secret unity of existence hidden behind the “veil of *Māyā*”—Schopenhauer’s phrase signalling his belief, borrowed from Hinduism, that our rational human values and distinctions are illusions.

Marsden’s contented withdrawal from life more closely resembles oriental serenity of passiveness than the human pursuit of happiness through possessiveness and passion. When Nina tells herself in act nine: “Peace! . . . Yes . . . that is all I desire . . . I can no longer imagine happiness” (Vol. III, SI 197), she looks towards Marsden “with a strange yearning” because “Charles has found peace” (Vol. III, SI 197). Her turn completes the shift toward
eastern renunciation, she unconsciously initiated twelve years before. "Will you let me rot away in peace?" "I'm sick of the fight for happiness" (Vol. III, SI 138). Nina asks to which he replies: "all my life I've wanted to bring you peace" (Vol. III, SI 197). He views their lives as purgatorial preparations for purification and obliteration and interlude "in which our souls have been scraped clean of impure flesh and made worthy to bleach in peace" (Vol. III, SI 199). Nina's final speech sees our lives as "merely strange dark interludes in the electrical display of God, the Father" (Vol. III, SI 199).

Ned Darrell's last lines ask God "to teach me to be resigned to be an atom" (Vol. III, SI 199), and death appeals to Marsden for "the peaceful annihilation it will bring" (Vol. III, SI 199). Moreover, the God they now serve is essentially neuter, as associated with the rhythm of their lives. However Nina desperately wants "to believe in any God at any price" (Vol. III, SI 41).

Nina, however, juxtaposes the judgmental Judeo-Christian God with a mother God of oriental features. Amoral and mystical, this maternal deity relates to the Taoistic rhythm that structures the lifecycles of Ned, Nina and Marsden. Nina's vacillation between father God and mother God is crucial, for it duplicates O'Neill's own conflict between Occidental and Oriental world views. Nina returns to the father God at the conclusion, just as O'Neill gradually moves back toward his western roots at the point of his career (leading to his play Days Without End). The male God does not vanquish the female God, but incorporates her into himself, and this ultimately neuter deity symbolises the uneasy marriage of East and West represented in the vision of Strange Interlude.
Three months after completing *Strange Interlude*, O’Neill wrote to Kenneth Macgowan that “life is merely—and perhaps at its highest and holiest!—a game in which the best winning of the greatest winner is in regarding with a self-contempt the pain of his inevitable loss—a game of greater and lesser losers!” The remark aptly captures the play’s oriental focus on life’s impermanence, and the consequent wisdom of resignation and detachment. As Hinduism, Buddhism also views life as *Māyā*, and seeks happiness in the timeless void of *nirvana*; through *Strange Interlude*, Marsden unconsciously engages in a similar quest. He suffers along with Ned and Nina for life’s impermanence. Marsden’s lack of possessiveness and non-egotism also identify him as the key to the play’s Buddhist themes.

However, in *Strange Interlude* too, the solution to all human problems is the divorcing of oneself from the cosmic ruling principle, the will, to find peace. This causes the fatalistic resignation of *Strange Interlude’s* last act, where the pursuit of happiness is sacrificed in order to achieve contentment. In oriental mysticism, however, happiness, peace and bliss reside in the serenity that lies at the centre of the cosmos.

Had the monistic philosophies of the East furnished O’Neill with the healing unity he sought in the fusion of eastern and western thoughts? The answer is that O’Neill’s plays pave the way for us, readers to seek the serenity and liberation of eastern wisdom and to keep up the western zest for living by a fusion of both.

O’Neill’s search for a new God in a world devoid of all absolutes finds a dramatic expression in the play *Dynamo*. This quest for belief provides the
principal motivation of the play's tragic protagonist Reuben Light, who represents the quest of modern man for a centre of meaning in the apparently meaningless cosmos. Overtly, in this play O'Neill claims to repudiate the modern western God of science; covertly, he discredits the eastern mysticism that had played a substantial positive role in the preceding three plays: *Marco Millions, Lazarus Laughed* and *Strange Interlude*.

By 1932 in *Days Without End*, O'Neill concludes (in the words of Father Baird in the play) that oriental religion was "not for the western soul." Absorbed by his own tormented history, he concluded that mystical escape from self and time was indeed "not for the western soul." And the limited happiness available to man, the play suggests, lies in following a Christian ethic of forgiveness and compassion which is contrary to the most fundamental teachings of oriental mystical thought. In a world of conflicting doctrines and ideologies and thoughts a man searching for faith finds it rather difficult to maintain the poise and balance of his mind and heart. On the one hand he is aware of the revolutionary development in the fields of science and technology and their impact on culture, on the other, he realises that the contemporary value-standards are derived from a dehumanised world of gross materialism, bereft of all spiritual and human values, which alone could satisfy the deep questionings of his soul.

