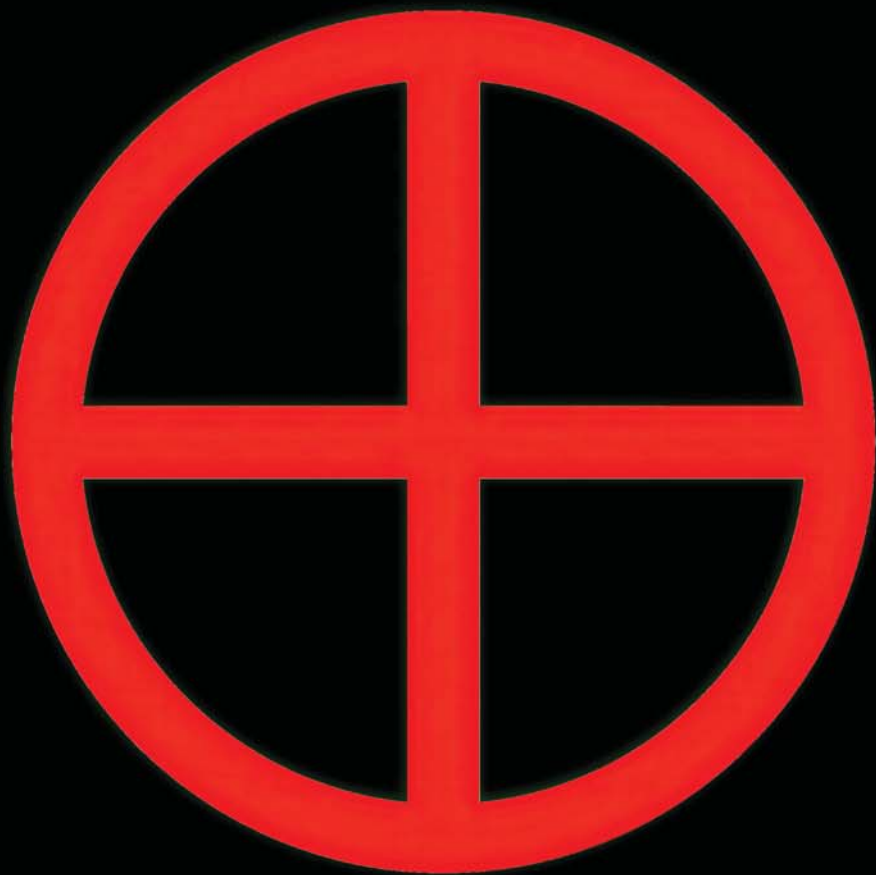


EVOLA ON CHRISTIANITY



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BOOKS



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We have already pointed out that one of the causes that has propelled the spread of neo-spiritualism is to be seen in the very character of religion that has come to predominate in the West, in Christianity and particularly in Catholicism. In its essential self-definition as an theologico-ritual system on the one hand and on the other as a devotional and moralizing practise, it seemed to offer very little to the need for the supernatural felt by many people of our time, who for this reason have been attracted by other doctrines that appeared to promise something more.

Naturally, in such a case we have in view the supernatural as *experience*. Otherwise Catholicism is characterised by the pretence of having in itself, more than any other religion, a true theology of the supernatural with respect to its conception of a personal God, separated from the entire natural world and powering over this world. But it is not any such theology that we went in search of, while the theistic Catholic conception of the personal God seemed to be inadequate right from the beginning, in order to admit, by way of principle only a dualistic relationship between I and thou, between the created and the Creator.

It is true that there also exists a Christian mysticism in that Catholicism has known monastic orders whose goal was to cultivate a life of pure contemplation. However, this presupposed rather specific vocations that otherwise in every removal of the distance deriving from the conception of the personal God, was seen by the Orthodox as a dangerous heresy in mystical life itself (limiting enough the concept of the *unio mystica* [mystical union], the unitive life). In practice, Catholicism of modern times has always given less prominence to all that, the so called "pastoral care of the soul" having become its principle preoccupation, while keeping silent about the most recent post-conciliar upheavals of "modernisation" and "opening to the left", and calling for, as its priority, mere social applications and socialisations with notorious sordid humanitarian pacifist and democratic ingredients; everything that could have a character of true transcendence is set aside, or, at least, encouraged by no one. From here the emptiness that presses the crisis of the modern world has motivated many to look elsewhere, more or less along the lines of contemporaneous neo-spiritualism, exposing themselves to the danger that obscure forces will pervert their highest aspirations.

But in an objective analysis some acknowledgments impose themselves.

If we refer here to early Christianity, it is presented as a typical religion of the *kali yuga*, of the "dark age", a period that in the Western formulation of its very teaching corresponds to the "Iron Age", in which Hesiod considered "burning in Hell without glory" as the destiny for the majority. Christian preaching, originally addressed above all to the mass of disinherited and those without tradition in the Roman Ecumene. It had as premise a human type somewhat different from those who had traditions of a higher level in view, a type that for that reason regarded access to the divine found itself in a desperate situation. So it took the form of a *tragic doctrine of salvation*. The myth of "original sin" was affirmed and indicated the alternative of an eternal salvation or eternal perdition to be decided once and for all on this earth, exaggerated with horrifying depictions of the afterlife and with apocalyptic visions. It was a way to arouse, in certain nature, an extreme tension which, a type associated to the myth of Jesus as "Redemptor", could also give its fruits: if not in this life, at least at the point of death or in the *post-mortem*, that these indirect means acting on the human emotivity could succeed in modifying the basal force of the human being in their depth.

In addressing the vaster masses, the Catholicism subsequently veiled, in a certain measure, the extremist severity of these views, concerning itself with furnishing some support for the human personality, whose supernatural destination it recognized, and to exercise a subtle action on its deepest being by means of the power of rite and sacrament.

In this context we can indicate the possible pragmatic, practical *raison d'être* of some aspects of Catholicism. Already certain principles of Catholic-Christian morals, such as those of humility, charity, and the

renunciation of one's own will, if intended in the right way and the right place, could have been formulated as a corrective in view of the closure and individualistic self-affirmation to which western man was often inclined. In view of the same limitations on the intellectual plane and of the corresponding humanisation of every capacity of vision, it could have been opportune to present in the form of dogma and according to authority that which is situated above the common intellect though at a higher level, at least for an elite, it could instead be knowledge, direct proof, *gnosis*.

It is possible that, for a not very different reason, we can deem it opportune to speak of "revelation" and of "grace": in order to emphasize the character of relative transcendent of the true supernatural in respect to the possibilities of a more or less decadent human type and who always showed themselves more prone to every type of rationalistic and humanistic abuse.

Finally, it has already noted that the relationships of simple "faith" in a theistic sense with a gap that they allowed to incur, if they are certainly limits (for which in more complete traditions they would have been considered only for the lower strata of a civilization), they can be such to guarantee the integrity of the person, which, close to pantheistic mysticism, and in trespassing in the supersensible, as we have said many times, can no longer find solid ground.

These are limitations of Catholic doctrine, having possible positive merits, adequate in regards to the great mass of men and in view—let us repeat—of the negative conditions of the current period of the "dark age". Since what is held at this level, ideas, like those of Catholics such as Henri Massis and also Jacques-Albert Cottat, could also be correct: Catholicism represents a defence of western man, while every less dualistic, theistic form of spirituality (and in such regard we often like to point to the Orient) can represent a danger for him. But when one no longer keeps himself at that level, things change, and greatly. If one aims at the positive openings to the supernatural and if one has in view, as a goal, what could be called the super-personality, or rather the integrated personality beyond common human conditionalities, then referring to Catholicism (we are not speaking, then, of the Catholicism of our time), is no longer a limitation that protects and preserves but is a factor of petrification that kills itself by the reactions that its intolerance and bias can provoke and has provoked in whoever aims for that different self-realization and that called attention to non-western and non-Christian traditions and doctrines in which a metaphysical or initiatic content is more visible and not a religious, dogmatic, and ritualistic reduction of it with a rigid theistic mythology.

Today with difficulty, if not exceptionally in some close to dangerous existential crises, the potentiality of Christianity at its beginnings as that "tragic doctrine of salvation" can be re-actualized. The problem is not set and we even say without reticence that if anyone who has known, for some time, nothing other than the vainest constructions of philosophy and the secular plebeian university culture of today or the contaminations of the various contemporary individualisms, aestheticisms, and romanticisms, would "convert" to Catholicism and would experience truly the faith *at least*, with a total commitment and possibly in a "sacrificial" sense, that would signify not an abdication but rather, in spite of everything, a progress.

However, here we have to keep ourselves to the special problematic that we indicated for a different human type and for a different vocation. Therefore we can ask ourselves: *is there possibly a conception and an acceptance of Catholicism that is not constrained to look for a path somewhere else?*

There are spiritual circles that have considered this possibility in the field of what is called Christian esoterism and "Integral Traditionalism". Let us see how things look in that respect.

In a preliminary way, it is good to distinguish the concept of Christian esoterism from that of Christian initiation, the first having a doctrinal character, the second an operative or experiential character. Whether there

has existed, in general, a Christian initiation, is a controversial question that, if ever, concerns other times and that in our opinion has an essentially negative answer.

If we are completely clear about what initiation is, in the integral and authentic sense of the term, we can hardly miss, by way of principle, the opposition between Christianity whose doctrine is centered in faith and the initiatic way. In its origins there could have been admixtures by way of interactions with the ancient mystery traditions and the proximity of them; so traces of this last possibility can be found in the Greek fathers. In dealing with Theosophy, we mentioned for example, the distinction made by Clement of Alexandria between the *gnostikos* who had some marks of being initiated and the *pistikos*, who is the man who simply believes. But every precise retrospective investigation of such an aim is difficult, if not impossible, and everything that has been adopted by anyone to sustain the existence of a hypothetical Christian Initiation, referring especially to the Eastern Church, and not to Roman Catholicism, seems to have a character less initiatic than simply the impartation of "benedictions". Also, whoever thinks otherwise was predisposed to hold that Christian rites having an initiatic character, at its origins, which later on had not survived or were handed down only in one of their religious and symbolic reductions or transcriptions: starting already at the Council of Nicaea. Otherwise there remains only the world of the mystic. In the environment of the Church, there is not any trace of an initiatic tradition, which through its own nature should have been rigorously super-ordinated to that of the existing apostolic hierarchy.

As to the claims to Christian initiation in environments outside the Church and in our day, when inot about mystifications, they have as their basis spurious combinations in which Christianity is only one of the ingredients, without any true root of traditional transmission. That goes also for those who are self-described, again in our day, like the Rosicrucians.

Nevertheless, the problem remains open as far as it concerns not a attestable Christian initiation only in the past, but a "Christian esoterism", or else the possibility of integrating what is present in Catholicism (and not in a vague Christianity) into a larger system, referring to which, the dimension and the deeper significance of structure, symbols and rites can be also indicated. The integration, as we said, first of all, has a doctrinal character. It is not necessary for anyone to say that the plane to which we are referring here is not that of the "esoteric Christianity" of Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater, not to mention the exegesis of the Gospels made by Rudolf Steiner with a muddle of incredible vastness.

Here instead there can come into question that which can furnish the current of "Integral Traditionalism", which had Rene Guenon essentially as the head of the school. The basic idea is the notion of a *unitary primordial metaphysical tradition* beyond every particular tradition or religion. The term "metaphysics" here is taken not in the abstract sense that it has in philosophy but with reference to a knowledge about that which is not "physical" in the broadest meaning, and to a reality that transcends the merely human world with all its constructions. This tradition would have had in the different particular historical traditions so many manifestations, more or less complete, with adaptations to various environmental, historical, and racial conditionalities, that arose by ways that elude secular research.

In such a premise the possibility would be given of finding again constant or homologous elements in the teachings, the symbols, and dogmas of those historical particular traditions and to rebuild them on a higher plane of objectivity and universality. Ideas of this type were raised even in Theosophy and some Masonic circles, although in inadequate forms; it is the precisely the Guenonian school that has known how to present them and develop them in a serious and vigorous way, with the corresponding thesis of the "transcendent unity of religions" (the expression is from Schuon and is the title of one of his interesting books).

We must emphasize here that it is not about "syncretism" and not even of those sometimes real but always empirical and external correspondences, that can be noted from the historical currents of religions. The

presupposition is just the opposite, a deductive method, based on fundamental knowledge and principles that, almost as, from the definitions of triangles, valid theorems can be deduced from singular cases. Similarly, they provide a way to understand how under certain conditions and the relation to a variety of possible expressive forms, besides keeping in view diverse needs, from certain meanings and symbols of the tradition, one reaches to the one or another *corpus* of teachings, beliefs, dogmas, mythologies, and even superstitions, keeping permanent those constants in spite of every difference and every apparent contrast.

Therefore, the first “esoteric” integration of Catholicism would consist precisely in this: starting from the symbols and doctrines of the Church, to know how to perceive what is in them, in order to be truly “Catholic” or universal (*katholicos* means universal), goes beyond Catholicism, gathering also illuminating connections of a character, so to say, “inter-traditional”. That would not entail an altering of Catholic doctrine but making its essential contents valid on a plane higher than that which is simple religion, on a metaphysical plane and with realizational prospects that can meet those who aspire to the transcendent.¹ It is only necessary to take care not to invert the preceding — unfortunately as has already happened — in assuming as the primary element Catholic doctrines in their specific limitations in order to juxtapose in them some “traditional” reference. It is, instead, these references that should constitute the primary element and the point of departure.

It is not necessary to say that only in this “traditional” (or super-traditional) perspective could the axiom of the Church “*Quod ubique, quod ab omnibus et quod semper*” have value. [“That which is accepted everywhere, by everyone, and always.”] Certainly not on the plane of that Catholic apologetics of which it could well be called “modernist”, in so far as it, since early times, has insisted fanatically in the character of the novelty and unrepeatability of Christianity, with the only reservation being the anticipations and “prefigurations” that refer especially to the Jewish people as the chosen people of God.