On one side, he is pulled by his desires and fascinations to worldly pleasures and on the other by the sense of futility and meaninglessness in the pursuits of such a complacence. In *Days Without End*, O'Neill has raised this eternal question of the incompatibility of man's quest for belief with the claims
of various ideologies and doctrines in his mind under the pressure of which he loses the integrity of his personality. John Loving finds himself in such a predicament. His personality has split up into two units—John and Loving. John is the elemental man in search of "belief," the strongest attribute of heart, whereas Loving is the questioning spirit of the personality of man's rational faculty. The prevalence of conflicting beliefs and doctrines in the contemporary world makes it difficult for him to modulate his thoughts. John wants to get at the real truth but Loving replies that there is nothing to hope for. The seeker in John Loving has unsuccessfully striven hard to clutch at the root of any belief and so he has flirted with various political ideologies and religious creeds. But he has not been able to stick to any institutionalised political dogma or religious orthodoxy. His intellectual and sceptical self symbolised by Loving says about the seeker in him: "He was never courageous enough to face what he really knew was true, that there is no truth for man, that human life is unimportant and meaningless" (Vol. I, DWE 535). This is the realisation of a mind that has surrendered to the negative values of cynicism and despair. During the period of his spiritual crisis, he talks about the absurdity of the contemporary life, the "stupid cowardice of the people" (Vol. I, DWE 542) who "don't want to understand what has happened to them" (Vol. I, DWE 542). They do not know the meaning of freedom and so "they don't want to be free" (Vol. I, DWE 542). Keeping in view the needs of the time John thinks that new goals of life must be created, "a new discipline for life will spring into being, a new will and power to live, a new ideal to measure the value of our lives by!" (Vol. I, DWE 542). He holds that "A new Saviour must be born who will reveal to us how we can be saved from
ourselves so that we can be free of the past and inherit the future and not perish by it” (Vol. I, DWE 543). John wants to believe in Christ, but Loving throws cold water on it. “No—we have passed beyond Gods! There can be no going back!” (Vol. I, DWE 543). Love is man’s hope for anything worthwhile in life and a life without love is like “the empty posing of your old ideal about man’s duty to go on for life’s sake, your meaningless gesture of braving fate—a childish nose-thumbing at Nothingness at which Something laughs with a weary scorn!” (Vol. I, DWE 561). Yet John is neither satisfied by Loving’s analysis of life nor is he totally discouraged in his search: “If I could only pray! If I could believe again!” (Vol. I, DWE 562). Ultimately he bows his head before a cross, which Loving disapproves. Loving falls and collapses. John says before the cross. “Thou art the way—the Truth—the Resurrection and the Life, and he that believeth in Thy Love, his Love shall never die!” (Vol. I, DWE 566). In the final battle between John and Loving the latter capitulates and John Loving becomes an integrated person.

A proper idea of the play’s meaning, however, may be obtained if we interpret the symbolic meaning of the play’s ending in the light of O’Neill’s note dated November 29, 1931, when he had in his mind the title of the play as Without Ending of Days, “... this symbol of Man accepting crucifixion in order to save men from themselves is a proof of the spiritual nobility which can be attained and which can make life a noble end in itself.” This note implies certain things which explain the purpose of the play. First, men are to be saved from the evils created by them (self-imposed evils); second, crucifixion is the symbol of man’s sacrifice of his life at the altar of love for mankind; third, faith in such a kind of sacrifice will give man “spiritual
nobility;” and fourth, this “spiritual nobility” will make life purposeful. Thus John’s effort to seek spiritual solace by bowing his head before the cross does not so much denote O'Neill’s return to Catholicism as it suggests that a Christ-like saviour is born in him; he now resolves to become one of those humble lovers of humanity who will save men from themselves. In *Days Without End*, O'Neill’s only consolation is to turn to the fundamental teaching of Christianity and discover in compassion some mitigation of man’s destiny of sorrow.

The shifting relationship between O'Neill’s eastern and western sides gives an interesting shape to his career. From 1913 to 1925, the western tragedian in O'Neill is in command. His mystical nature, however apparent in early sea plays like *Moon of the Caribbees*, aligns itself with Hindu and Taoist approaches to existence in *Anna Christie, The Fountain* and *Marco Millions*. *The Fountain*’s protagonist transcends life’s struggles after a vision dramatises the *Māyā*-like artificiality of distinctions, and reconciles all dualities in a universal dynamic rhythm. From 1925 to 1928, four expressionistic, deliberately religious plays represent the high water mark of his orientalism. *The Great God Brown* ends (like *Marco Millions*) in dualism, but its western sources of Jung and Nietzsche combine with Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism in *Lazarus Laughed* to reveal O'Neill’s eastern attraction to passivity, egolessness, and spiritual liberation. A similar yearning lies behind *Strange Interlude*. The oriental mother God in it, however, battles against the judgmental, Old Testament father God; and *Dynamo* repudiates both mother and father Gods and upholds neuter God, submerging O'Neill’s mystical urges until his final autobiographical phase from 1939 to 1943. Oriental and occidental approaches again contend in *The Iceman Cometh, Long Days*
Journey Into Night, and Hughie, but each play rejects eastern paths and embraces Christian values of fellowship and compassion. And A Moon For the Misbegotten makes clear that the rejection—an inevitable consequence of O'Neill's western identity—was indeed sincere and final.

O'Neill's greatest drama probed the enduring concerns of western man, the fear of death, the obsession with history, the quest for identity. It simultaneously raised the possibility of oriental approaches to these problems, while remaining sceptical about eastern philosophy's ultimate relevance to the western mind. His plays thus helped the readers to have a rapprochement between the eastern and western thoughts and the fusion of both will, indeed, contribute a lot to man in his search for belief, values and meanings in his life.