The novelty can be conceivable only as a particular adaptation of the doctrine that is new only because it refers to new existential and historical conditions (which however imposed a presentation of the teaching anything but in a higher form). In order to be able to sensibly affirm the Catholic axiom just cited, the attitude should be the opposite: instead of insisting on the “novelty” of the doctrines, almost as though this were a bonus, we should be inclined to highlight their *antiquity* and *perpetuity*, precisely while showing the measure with which they can be related in their essence to a super-ordinated body of teachings and symbols which that is truly “Catholic” (=universal) in order not to leave ourselves locked in to any time or any particular formulation, only remaining at the base of each one of them both in the pre-Christian world and in the non-Christian, western or non-western world, whether in extinct or past traditions in involitional or nocturnal forms, as is the case for beliefs often conserved among the same primitive populations. Catholicism admits the idea of a “primordial or patriarchal revelation”, made to the human race before the flood and the dispersion of the people.²

¹ V. Gioberti spoke about a transcendent Catholicism (*Della Riforma Cattolica*, Torino, 1856, pp. 317 and 318): “True universality is found only in transcendent Catholicism. Common Catholicism, as practiced, being restricted to a place, time, determined number of men, has always more or less the aspect and the workings of a sect. Catholicism is therefore not truly Catholic to the extent it is not united to the transcendent. In common Catholicism cannot be called Catholic if not insofar it is not unified to the transcendent”. Except that Gioberti, tied to an intellectualizing ideology of an Hegelian type soaked with politics, was certainly the last who was able to have an adequate idea about the essence of “transcendent Catholicism”.

² These events are not “myths” if in the forms they are presented in the Old Testament and they concern, then, only a given historical cycle. The tale of the “flood” must be considered as the echo of memories of the catastrophe that destroyed the original Arctic and North Atlantic sites of the prehistoric race that had the legacy of

But of these ideas, it has not made any use that relates it beyond the limitations mentioned. The only exception is perhaps established by the Catholic ethnologist Father W Schmidt who in his ponderous work *The Idea of God* served it precisely on the plane of ethnology. How characteristic of contemporary Catholicism they remain a united closure to sectarian exclusivism.

As for the origins of the contents that in Catholicism are shown to be susceptible to a "traditional" assumption, and as to the singularity of many correspondences — in mythologies, names, symbols, rites, institutions of holidays and so on — with many other traditions scattered in time and space, which makes one think of something more than a simple case or of that which the efforts of historical and empirical research can lead to, the conception of the Theosophists, which they see as the personal actions of "Masters" and "Great Initiates" everywhere, is too simplistic.

Instead it is necessary to also take account of an action not perceptible and not always tied to a person, to a "subliminal" influence which, without the founders of the Catholic tradition suspecting it, could have made so that they, often with the idea of doing something else or even being pushed by external circumstances, became the instruments of the conservation of tradition, of the transmission of some elements of a primordial and universal wisdom that thereby — as Guenon says — are found again in the "latent state" in Catholicism, hidden from the religious, mythical, theological, and dogmatic form. Besides, a similar view could be in part accepted by the Catholic Orthodoxy, except that it would be understood in more concrete terms, that the action of the Holy Spirit throughout the history of the Church would have developed the primitive "revelation", being invisibly and inspirationally present in every Council. In the self-formation of every great current of ideas one must take account of how much can be owed to influences of the sort (but in such case of another nature), much more than the common man can even imagine.

From the point view of contemporary Catholicism, a serious difficulty for traditional integration about which we are speaking regarding Jesus Christ, the founder of this very religion, because, as we said, the idea that his person, his mission, and his message of "salvation" present a unique and decisive character in universal history (whence precisely the exclusivist claim of Catholicism) cannot be accepted, while it constitutes the first article of faith for Christianity in general.

The same conception of the historical Jesus Christ's function as the saviour or redeemer in the measure in which he is portrayed in terms of a "vicarious expiation", that is of the expiation, on the part of an innocent person, of a guilt committed by others (in this case of "original sin" charged on the race of Adam), presents an intrinsic absurdity. The presupposition here is evidently a materialistic and deterministic conception of the supersensible in its foundation. In fact the theory, that guilt cannot be removed unless someone expiates it, implies the acknowledgment of a type of determinism or fatalism, of a kind of *karma*: almost as if the guilt had created a kind of burden that in every case *had* to be discharged, if not on the one, at least on the other, as the sacrifice of an innocent or of a stranger can have as much value, objectively, as the expiation in the person of the offender. All that returns to an order of ideas very far from that religion of grace and of supernatural freedom that Christianity wanted be in opposition to the ancient Hebraic-Pharisaic religion of the Law. Already in the first centuries the adversaries of Christianity rightly pointed out that if God wanted to redeem men he would have been able to do it with a simple act of grace and power without being constrained to sacrifice, in place of vicarious atonement, his son, giving men, thereby, the opportunity to carry out a new horrendous crime and as if remission was an almost physical iron law against which God himself can do nothing.³ That speaks to the difficulty that arises

the sole primordial tradition, leading thus to a shift and dispersion. On this, see Evola, *Revolt against the Modern World* and also *Sintesi di dottrina della razza*.

³ The law of expiation, which is a particular case of that of causality, has effectively a validity only on a certain plane of reality in which it justified various rites of ancient peoples who were not superstitious; therefore

for whoever holds, in regards to the history of Christ, to the exoteric religious point of view and does not know how to separate, on the other hand, the eternal and essential side of the doctrine from the motives that come from inferior conceptions that only on the basis of sentimental needs (divine sacrifice for humanity, love, and so on) were able to pass in the first plane into being constituted into Catholicism itself as articles of faith.

In relation to the stories of the Gospels, the problem of historical reality is basically irrelevant. From the point of view here considered it would instead be important to establish the extent to which the life of Jesus — in the same way as different myths relative to demigods or “heroes” of the pagan world — can be interpreted *also* as a series of symbols that refer to phases, states, and acts of the development of the being consistent with a given path. We said “also” because in the case of given incidents or figures of history certain occult convergences can act as if reality is the symbol and the symbol is reality. So the life of a real being can simultaneously have the value of a dramatization or sensibilization of metaphysical teachings, almost as in dramatic representations of the classical Mysteries, intended to arouse deep emotions in the initiate, acted to begin to accomplish within themselves the given transformations of their being.

A symbolic interpretation of the material of the Gospels was already conceived by the fathers of the Church and in part also of the Old Testament, but it stopped at the moral, and at the most, mystical devotional plane. Of that, it was also the case for the called “Imitation of Jesus”, in which, apart from historical facts, Jesus is presented exactly as model to copy and as a pointer of a way. It is therefore to be noted that attributing to Jesus this meaning, obscuring his historical reality and the belief in his magical action of the redemption of humanity, was declared a heresy. Moreover, even in regards to the “Imitation of Christ” and of the utilization of this figure *sub specie interioritatis* it is necessary to keep always in mind the distinction between the mystical-devotional plane and the plane of a metaphysical realization, to which one can also rise up, according to the perspective of “Integral Traditionalism”. Nevertheless the fact remains that in general in Christianity the highest ideal is always, in its foundation, moral and not ontological, of the Saint, of *sanctification*, and not of that *divinization* which sometimes Greek patristic mentioned: it is the idea of “salvation” and not of the “Great Liberation”.