Now that we have examined O'Neill's shifting, vanishing and substituting metaphors and concepts of God, we are left to ourselves to deduce our own conclusions concerning what should be our conceptions of God, religion, morals, and values. Before dealing with the most rational and scientific conceptions of God, religion, and values, a look at O'Neill's views on death, immortality, and reincarnation in general and on 'fate' in particular would be helpful.

Man's physical body dies and decays but his 'creative spirit' and 'creative works' outlive him. One theme that has stimulated O'Neill to creative work and one problem with which O'Neill has wrestled as a man and as an artist is the fundamental universal problem—the problem of man's insignificance of man's mortality.
O'Neill contemplates man's mortality at least in five plays. His *Lazarus Laughed* and *Strange Interlude* partly dealt with the idea of reincarnation also. Lazarus returns from death for a new life, but occupies the same body. *Strange Interlude*’s Ned Darrell bids final farewell to Nina by musing that “perhaps we’ll become part of the cosmic positive and negative electric charges and meet again” (Vol. III, SI 197). Despite the unity behind the polarities *The Great God Brown* concedes that only death can resolve the oppositions of existence. But in *Lazarus Laughed*, the protagonist rises above good and evil, male and female, even life and death—all of which he views as simply different stages in the cosmic rhythm.

In *The Fountain*, O'Neill contemplates that man attains immortality through his descendants. *The Fountain* tells the story of Juan Ponce de Leon’s search for the spring of youth. Youth and love are but glittering commonplaces to him—until youth passes and he is “sick with years.” Then it is that he asks bitterly “Why have I lived?” and prays:

> “O, son of God . . . show me Thy miracle—a sign—a word—a second’s vision of what I am that I should have lived and died!”

(Vol. III, *The Fountain* 438). “I have striven for what the hand can grasp. What is left when Death makes the hand powerless? O Mighty Rellexer of hands, have you no vision for the graspers of earth?” (Vol. III, *The Fountain* 441)

His words carry the tragedy of man’s decay and the pathos of his helplessness. He calls pitifully: “All Faiths—they vanish—are one and equal—within—what are you, Fountain? That from which all life springs and to which it must
return—God! Are all dreams of you but the one dream? (Bowing his head miserably) I do not know. Come back, Youth. Tell me this secret!” “What are you, Fountain?” (Vol. III, The Fountain 441). O’Neill repeats this question in The Great God Brown, in Marco Millions, in Strange Interlude, in Lazarus Laughed.

In The Great God Brown, O’Neill comes once more to Mother Cybel to be comforted. And Cybel strokes his hair maternally and laughs at Dion Anthony’s weakness. “You were born with ghosts in your eyes,” she tells him, “and you were brave enough to go looking into your own dark—and you got afraid. (Vol. I, GGB 285). Yet he remains afraid before the dark curtain hiding the endless void. “Into thy hands, O Lord,” Dion Anthony prays with ascetic fervour (Then suddenly, with a look of horror). “Nothing to feel one’s life blown out like the flame of a cheap match...! To fall asleep and know you’ll never, never be called to get on the job of existence again!” (Vol. I, GGB 286). And Cybel puts his head maternally: “There, don’t be scared. It’s borne in the blood. When the time comes, you’ll find it’s easy” (Vol. I, GGB 286). But evidently he does not find it easy, for when she kisses him good bye he begins to sob. Even her admonition, “remember, it’s all a game, and after you’re asleep, I’ll tuck you in” (Vol. I, GGB 288), does not help. His last word is a choking, heart-broken cry: “Mother!” And Cybel remains murmuring the old riddle: “What’s the good of bearing children? What’s the use of giving birth to death?” (Vol. I, GGB 288).

In Macro Millions, O’Neill started out to write a satire of one modern commercial civilisation and its representative “wise man,” Marco Polo, but the
play ends as a poignant tragedy of man's quest for happiness and understanding and his ultimate defeat. Marco is convinced that he is immortal. He will not confess that his soul is but a stupid invention of his fear and that when he dies he will be "dead as a dead dog," yet he trembles at the prospect of having his head out off, for he cannot imagine his death. But Marco is too insignificant and unreflective to make the contemplation of his mortality dramatic. It is only when O'Neill begins to contrast the ancient wisdom and the sadness and resignation of the East with the brashness and purposeless activity of the West that his play acquires the deep overtones of great drama. The last scene reverberates with the intolerable burden of the unanswerable question. The priests of the East—Taoist, Confucian, Buddhist, Islamic—can answer Kublai only with the assertion of the chorus: "Death is." And the chronicles intones resignedly:

> We lament the shortness of life. Life at its longest is brief enough. Too brief for the wisdom of joy, too long for the knowledge of sorrow (Vol. II, MM 436) . . . Our sobs stifle us, our tears wet the ground, our lamentations sadden the wind from the West, yet we must bow humbly before the omnipotent. (Vol. II, MM 436)

The same sadness of resignation marks the end of O'Neill's *Strange Interlude*. After nine acts crowded with human events—"tangled mess of love and hate and pain and birth"—Nina settles down to "rot away in peace" (Vol. III, SI 138). Ned Darrell leaves, praying to God "to teach him to be resigned to be an atom" (Vol. III, SI 199) and Nina remains with the conviction that life
is only a strange interlude. All “lives are merely strange dark interludes in the electrical display of God the Father!” (Vol. III, SI 199).

It is in *Lazarus Laughed* that O'Neill is most rigidly concerned with the problem of mortality. Lazarus has risen from the dead and all that behold him seek to know: “What did you find beyond there, Lazarus?” He gently rebukes them: “O, Curious Greedy ones, is not one world in which you know not, how to live enough for you?” (Vol. III, LL 279). But man’s quest for the secret goes on. “What is beyond?” (Vol. III, LL 279) comes the refrain of the chorus. It is echoed in one form or another by the ragged multitude and the powerful Roman legions, by the lecherous Tiberius and the cowardly Caligula, who knows, even before Lazarus tells him, that he is but “a bubble pricked by death into a void and mocking silence” (Vol. III, LL 309). Lazarus has been beyond and he has brought back a strange laughter. His compassion embraces the entire race of men, “whose lives are long dyings! They evade their fear of death by becoming so sick of life that by the time, death comes they are too lifeless to fear it. Their disease triumphs over death—a noble victory called resignation!” (Vol. III, LL 352). Most men, however, are not resigned, they cling to the few certainties they possess and, like Tiberius, they do not wish to die. Unlike Tiberius they might not even admit that “If I were sure of eternal sleep beyond there, deep rest and forgetfulness of all I have ever seen or heard or hated or loved on earth, I would gladly die!” (Vol. III, LL 353). Only Lazarus is sure, and he laughs a joyous laughter. He knows the secret. And O'Neill knows.
For himself at least, O'Neill has found an answer to the question of mortality. In these five plays which partly deal with death, O'Neill views the transience of human existence; he not only poses dark riddles, but he presumes to point a way, to strike a heartening harmony. Out of the depths of fear and doubt and despair into which he has imaginatively gone down, he returns, like Lazarus, with a joyous laughter in his heart, and exultation not the less triumphant because it encloses the vast sadness of the world. He could not remain passively, whining at the inevitable doom of extinction; out of his fearful intimations of mortality he has forged a shining armour for man, a bold consciousness of survival with which to meet the devouring riddle of time.

Like Lazarus, O'Neill himself has found the answer to death. It is: "There is no death!" (Vol. III, LL 371). Man's creative life and creative works and creative spirit survive his death. Only cowards like Caligula who kill out of a terrible fear of death, believe in death. In reality, "There is only life! There is only laughter!" (Vol. III, LL 310).

Lazarus who died returns with an affirmation, a thundering yes, of the indestructibility, the endlessness of life. He says that man as dust is eternal changes, and everlasting growth, and a high note of laughter soaring through the chaos from the deep heart of God! Because man thinks only in terms of his temporary form rather than of the agelessness of his dust, he walks this earth in aching loneliness and dies of self-pity. If he would but say with Lazarus:

Millions of laughing stars there are around me! And laughing dust, born once of woman on this earth, now freed to dance! New
stars are born of dust eternally. The old grown mellow with God, burst into flaming seed! The fields of infinite space are sown—and grass for sheep springs upon the hills of earth! But there is no death, no fear, nor loneliness! There is only God's Eternal Laughter! His laughter flows into the lonely heart! (Vol. III, LL 348-349)

Alas, that man forgets the laughter of Lazarus, the eternal rhythm of rotating dust, the deep, soft laughter of being and becoming!

O'Neill's conception of immortality can be termed biological. Birth and death, growth and decay, are the unending cycles of existence. "Always spring comes again bearing life!" Mother Earth, Cybel, speaks over the body of Billy Brown:

Always again! Always forever again!—Spring again—life again!—summer and fall and death and peace!—but always, always love and conception and birth and pain again—spring bearing the intolerable chalice of life again!—bearing the glorious blazing crown of life again! (Vol. I, GGB 322)

And O'Neill's use of the term 'God' is biological, naturalistic. God is as Time is, as Dust is. And man's pain and travail are normal phases in the unchanging changes of being.

There is a good deal of eastern philosophy in O'Neill's attitude toward death also. If he has not been able to acquire the serenity of the East, he has at least accepted inevitability and resignation. He has accepted the Eastern view of life as "an interlude, of trial and preparation, say, in which our souls
have been scraped clean of impure flesh and made worthy to bleach in peace” (Vol. III, SI 199) In fact, in *Strange Interlude*, Charlie Marsden, who speaks these lines, has been more victorious by standing aloof and waiting with Buddha-like patience, than either Nina or Darrell by yielding to the fever and fury of their passions. In the end all three realise the inevitability of bleaching, except that Charlie comes to the anodyne of peace much earlier in *Strange Interlude*.