As to the esoteric interpretation, in terms of a “spiritual science”⁴, it can be said to be non-existent in Orthodoxy and that even in the early days; almost exclusively, moral and allegorical meanings were considered. The meaning of the Virgin, the so called “Immaculate Conception”⁵ and the birth of the divine Child⁶, the expectation of the Messiah, the *curious* correspondence for which Bethlehem, the place of the birth of Christ,

that law cannot have value with characteristics of ineluctability, for the divine order, if by it is meant that of the true supernatural.

⁴ [Tr] This is a reference to the Anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner

⁵ Also the date of Christmas can be integrated in a vaster whole with a cosmic background, in that it corresponds approximately to that of the winter solstice, a point of the re-ascend of the light in the yearly cycle, an event which also made from the base to a sacred primordial symbolism in the prehistoric North Atlantic. Outside of Christianity it is known that “pagan” Romanity, in a certain relation with Mithraism, also knew date, as *Natalis Domini = Natalis Solis Invicti*.

⁶ Its literal interpretation, which is an article of faith in common Christianity and in that constitutes the base of the Mariolatry or “Marian cult”, entails the absurdity of the most opaque exotericism. Apart from the accentuation of the sexual theme in relation to the exaltation of physical virginity, one does not see why should resort to an abnormal family in which properly married woman remains a virgin, nor is there indicated in the Gospels any exceptional title of merit and of excellence for which this “Virgin”, Mary, should be chosen, and after this simple instrumentality of having served for the incarnation, she was raised up to a divine figure and to the “Queen of Heaven”, with all attributes that are found in Catholic liturgy. The fact is that in Maria is re-poured a full canon of mythology already existing in the prehistoric Mediterranean (corresponding to the mother with divine child even in ancient Egyptian iconography) in a portrait predominating “gynocratic”.

refers to Bethel, the name given by Jacob to the place where he, asleep under a *rock*, had the famous vision and experience of the stairway to heaven; the “walking on the water” (not unrelated to Saint Christopher who carried the baby Jesus across the river); the changing of the water into wine; the stay in the “desert”; the ascending the “mountain” and the sermon on the “mount”; then, again, being covered in a false regal cloak and then being made naked; being crucified between *two* crosses; the thrust of the lance in the heart; the flowing out of water and *red* blood; the darkening of the “sky” and the opening of the earth; the Hell in which Jesus descended to visit the dead like Aeneas; the fact that no body was ever found in the Sepulcher; and the rising, the resurrection and ascension into “heaven”, after which followed the descent of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) and the gift of tongues; that was the spiritual body and the resurrection of the flesh, the water than satisfies the eternity of thirst, baptism not according to the water but according to “Fire” and “Spirit” and, finally, the “not having broken the bones”, and the “judgment of the living and the dead”; because twelve were the disciples of Jesus, three the Magi (which was their true significance), forty days and nights of the retreat to the “desert” and forty—again—hours laying in the grave, and so on. To give an explanation to all that *sub specie interioritatis* connecting it systematically to a body of esoteric doctrine, is a task that cannot be accomplished as long as one holds steady to the limits of faith, devotion and so much other that is characteristic of simple religious consciousness.

Perhaps a short fine tuning is appropriate for what concerns “miracles”, also because, as we said, for modern spiritualism it is above all the “miraculous” that makes a splash. To admit the reality of miracles, starting from those of Jesus, is not to go too far. We noted that the representatives of the ancient Roman tradition did not draw a reason for scandal and astonishment from the miracles attributed to Christ: in ancient civilizations, some paranormal possibilities were always admitted, even susceptible to a science *sui generis* (magic in the strict sense), for the production of certain “phenomena”; and there is only the “freethinker” of today who makes a big deal about these types of things, as if the little people only draw the reason for faith from the “miracle”. But Catholicism justly does not accommodate that. It distinguishes between miracles and miracles, and does not propose phenomena as the criteria, but the cause that — as we have already brought up about spiritism — can be quite different even for the same phenomenon. Nevertheless, as the criterion for the distinction, Catholicism remains in a weak position. To say that “occult” phenomena are due to diabolical or hidden, but always “natural”, forces, of man or of things while the true miracle is due to “God”, is not something that can practically furnish a secure criterion: among other things, it would be necessary to begin with making objectively precise what limits “nature” has, and not to recall what was said in the Gospels, it is worth saying that the Antichrist will have the capacity to produce “signs” of equal potency to those of the “Son of Man”. To pose, on the other hand, the condition that the phenomena have ethical or conversion goals, means to end up at a rather low level. The only element of a certain consistency is the demand for a meaning, for an illuminating force, that is connected to the phenomenon in an essential way, and, additionally, the relationship to a truly superior personality.⁷

That starts at the criterion proper to the metaphysical point of view, according to which *a phenomena* is truly “supernatural” when it presents simultaneously, as inseparable parts of a whole, three aspects: magical, symbolic and an inner transfiguration. We can explain that with an example. “Walking on the Waters” is an esoteric symbol, not only for Christianity, for a given meaning and a given period of existence. “Above” the waters, equivalent to above the “onrush of forms”, above the mode of being of natures subjected to becoming, composed of a desire that does not distort its life and deprives it of every stability. Now, it is possible to think that in given circumstances the integral realization of the meaning of that symbol on the part of a personality is accompanied by the realization of a magical power, which confers the effective possibility of walking on the water without sinking,

⁷ On the distinction between psychic phenomena and miracles from a Catholic point of view, one can refer to the book of the Jesuit G. Bilchmair, *Okkultismus und Seelsorge*, Innsbruck, 1926, where some correct criticisms of the various forms of modern spiritualism are found.

as if the symbol is transmuted into a fact, which in its turn is symbolic, and that one makes a sign and illuminating testimony of a reality and a law of a higher order. We know that the example chosen corresponds to one of the stories of the Gospels. Others of the same type can be found both in them and in the texts of other traditions.⁸

It is in the capacity of understanding things from a similar point of view that could be raised by whoever wants to discover the latent metaphysical contents in the “sacred history” taught by Catholicism and to extend to the meaning of that which is truly “supernatural” in it and not phenomenalist. These could also learn to read, outside that in the Gospels and in the Bible, even in many dogmas and in many Catholic theological doctrines: it could also mean—as Guenon noted—that much of what was said theologically about the angels is the same metaphysically as the transcendent states of consciousness to which ascetical practises can lead, the awakening and interior rebirth; while the “demons” symbolize forces and states below the human level.

In an examination of Catholicism one should also take account of everything that in it, beyond its doctrinal part, in order to have a sense and an objective meaning, he would refer back to *magic* in a strict sense. Magic is based on the existence of subtle forces of a psychic and vital character, and on the possibility of a technique that can act on them and with them, with the same character and necessity and impersonality and with the same independence from moral talents in the object and the subject, that the technicians of material forces present. Now, such characters are visible in that which Orthodoxy attributes to the rites of sacraments of Catholicism, in which, in truth, nothing is “arbitrary” and “formal”. We are thinking about the rite of baptism, considered capable of inducing a principle of supernatural life in which it undergoes, outside of anyone’s intentions and merits; to the quality established by ordination of the priest, that is not destroyed even when they commit moral turpitudes; finally to the power of absolution, ordinary and *in extremis*, which is that, at its foundation, of dominating and suspending what is called *karma* in the Hindu tradition. These are only some cases, in which Catholicism would remain at a plane of *spiritual objectivity*, higher than the unreality of sentimentality and human morality: exactly on the plane of magic. Without a reference of that type, the defense of Catholicism against anyone, with the profane and rationalistic mentality of the moderns, who attacked the superstitious and even *immoral* side of its sacramental aspect, can only be rather weak.