O’Neill’s discovery of the endless continuity of life and its perpetual metamorphosis in external form tempers the tragic brooding of his plays. The efforts of the heroes in these plays become ennobled and their defeats become victories in the march of eternity. In *The Fountain*, the dying Juan hears “the rhythm of eternal life.” He sees “the fountain everlasting time without end! Soaring flame of the spirit transfiguring death! All is within! All things dissolve, flow on eternally!” (Vol. III, *The Fountain* 442). He prays to the “aspiring fire of life” to sweep the dark soul of man, and that he might burn in its unity. Juan, the bold adventurer, dies exulting that “God is a Fountain of Eternity,” that “He is the All in one, the one in all—the Eternal Becoming which is Beauty” (Vol. III, *The Fountain* 442). He dies hearing the earth and youth and love and the Fountain sings an all-comprehending hymn of the mystery of life:

*Life is a field*
*Forever growing*
*Beauty a fountain*
*Forever flowing*
Upward beyond the source of sunshine
Upward beyond the azure heaven,
Born of God but
Ever returning
To merge with earth that the field may live. (Vol. III, The Fountain 440)

O’Neill’s ideas of fate with reference to his plays and his own remarks about it are worth examining: “We do what we must—and sand covers our bodies and our deeds” (Vol. III, The Fountain 428). “We’re never free—except to do what we have to do” (Vol. II, AGCGW 315).

In a letter written in 1925 to Arthur Hobson Quinn, O’Neill stated the objective all his life:

And just here is where I am a most confirmed mystic, too, for I’m always trying to interpret life in terms of lives, never just lives in terms of character. I’m always acutely conscious of a Force behind—Fate, God, our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it—Mystery certainly—and of the one eternal tragedy of Man in his glorious, self-destructive struggle to make the force express him instead of being, as an animal is, an infinitesimal incident in its expression. And my profound conviction is that it is the only subject worth writing about and that it is possible—or can be—to develop a tragic expression in terms of transfigured modern values and symbols in the theatre which may to some degree bring home to members of a modern
audience their ennobling identity with the tragic figures on the stage. Of course, this is very much a dream, but where the theatre is concerned, one must have a dream.36

Likewise, when Mary Mullet once pressed him to state his fundamental scheme of life, O'Neill made a statement that is again an echo of the same idea:

People talk of the 'tragedy' in them (my plays), and call it 'sordid,' 'depressing,' 'pessimistic'—the words usually applied to anything of a tragic nature. But tragedy, I think, has the meaning Greeks gave it. To them it brought exaltation, an urge towards life and ever more life. It roused them to deeper spiritual understandings and released them from the petty greeds of everyday existence. When they saw a tragedy on the stage, they felt their own hopeless hopes ennobled in art . . . life in itself is nothing. It is the dream that keeps us fighting, willing—living! . . . The dreams that can be completely realised are not worth dreaming . . . A man wills his own defeat and when he pursues the unattainable . . . such a figure is necessarily tragic. But to me he is not depressing, he is exhilarating.37

Again and again O'Neill stresses that he wants to make the audience sense the presence of the inscrutable mysterious force which thwarts human aspirations, that this is not a pessimistic approach, for in man's failure should be sensed a tragic joy, that hopeless hope, though unachieved, should itself be felt as a victory, that a man wills his own defeat when he pursues the
unattainable and that tragedy in life is what makes it worthwhile. In short, O'Neill seems to think that, for his purpose, it would be enough if he were to present man as a soul pursuing the unattainable and reaching a point where the failure itself would make life noble, meaningful and tragic.

In *The New York Tribune* (13 February 1921), O'Neill said, "to me the tragic alone has that significant beauty which is truth." In this statement, he damned all the optimists, whose facile optimism made life so 'darned hopeless.' In this connection, one recalls how, when Malcolm Mollan asked him if he would ever write a play with an out-and-out happy ending, O'Neill retorted by asking "if the exaltation that his plays offered was not a sort of happiness."38

However, John Anderson’s comment in this connection is worth reproducing: "O'Neill finds not happiness in tragedy so much as tragedy in happiness."40 Such a commentary refers to a jealous, sadistic or masochistic attitude of mind towards happiness, which a sensible reader cannot tolerate.

Whatever O'Neill might say about his concept of fate, it is actually deterministic, and his plays illustrate it. The determinists and fatalists hold that man is the victim of circumstances over which he has no control. But the difference is that according to the fatalists whatever happens was prearranged by a power outside the world (God or spirits). Furthermore that power is a conscious force, sometimes malignant, which acts arbitrarily and has a prevision of the end it achieves. A fatalist is also in a certain sense a free-willist. He believes that in most cases he is at liberty to behave as he desires, but in the major experiences of life he thinks that an outside power has
intervened to pass judgement or grant reward. It places the cause of the happening in the hands of an arbitrary supernatural force which has no direct connection with the laws of physics, biology or social behaviour patterns. This view of the world represented by fatalism is purposive, even teleological in that there is a plan which involves a prevision of a goal. It thus follows that it involves the concept of anthropomorphic beings who rule arbitrarily over the destinies of men. It is primitive faith as opposed to modern science. Its value must be purely aesthetic to the modern thinker, and it no longer serves as a guide to the contemporary artist. O'Neill could realise this. He also realised that the ancients were essentially true to the nature of the world in emphasising the helplessness of man in his struggle with forces of life.

The deterministic view of fate is more scientific and rational whereas fatalism has a footing only on a belief in a personal God and is always dependent upon a supernatural will. The point of view of the fatalist is primitive in that it is based upon a world of magic, a world in which miracles occur because there is no hard and fast relationship of cause and effect between man’s experiences and the rest of the world.