But it is difficult for a Catholic to be able to assume a similar point of view. Instead, he has to think that everything that is rite and sacrament, even when it had a true “magical” potentiality, had lost it and in Catholicism it remains on the plane of religious facsimile that only formally repeats the structure of the magical and initiatic rites.

Even in this context Catholic doctrine of the so called effects of *ex opere operato* must be examined. Rigorously speaking, this doctrine, if meant righteously, rules the aforesaid objective character of the forces that acts in the rite, which, once the required conditions are set, they act from themselves, they create a necessary effect, independent of the operator (not *ex opera operantis*) almost as in the case of a natural phenomenon. Therefore, as for the exact production of natural phenomena, so also here certain conditions are certainly required that are present. The structures of the rite, in themselves, are ineffective as much as the articulations and mechanisms of a motor, to which electric energy is not provided. In order to act, that is, in order to create certain conscious or infra-conscious psychic effects, the rite is required to be *vitalized*, or that there exists a state of relationship with that supersensible plane, which furnishes simultaneously the knowledge and consciousness of the primordial and non-human symbols and the magical force that gives exactly efficacy to the ritual operations: and, in one aspect of it, in the notion of the “Holy Spirit”, a type is brought back to the origins when it had not yet been theologized, it was only drawn from above. Without that, the ritual and sacramental *corpus* is a simple super-

⁸ See Evola, *The Doctrine of Awakening*, where other examples are indicated, with the distinction, made in the case of Buddhism, between “Aryan” (noble, holy) miracles “non-Aryan”.

structure — and then is as much value to put in the first plane everything that is simple religion, “faith”, and morality as Protestantism did with consistency, setting aside the rest.

The relationship with the metaphysical plane in an irregular and sporadic way can happen through states of exaltation, of “sacred enthusiasm” of the soul, while always an adequate orientation is maintained such as to be able to reserve from the evocations of invisible forces but of a lower character period. In a regular way, and when it concerns a tradition, it is necessary instead who makes a stable and conscious bridge between the visible and invisible, between the natural and the supernatural, between man and the divine. According to the etymology of the word itself, such was the *pontifex* (= maker of bridges), the Pontifex constituted precisely the point of contact which made possible the manifestation of efficacious and real influences from above into the world of men. And the chain of the Pontifexes — which in the higher and most original forms of traditional civilization made all one with chain of representatives of the “divine regality” — guaranteed the continuity and perpetuity of this contact, that is. It constituted the axis of the *tradition* in a literal sense, that is, of the transmission of a “presence” and of vivifying and illuminating sacred force⁹, of which, through participation, could benefit a regularly ordained sacred body, a force without which, as we said, every rite is ineffective and degenerates to a mere ceremony or symbol.

Nominally, the pontificate, an institution that was already existent in ancient Rome, is part of Catholicism, and stands at the center of the Church and at the top of her hierarchy. But we must ask what subsists in it of its primal function and of Tradition on the whole. The prophetic hope of a Joachim of Fiore in the coming of a “angelic pope” having almost the marks of an initiate and inaugurating a new “Reign”, that of the acting, vivifying, and living Holy Spirit, has remained a utopian illusion. And if we want to adapt ourselves to the contingencies of the latest times, in particular the figures of the two most recent pontiffs, John XXIII and Paul VI — with the climate of “aggiornamento” and of modernization, with the increasing aversion toward Catholic “integralism” and toward so-called “residual medievalism”—seem to definitively seal a disastrous balance sheet.

So the conditions, for which we can give a somewhat positive response to the issue we formulated on the principle, that of the susceptibility of Catholicism to furnish what many sought elsewhere and yet so often has pushed them into the confusions and errors of neo-spiritualism, appear to be nonexistent, at least if we consider the large picture. Given what we have said, it is problematic that in spite of everything the Church, the “mystical body of Christ”, is the carrier and administrator of a true supernatural power objectively acting through rites and sacraments, of which it can those benefit who become its members, hoping however to experience beyond the confessional religion and not seeing in the so-called “holiness” the paramount goal.

One can however recognize that Catholicism contains, in spite of everything, traces of a wisdom that can serve as the basis for an “esoteric” dimension of various contents on the part of one or another personality in the area of “integral traditionalism”, valuing then as the rallying cry what one exponent in this current had to say: “The fact that the representatives of the Catholic Church understand so little of their own doctrines must not make it such that we ourselves demonstrate the same incomprehension”. Otherwise, all the impediments and all the limitations appear difficult to remove. Leaving priestly Catholicism out of consideration, we could refer to the ascetic Catholic in regard, above all, to the ancient monastic traditions, to that which concerns, if not an initiation, at least an interior discipline that looks toward an opening to transcendence, an approach to the supernatural. But

⁹ That which in Christianity is the “Holy Spirit”, dwelling in the Church, is the *Shekinah* of the Kabbalah (Kabbalah among other things literally means “transmission”), the *prana* or *brahman* brought from the Brahmin caste, the glory — *havareno* — dressed up again as a “celestial fire” of victory by the Iranian kings, and so on. Given the nature of the present work we have to pass over the nature of the relationships of spirituality and regal traditions with the priestly traditions. On this topic see Evola, *Revolt Against the Modern World*. Considerations of the type cannot be put in light also negative function that Christianity and Catholicism had in the western world, as historical forces.

even here, a difficult work of purification and essentialization would be imposed, given the co-presence of devotional elements and specifically Christian complexes through which perhaps it is difficult to gather up valid tools for interior action without the consciousness also of what other traditions offer.

A Catholicism that is raised up to the level of a truly universal, unanimous, and perennial tradition where faith can be integrated into a metaphysical realization, the symbol integrated into the way to awakening, the rite and sacrament into an act of power, dogma into expressions of an absolute and infallible consciousness because it is beyond human and as such alive in beings unbound from terrestrial chains through an asceticism, and where the pontificate recovers its primal mediating function—such a Catholicism could supplant every “spiritualism”, both present and future.

But observing the reality, is this anything more than a dream?

Scholasticism and the Spirit of Modernity

Louis Rougier (1889-1982) is one of the main figures of French epistemology in the XXth century, and, possibly, the most original and brilliant one. He wrote more than 40 books, whose subjects range from the theory of knowledge to the philosophy of science, from the history of philosophy and religion to political science, from political economy to contemporary history. Yet, his work is still largely unknown to the general public and ignored by the world of scholars. This ostracism can be attributed to his political involvement, namely to the rather important part he had in the foreign policy of the Vichy regime in the 1940's and to his connections, in the 1970's, with the "Nouvelle Droite", whose members could not fail to be interested in his critique, in his "militancy against Christianity" and, most particularly, in his edition, with translation and commentary, of Celsus' "Alethes Logos" ("On The True Doctrine : A Discourse Against the Christians"), the earliest known comprehensive criticism of Christian doctrines. More generally, his support for the corporatist state, his opinion of the origin of egalitarianism in Jewish thought and in the prophets of Israel, and his general critique, somewhat along Pareto's lines, of democracy, could not but incline him to a far right position.