Determinism is modern in that it is a philosophy of life that grows out of an understanding of life as an integral part of the universe, and not as something that is specially created and thus capable of miraculous behaviour. From this scientific point of view the behaviour of man is no more mysterious than the behaviour of the atmosphere, that encircles our globe. In each case there may be many aspects of behaviours that are unknown, but the
assumption of science is that should they ever be fully explained there will be nothing that does not fit into the scheme of what we already know.

The determinist also holds that man is the victim of circumstance, but in this case there are no outside powers. To the determinist there is no conscious objective purpose in the universe, and there is no prevision of an end either good or bad. According to this view, man is what he is because of his heredity and environment, and every action has its definite cause which, in its turn, was caused until the whole of man's life is an endless chain of causes and effects. From the determinist's point of view freedom is a myth, because everything has its sufficient reason for being, a man is free to do that which he has to do, which simply means, that he is free to be the product of the forces that made him what he is or his destiny. This is what Jim says to Ella in *God's Chillun Got Wings*: "We're never free—except to do what we have to do" (Vol. II, AGCGW 315).

Man is free to think, decide, and act, but only according to the laws of nature and it turns out to be, perhaps as we will or against what we will. We can preconceive what we should will but we cannot preconceive the result of the will, whether it is a 'decision' or action which seemed to be under our control before we decided in the past but which happened to be not within our control in the future.

In *Anna Christie*, O'Neill has revealed the real conflict between what man desires in this life and what he gets. Anna was a normal child with normal physical characteristics and aspirations. Her first great disadvantage was that she did not have the protection and care that parents usually give
their children. In the case of Anna, the antagonist is an intangible force. Anna describes it when she says: “I was caged in, I tell you—just like in jail” (Vol. I, AC 58)—She sums it all up for her father. “There ain’t nothing to forgive it ain’t your fault, and it ain’t mine, and it ain’t his neither. We’re all poor nuts, and things happen, and we just get mixed in wrong, that’s all” (Vol. I, AC 65).

Mary Tyrone in *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* sums up O’Neill’s entire philosophy when she says: “None of us can help the things life has done to us. They’re done before you realise it, and once they’re done, they make you do other things until at last everything comes between you and what you’d like to be, and you’ve lost your true self for ever” (LDJN 53).

O’Neill is greatly indebted to Schopenhauer for his idea of fate. Schopenhauer’s saying: “A man can do what he wills to, but he cannot determine what he wills” is noteworthy in this context. Incidentally this quotation was dear to Albert Einstein and it consoled him when he witnessed or suffered life’s hardships.

But when fate refers to “inscrutable forces” O’Neill had in mind the fate consequent of a certain biological fact or a factor of heredity or environment or both. Such a fate is unalterable by all means. Whereas when fate refers to a chance or a happening at random or an accidental incident, it appears to be alterable but, in reality, it is not so. Thus intelligence, physical features, complexion, beauty etc. are unchangeable hereditary factor of fate or chance with all its bearings upon life is an inexplicable factor of fate. One has to be submissive and passive to this fate as Jim Harris in his helplessness accepts the
plight of his biological features and complexion and bears the racial discrimination in the society.

The world of O'Neill as revealed in his works is a world in which free will has been reduced to necessity and substituted by cause and effect analysis. The behaviour of men and women who live in this world is not free behaviour, that is, it is not unaccounted for and unrelated to the forces which determine it. This gives tragic beauty to O'Neill's interpretation of life, but it also implies ethical consequences. In a deterministic world free from the traditional hopes of an Arabian Nights psychology, it may be possible to analyse the causes of human conduct. The moral dogma of praise and blame will perish and in their place may come understanding and a new moral order. It is this implied hope that lends a warm vitality to the plays; it gives the reader a sense of power, or at least it offers an interpretation of life that is a challenge, something more than a supine hope. It is only when life is recognised as deterministic that it will be possible to act and plan to make it better, or even to conceive what may be meant by better. O'Neill has revealed the forces that work through the lives of his characters, and by this method he has achieved a fair modicum of artistic reality which helps to make his plays intellectual as well as aesthetic in their appeal. Thus O'Neill could shift the tragic situation from a conflict between man and the divine laws of the universe to man's inner soul in a world where he is free to be the product of the forces that made him what he is or what he does.

In this modern world of conflicting values, words are made meaningless by the contrasting definitions attached to them by opposing schools of
thought. The church or Christianity has always professed to have a solution to man's apparently inescapable dilemma, and no doubt there have been times in the history of civilization when it did provide a very real answer. In the middle ages, Christianity was a genuine answer to man's eternal enigma. But as Western civilization came into the true heritage of its purely Western culture, the romantic, other worldly religions of the East lost its influence in direct proportion to the success of the very culture which it professed to nurture. If survival of our particular civilization is to be used as a standard of worth, then it might very well be said that in our struggle to achieve material triumph over the outward aspects of nature, we are doing the very things which will lead to our ultimate annihilation.