As one of the few contemporary experts on Rougier's work puts it, he can be considered as "a non-conformist in the IIIrd Republic". "Rougier (...) saw it as his duty to fight against the revival of scholastic philosophy in France. As a result of the impulse given by Leo XIII's encyclical Aeterna Patris in 1879, a neo-Thomist movement had emerged in predominantly Catholic countries such as France ; it had gained momentum in the 1920's and 1930's. Rougier published a lengthy critique of neo-Thomism in "La Scolastique et le thomisme", a huge book of more than 800 pages. It was not written as a piece of scholarship ; Rougier wanted to show that the scholastic attempt to reconcile the revealed truths of Christian religion with Greek rationalism was a complete failure. His peculiar approach was to 'axiomatise' scholastic philosophy and to show that its conclusions did not follow from its premises unless one committed one of a number of "paralogisms", i.e., fallacies that are committed in good faith and not with the intention to mislead. Rougier's book was very controversial and he was accused of plagiarism by Dominicans. The leading neo-Thomist figures of the day, Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson, became his bitter enemies (...). Rougier's atheistic and anti-scholastic stance was unusual for a philosopher of the IIIrd Republic, the vast majority of whom were practising Christians".

In the XIth century, through the development of contacts between the various parts of the Western world, a renewing of philosophical thought occurred. The works of Plato, of Aristotle, and of other Greek philosophers, were translated by Arab scholars and attracted the attention of the philosophers of Western Europe. Jewish, Muslim and Christian philosophers interpreted these writings in an effort to reconcile philosophy and religious faith and to give rational foundations to their religious convictions.

Their researches laid the foundation of scholasticism. Scholastic thought endeavoured to demonstrate the truth of existing convictions rather than to discover new facts and principles. Its method was therefore dialectical. Researches on reasoning lead to important developments in logic as well as in theology. Avicenna, the Arab physician of the XIIth century, integrated neo-Platonic and Aristotelian notions into the religious doctrine of Islam, and the Jewish poet Avicebron carried out a similar synthesis between Greek thought and Judaism. Saint Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, reaffirmed the position of Augustine on the relation between faith and reason and associated Platonism with Christian theology. An adept of the Platonic Theory of Ideas, Anselm maintained the distinct existence of "universals" or common attributes of things. He thus established the position of realism in regard to one of the most controversial questions of medieval philosophy. The opposite position, nominalism, was formulated by the scholastic philosopher Roscelin, who held that only individual and concrete objects exist and that universals, forms, and ideas, under which particular things are subsumed, are only mere words or labels, and not intangible substances. He also asserted that the Trinity comprises three distinct persons. The scholastic French theologian Pierre Abélard offered a compromise between realism and nominalism : according to conceptualism, universals exist in particular things as attributes and outside things as concepts in the mind. Abélard believed that revealed religion must be justified by reason. He elaborated an ethics based on personal consciousness which presaged protestant thought. Averroes, the most famous Muslim philosopher of the Middle Ages, tried to overcome the contradictions between Aristotelian philosophy and revealed religion by distinguishing two distinct systems of truth : a corpus of scientific truths, built on reason, and a corpus of religious truths, built on revelation, while asserting that reason prevails over religion. The rabbi Maimonides, following in Averroes footsteps, united Aristotelian science with religion, while rejecting the idea that two incompatible conceptual systems could be equally true. Bonaventure, the philosopher of the XIIIth century, for his part, combined Platonic and Aristotelian principles, introducing the concept of substantial form or immaterial substance to explain the immortality of the soul. The concepts of Bonaventure bordered on pantheistic mysticism and regarded ecstatic union with god as the goal of philosophy.

However, the most eminent intellectual figure of the Medieval epoch was the Dominican monk Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas integrated Aristotelian science and Augustinian theology into a vast system of thought which was to become the official philosophy of the Catholic Church. He asserted, as against the Averroists, that the truths of faith and the truths of reason cannot contradict each other, since they apply to different domains. It is by looking into observable facts that the sciences and philosophy discover truths, whereas the articles of revealed religion, such as the Trinity, the creation of the world, and the other articles of Christian dogma, are beyond the capacity of human reason, although they are not contrary to reason, and they must be accepted by faith.

The major critics of Thomist philosophy were Duns Scotus and William of Occam – whose pre-idealist positions were often praised by Julius Evola. Duns Scotus, who formulated a subtle and highly technical system of logic and metaphysics, rejected the attempt of Thomas Aquinas to reconcile rational

philosophy and revealed religion. Modifying the doctrine of the “double truth” of Averroes, he argued that all religious beliefs are a question of faith except for belief in the existence of God, which he considered to be logically demonstrable. As against the position of Thomas Aquinas, according to which God acts in accordance with his rational nature, Duns Scotus stated that divine will prevails over divine intellect and creates the laws of nature and morality rather than follows them, and thus he differentiated his view from Thomas Aquinas’ conception of free will. As far as the question of the universals is concerned, Duns Scotus developed a new compromise between realism and nominalism, considering that the distinction between individual objects and the forms which these objects accomplish is a logical rather than a real one.

This excursus through the main stages of development of scholasticism and the critiques raised against Thomism, necessary in order for the reader who is not familiar with this philosophical tradition to understand the dense and pointed considerations developed by Evola in “Scholasticism and the Spirit of Modernity”, will now have given him an idea of the kind of criticisms which Evola wished to raise against scholasticism – criticisms which were to be taken up again in his “Teoria dell’Individuo assoluto”, written in 1924 and published in 1927, and his “Fenomenologia dell’Individuo assoluto”, written also in 1924 and published in 1930. It may be noted that, just as, with the theory of ‘absolute idealism’ that he was building at the time, he went beyond classical transcendental idealism, so also he went beyond the critique launched by Occamism and Scotism, as well as beyond that raised by Newtonianism and Empiricism, against the entire scholastic philosophy, based as it was on formal methods of teaching, knowledge from books, dialectics and words. In the course of this development, his thought intersected with that of Louis Rougier in “La Scolastique et le thomisme” (Gauthier-Villars, Paris, 1925). Finally it is not without importance to add that they both show a few flaws in their account of the reading by the scholastics of Aristotle’s work.

“Scolastica in fronte dello spirito moderno” (“Scholasticism and the Spirit of Modernity”) appeared in 1926 in *Bilychnis*, a review of religious studies founded in 1912 by the faculty of the Baptist Theological School of Rome. The nine essays (including this one) which were written for the journal by Julius Evola between 1925 to 1931 were all republished by Edizioni di Ar in 1970 in a collected edition entitled “I Saggi di Bilychnis” (reprinted 1987).