O'Neill has not overemphasized the problems of modern Christianity, but his plays give ample evidence that even from the very first he was interested in the effect of Christian doctrine upon the lives of his characters. This is just what one might expect from a dramatist who makes man's struggle with the shadowy, indefinable and inevitable forces of life the material of his art. The careful reader of his plays will find ample evidence that he has no disagreement with Jesus as a social teacher. Even in our days, troubled days, in which Jesus has no more authentic followers than those who seem to deny him, the dreams of an ideal organization of society, which have so much analogy with the aspirations of primitive Christian sects, might be O'Neill's view of organized Christianity. The idea referred to is the Kingdom of God, which to O'Neill means social justice and individual freedom. O'Neill sees only the elements of tragedy in a philosophy which is incompatible with the exigencies of a fixed social practice. Like most of the leading writers of the
modern world, O'Neill is not a Christian in the conventional understanding of Christianity. Rather he is an artist who is concerned with the problem of man's relation to his universe. He is seeking an answer to this puzzle. One way he is sure will not solve the riddle, and that is the way of traditional Christianity. He is sure that man's solution to life's enigma will not be answered in the terms of the old faith, but he is also certain that instead of being helpful, this old form of an other-worldly religion is a bar across the road to happiness and freedom. As popularly conceived, it is an active force for evil, a force that leads man to make dangerous denials, and finally to the inhibition of those qualities that alone might make the brief span of this life gleam with occasional moments of real beauty, a beauty that would come through an affirmation of our humanity. O'Neill always hated all the sham that prevents us from loving people as they really are and he was always opposed to the forces that are evil in that they tend to destroy beauty, love of liberty and all that affirms the goodness of this life in this world.

O'Neill is as sceptical of any ultimate solution to life through science, as he is definitely critical of the religious dogmas of the past. His tragedy goes deeper than that. All his characters defy an unfriendly and immutable universe. O'Neill's men and women demand more from life than is prescribed for man within the limits of an ascetic dogma. In a tragic situation in the plays of O'Neill, the solution is always in harmony with the modern world of science. It may be that the solution is not successful, quite often it is not but at least his characters face the issue squarely. O'Neill does not use Christianity as a solution to tragedy, because he has no faith in it as a solution to any particular complex problem in this modern world, a world which has
abandoned faith in the interests of technology. The place of religion has been usurped by technology and for ages to come, man is doomed to be its slave.

O'Neill's universe is not concerned about the hopes and fears, desires and aspirations of man. Whatever hope there may be for man in the dramatic picture of the world that O'Neill has given us, arises out of the very fact that the universe is without any particular purpose as far as man is concerned. It leaves man free to create his own ideals, and to bend the forces of nature to his own uses, reversing the order of the primitive past, thereby making man the master and the laws of nature his guide. In the transition period of man's history as a thinking animal, which is the modern period of which O'Neill writes, man is still more rebellious and defiant than actively concerned with a constructive programme. He is busy sweeping away the débris of a civilization of erroneous conceptions, false beliefs and fatal superstitions. Only the simple are still living with confidence in the world of a conscious ruling power that watches over the destinies of men.

O'Neill was not a cosmologist in the proper sense of the word. Consciously and intellectually, he usually thought of the world, when he could bear to think of it, as a meaningless chaos. There were periods in his life however, when he was a God-seeker; also as a playwright he created dramatic universes in which there are cosmologies sometimes theistic, sometimes scientific. O'Neill's universe as mentioned earlier is a disorderly place, sometimes teleological, more often blind and purposeless. According to O'Neill, some kind of cosmology, God-filled or Godless, purposeful or purposeless, is generally assumed to exist and to have some relationship to
and bearing upon human life. This cosmos can be, and is, apprehended in either theistic or scientific or intuitive terms. Yet whatever its multiple faces or however various are the ways of apprehending it, this universe does exist, and human life is part of some larger scheme of things, be it God or the evolutionary process or the development as per the Big Bang theory. In his early plays, O’Neill dramatised from different perspectives the longing for a universal design to things. In his subsequent plays the concept of a personal God is nowhere mentioned by O’Neill. He could not conceive of a God who has a will of the kind we experience in ourselves or a God who rewards and punishes his creatures or a God whose purposes are modelled after our own. The main source of the present-day conflicts between the spheres of religion and of science lies in the concept of a personal God. It is the aim of science to establish general rules of nature which determine the reciprocal connection of objects and events in time and space.

Everybody likes the idea of the existence of an omnipotent, an omniscient, an omnipresent and a benevolent personal God. Nobody, certainly, will deny that the idea of the existence of an omnipotent, just and benevolent personal God is able to accord man solace, help and guidance. By virtue of its simplicity, it is accessible to the most undeveloped mind easily taking for granted what the religions say. The teachers of religion in their struggle for the ethical good must avail themselves of those forces which are capable of cultivating the good, the true and the beautiful in humanity itself.

If the universe appears to be an orderly system and if there is uniformity, harmony and order in the mysterious functioning of the universe
and if everything in the physical world is determined by the uniform laws of
the physical world, one cannot expect a personal God to break these laws of
Nature. Even in the case of predicting the weather there is some causal
connection between a variety of factors in operation, and we can find no lack
of order in nature although weather for a few days ahead cannot be predicted.
In the formation of a man's religious feelings, the laws of nature must take the
place of the concept of the personal God. If it is one of the goals of religion to
liberate mankind as far as possible from the bondage of egocentric cravings,
desires and fears, scientific reasoning can aid religion in yet another sense.

The idea of God in the historical religions taught at present is a
sublimation of the old concept of the gods as anthropomorphic. During the
youthful period of mankind's spiritual evolution human fantasy created gods
in man's own image, who, by the operations of their will were supposed to
determine, or at any rate to influence, the phenomenal world. Man sought to
alter the disposition of these gods in his own favour by means of prayer.
However, it cannot be denied that great and valuable is the serenity and the
peace of mind man derives from the prayers addressed to a personal God,
especially when his belief in such a personal God has been conditioned from
his birth onwards, based upon a belief followed through generations.

It has already been analysed that O'Neill's God was not the God of
most other men. In his plays, O'Neill has rational and romantic concepts of
God. He did not believe in a personal God. His belief looked like a variant of
simple agnosticism. In a context where O'Neill has been sceptical about the
social or moral conceptions of God, we find in his plays shifting concepts and
metaphors of God. The desire for guidance, love and support prompts men to form the social or moral conception of God. This is the God of providence, who protects, disposes, rewards, punishes; the God who, according to the limits of the believer's outlook, loves and cherishes the life of the tribe or of the human race, or even life itself; the comforter in sorrow and unsatisfied longing; he who preserves the souls of the dead.

No doubt, much of O'Neill's writings give the impression that O'Neill's idea of God appears akin to that of Albert Einstein who conceives God "as the physical world itself, with its infinitely marvellous structure operating at the atomic level with the beauty of a craftsman's wrist-watch and at the stellar level with the majesty of a massive cyclotron." It is not the conception of a God as the personified Being governing the universe from Olympian heights. O'Neill's most rational conception of God is implicit in the utterance of his character Kublai Kaan in *Marco Millions* as mentioned earlier: "My hideous suspicion is that, God is an infinite insane energy which creates and destroys without other purpose than to pass eternity in avoiding thought" (Vol. II, MM 426). These and all other shifting concepts and metaphors of God, we find in O'Neill's plays do not correspond to the dogmas of any of the established religions with a personified God.

Though O'Neill levels harsh criticism against established religions through which it finds conventional expression, the critical thinker may discern in his point of view the foundations of a better ideal religion than the one he denies. It was said of Tolstoy that the greatest fault he revealed as a Christian was that he thought Jesus meant what he said in the Sermon on the Mount.
The same might be held for O’Neill, that he does not deny Jesus as much as he denies what tradition has made out of his teachings. The most rational concept of God of a person should be about the power that pervades the whole universe, the power that preserves the uniform laws of nature or the force behind the marvellous structure and the mysterious functioning of the universe, and also the mysterious power behind the origin of the universe. The true religiosity or piety should spring out of a sense of wonder at the mysterious functioning of the universe especially at the force behind every phenomenon.

However, man’s most desirable and the most logical and ideal concept of God will be about an omnipresent, omniscient God. Out of man’s inherent religious feeling and sense of piety and the tendency to believe in the mysterious power behind every phenomenon man is inclined to praise, adore and worship a supernatural ruling power namely God or to believe in a benevolent and omniscient ruler or the controller of human affairs within the universe with its marvellous structure functioning according to the uniform laws of Nature. Whatever be the beliefs according to the tenets of the various established religions, all such beliefs logically lead to the idea of one God, even if conceived of differently. When we are deluded in the labyrinth of darkness in our journey of life with its encircling gloom of the enigma of faith, O’Neill’s plays will finally leads us to this ideal conception of God and also disillusion us to reflect on how much bloodshed has been caused in the name of religion resulting in wars between peoples and nations sowing seeds of spite between different clans of people throughout the world in the history of mankind. The problem of faith at whatever level of experience we approach
it, allows room for conviction that the motivation behind the whole quest is the feeling of spiritual insecurity. It is easy for the modern society to part with religion, but it is not easy for its members to find a secure shelter where they could harbour the insoluble conflicts that are devastating their inner selves. Both theories and practices of mysticism, in the East and the West, in Pre-Christianity and Post-Renaissance, have contributed a great deal to enliven our interest in intuitively conceiving of God and spirituality, which we have heard since the very beginning of the human race. To make life in all its stupidity and cruelty at all meaningful, O'Neill came to see it as a test, which man must pass to become worthy of what comes after death. Thus considered, the pain of existence could be explained and even welcomed, since pain, suffering and inner struggle would be the cost one had to pay to insure a blissful journey beyond the night of death. This hope or dream, which gives meaning to life and beauty to death, is ultimately what keeps O'Neill's tragic protagonists struggling through existence, much as their creator did. When O'Neill talks about a future of nobler values and treasures in other kingdoms he is expressing a utopian idea of a certain vagueness which reflects his uncertainty as whether these kingdoms will ever be found on earth, as he hoped with Nietzsche or whether they will be found in another existence, beyond death. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that to many, religion has been playing a major role in keeping up values and morals and in making human beings significant and human life meaningful within their own angle of their views and within the limits of the horizon of their thinking faculty.
NOTES


2 Ibid. 38.


7 Ibid. 46.

8 Ibid. 372.

9 Ibid. 374.

10 Ibid. 375.


15 Gelbs 234.


17 Ibid. 264-265.


19 Ibid. 923.


24 Gelbs 601.

25 Ibid. 601.


29 Ibid. 33.

30 Ibid. 34.


38 Gelbs 486.

39 Gelbs 487.