At times of crisis – when, as the spirit strives towards new and more living forms, the usual supports seem to disappear and general chaos reappears in the worlds of culture and values -, there are always people who are overcome by weariness and spinelessness so that, induced to run away by the fear of

'no longer touching the bottom', they start to search in the past for the life and the certainty which they have lost, and which in reality they could only recover by going further. This is the meaning of the so-called returns which are nowadays so fashionable and, more particularly, of the return to scholasticism.

Seen from outside, scholastics really appears as a grandiose monument, as a whole, as something complete and exhaustive. It would seem that the need for the spiritual and the supra-mundane, and the requirement for a rationally justified system of human knowledge, celebrate in it a harmonious union. This is why there is nothing more natural than the suggestion it exerts on weary and distracted spirits in our own time, a time which is precisely characterised, on one hand, by nausea for a philosophy which has now weakened into a miasma of abstractions and conceptual rhetoric, foreign to the living reality of the individual ; and, on the other hand, by a vain effort to attain a generic, vague, formless spirituality, which is unable to create for itself a body, or to firmly account for itself in the face of the challenges of knowledge and of action.

However, this fascination for scholasticism is just a mirage : only the rhetoric of insufficiency fuels and vitalises it, only this rhetoric makes people mistake the eternity in actuality of a 'perennis philosophia' for what is, in reality, only the immobility peculiar to lifeless things and exhausted processes.

It has been some time since this author has attempted to examine scholasticism thoroughly, to place himself decidedly within the system, to dissect its mechanism, to authenticate its elements and its connections in order to reach an impartial verdict on this moment of the history of the spirit, which some people propose to protract. This we can do, either by means of compromises and myths which we may feel still have, to some extent, a *raison d'être*, or, more essentially, we can treat the question as a contribution to the higher task of assessing the extent to which a transcendental religion (a religion, that is, which posits between man and God an essential, irreducible difference) can find any foundation outside the irrational act of merely passive faith. In fact, since we have in Catholicism the typical form of such a religion, the examination of scholasticism, which precisely sets itself to actualise the data of Catholic faith in a speculative system, can be considered, in this respect, as decisive. Our solution, or lack of a solution, to the scholastic problem amounts, more or less, to a verdict on the question of the rationality or the irrationality of transcendental religion in general.

From this point of view, it seems that the analysis of scholasticism which we wish to undertake has already been performed. The recently published work of Rougier carries out our design : it is a masterly volume, the fruit of eleven years of work, in which, with mathematical lucidity, great richness of information and a penetrating criticism, the birth, the essence and the significance of scholasticism are truly exposed according to an objective but, at the same time, inflexible and severe examination.

By expounding the general lines of this critique of his, we can say that we expound our own ideas. Where we will make several reservations is where Rougier passes from the critical to the positive plane, that is, where he indicates what, for him, would be of value, as against what he regards as the absolute valuelessness of scholasticism. Rougier, a disciple of Poincaré, is radically an anti-metaphysician. The critical empiricism of mathematical philosophy – limited to outer and analytical knowledge, opposed to all normativity, to all questions of meaning, to all problems of power and freedom – is for him the ultimate instance. Here we are not at all with him but, sticking firmly to the idea that the task of the individual is very different from the passive watching and exact recording of the contingencies of things and particular beings, we are instead decidedly against him. Thus the common road will concern the purely critical plane, after which we will part company with him in order to indicate what is, in our view, the positive direction, beyond the destroyed idol.

I. The Necessity of Scholasticism

The scholastic problem, in so far as it connects with that of the agreement between faith and reason, is a necessary problem. The inner and vague faith of the simpliciores, who think like Tertullian that the believer who attempts to justify his own faith by reason ceases thereby to be a believer, is an abstraction which could in no way amount to a faith in itself, and, on the other hand, could not be connected to any given religion in preference to any other.

Therefore, as determined within a specific religion, faith is faith only insofar as it is also philosophy : dogmatic definitions must be interpreted, otherwise they cannot be referred to a faith, that is, to an adhesion of the spirit to intelligible ideas, but rather to a psittacism, that is, to a servility to words which function as mere sounds. Since language itself presupposes, in any case, a philosophy of a rudimentary sort, when one says that one sticks to the pure letter of the dogma prior to any theology, one only prefers an inferior philosophy to a higher or more conscious one. So it is worth while to pose the problem frankly, that is, to look for a point which actualises the spirit of the faith in the body of a rationally founded system.

Therefore, after its first moment of mystical enthusiasm and messianic orgasm, we see Christian faith looking for compromises and thus trying to reconcile itself to the whole existing body of wisdom and to reduce the latter to itself. In the first place, we had the theory of plagiarism : that is, the idea that the various profane philosophies only had value to the extent that they had consciously or unconsciously taken elements from the Scriptures. In the second place, we had the theory of the subjective divine illumination : the ability to recognise the truth is rendered possible in man by a single immanent divine

principle, which has been revealed partially and inadequately in the various profane philosophies, but in Christianity is revealed in its entirety. This theory basically is only a pretext for glossing over the antithesis with the various profane philosophies, drawing from them selected elements, and thus constructing a Christian theology. Therefore, it has as a logical consequence the theory of Justin, that profane reason is right insofar as it is Christianity, and insofar as it is not Christianity is not right – a theory which, if we examine it closely, means that it is not rational being which is the criterion according to which the divinity of the Christian revelation is to be acknowledged, but the pure fact of being revealed by Christ is instead the criterion according to which what can be said to be rational is to be judged.

Scholasticism – specifically, Thomism – wanted to mitigate this position, which did not solve the problem of reconciliation for the simple reason that it suppressed one of the terms to be reconciled, namely reason. Conversely, the opposite position of rationalism, expressed from the beginning by Abelard, did not reconcile the terms either : “Nec quia Deus id dixerat, creditur, sed quia sic esse convincitur recipitur”, since, here it was revelation as a distinct force which came to lose all its value : “Fides non habet meritum, cui humana ratio praebet experimentum”). Scholasticism wanted to combine faith and reason taken precisely as distinct and autonomous terms – and not by violence, but by inner concordance -, showing that, from reason, one can manage to understand that what is admitted according to faith ; and that, even if reason was not able to produce by its own means certain dogmatic points, it can always be shown that they are not irrational, but suprarational, and, legitimately, rationalisable.

We will show, with Rougier, that this is merely the pious hope of Thomism, since, in fact, Thomism in the service of faith desecrates reason, and, when it does not do this, it is absolutely powerless to acquit its task.

II. Presuppositions of Thomism

Once faith and reason were taken as distinct terms, two further problems were added to the problem of their reconciliation, namely, to define these terms themselves, to say what it is that is meant by ‘faith’ and what it is that is meant by ‘reason’. However, scholasticism, rather than solving these initial problems, supposes them to be already solved. It is thus based on a double dogmatism :

(a) It does not even suspect the existence of the Biblical problem, that is, the problem of the birth, nature and capacity of the scriptural data ; it worries even less about analysing the historical genesis of

the dogma on which it is based and asking itself to what extent the conciliar decisions are founded on the pure data of the Scriptures and to what extent they simply represent particular interpretations taken among many other possible ones.

(b) It does not face the critical problem, that is, the problem of the value, nature, and capacity of the rational principles on which it is based, by deducing those truths which are considered to be demonstrated according to logical necessity ; instead, it presupposes the existence of a natural reason, common to every man, whose content is purely and simply identified with the doctrinal system peculiar to Aristotelianism.

Thus, for scholastics, the problem is reduced to that of conciliating Aristotle with the corpus of dogma defined by the Council of Trent. Now, Rougier shows that, in these conditions, the two terms are not open to reconciliation : reconciliation only seems to succeed, insofar as, consciously or unconsciously, an actual counterfeiting of Aristotelianism takes place, consisting in the conversion of the logical distinction between essence and existence into a real distinction.

The main points of Catholic doctrine in fact are :

(a) The contingency of the world and of beings, which God creates out of nothing (non ex se, sed ex nihilo) ;

(b) The dogma of the trinity ;

(c) The dogma of divine incarnation (and, in connection with this, the dogma of the transubstantiation of the Eucharistic species) ;

(d) The personal survival of souls ;

(e) The existence of disincarnate intelligences distinct from God (angels).

These are not positions one could reach on the basis of the data of Aristotelianism alone. In fact :

(a) The Aristotelian demonstration leads to The One who is purely and simply himself according to a perfect, solitary act detached from everything, unaware of all love and providence for particular beings, which fall outside of his immaterial self-revelation – not to the providential God creator of the Christians. As for the world, for Aristotle, it is eternal and necessary (necessitated by final causes if not by mechanical ones) rather than innovated and contingent, as the dogma would assert ;

(b) & (c) By admitting only a purely formal distinction between essence and existence, and between substance and accidents, Aristotle, as will be shown in more detail soon, prevents whoever follows him from grounding intelligibly the dogmas of the trinity, the incarnation and the Eucharist ;

(d) For Aristotle, the person is the particular individual who is derived from a particular individual organism, of which he is the act. To admit therefore the survival of the person after the dissolution of the corporeal organism is a contradiction in terms. The principle of individuation is matter : separated from matter, intelligences lose any personal character and are submerged in the unity of universal intellect – this, as seen by Averroes, is the only logical consequence which can be drawn from Aristotelianism, which, however, contradicts Christian doctrine ;

(e) The angels and the disincarnate souls, according to the dogma, are pure spirits, that is, in Aristotelian terms, “pure forms”. Now, in Aristotle, form (= actuality) is the principle of existence : *format dat esse*. Pure forms would therefore mean : beings which are by and for themselves, and, thus, eternal, necessary beings, such that nothing could give or take away their existence : pure acts, gods. This goes against the dogma, which does not call the subsisting forms gods, but instead understands them as contingent beings, subordinate to divine omnipotence.

Pure Aristotelianism and revelation are therefore in striking contrast to one another. The means by which this contrast is magically resolved into a harmonious unity is the ‘reification’ of the logical distinction between essence and existence.

III. The real distinction between essence and existence

Aristotle had said : the definition of an entity never implies its existence. I can know perfectly well what man or the phoenix is, and yet not know whether or not there are really any such existents in nature. But this, for Aristotle, was a purely logical distinction, living in the mind (idealiter) and not in reality (objective), since his doctrine held, as against the Platonic one, that essence (= that which is given by the definition) and existence (the concrete being to which the definition is referred) realiter, in the indissociable unity of the synolon, are one and the same thing. Thus, for him, to speak about essence and existence as two distinct truths could have no meaning. Essence, as such, is not a reality, but an empty, abstract possibility ; let it be actualised, and it would become an existent essence, and only then, from the purely ideal point of view, could its being de facto (to on = that = Dasein) be distinguished from what it is (ti estin = what =Wesen).

Scholasticism neglects this fundamental point of Peripateticism, and transforms the distinction from ideal and logical to real and ontological. The concept of reality then becomes a genus of which essence and existence are two species. There is an essential reality and an existential reality, which are metaphysically distinct and, therefore, are able to enter in composition just as two physical realities can.

At this point we may note that at the root of this mental attitude – leaving aside the atheoretical movement of the apologetic – there is the prejudice of a naive realism, that is, a tendency to take concepts for reality and to think of all the distinctions created in the mind from the point of view, not so much of discursive knowledge as of mere language, as really existing in things. Such a prejudice leads, as we shall see, to a sea of antinomies and insoluble problems. But, without it, it is impossible to account logically for the data of the dogma. Those who – like Averroes, Duns Scotus, Suarez, and Ockam – rejected and refused to think of a real distinction between essence and existence are powerless against the scholastic problem.

IV. Thomist pseudo-justification of dogma

(a) Contingency of the world. – Point of departure : in the order of nature, the existence of a being is not included in its definition or essence, but it is instead contingent to it, since I can know what a thing is, and yet not know whether it exists. However, scholastic dogma moves then, paralogistically, from mere logical implication to real causation : a real principle is made of essence, a ‘non being caused by’ is made of the ‘non being implicit in’, and the natural being is therefore defined as something which is not the cause of its own existence, precisely because its definition does not imply its existence. If natural beings exist, this means therefore that ‘another’ gives them existence, and since one cannot go back ad infinitum (this is the Aristotelian argument known as ananké stênai, which is far from incontestable and for the Stagirite, anyway, had a purely logical use), this means that there exists a being in which essence

and existence are one and the same thing, i.e., one that is pure, active power to exist (*quod est non per se, est ab alio, quod est per se*). Such is God, who says explicitly in the Scriptures : “I am the one who is”, that is, the one who has existence as such as essence or definition.

The argument is completed a priori with the so-called ontological proof : God ,as the most perfect being, cannot be thought of as not existing, since existence, being a perfection, is ex hypothesi already comprised in the concept of God. Cause of himself, absolute and necessary existence, God gives existence to the natural beings, which are passive possibilities (= essences), incapable of bringing themselves into the active state (or existence if one wants to put this way). But let us beware : essence, being ex hypothesi distinct from existence, not merely as its abstract logical possibility, but rather as its real principle, does not vanish, but subsists beneath the divine command which makes it actual ; hence the existent owes its existence to God, but its essence, qua essence, is distinct from God. With this, the stumbling block of pantheism is, apparently, overcome.

As for the essence, in itself it must be understood as a limiting principle, whose function is to receive the indeterminate command to exist and to circumscribe it within the limits appropriate to the genus and species of the particular individual. This concept of essence is deduced from the following *reductio ad absurdum* of S. Bonaventure. The concept of limitation and diversity of kind is not comprised within the concept of existence per se. However, since in fact a diversified universe does exist, it is necessary to admit, as its cause, a principle which is distinct from pure existence or Divinity, and which is precisely the finite quality of the essence, derived from its creation ex nihilo. The main points of the dogma are therefore conquered : the real distinction between creature and creator ; the contingency of the former – and, therefore, of the world ; and the logical necessity and the ‘aseity’ of the latter, shown both a priori and a posteriori.

This construction can be taken apart as follows. Real distinction only exists between two things which possess reality independently of each other. Now, since, ex hypothesi, only the existent is the real, to speak of a real essence before or outside of the command which renders it an object in the world of existence is a contradiction in terms. Thomism, using the Aristotelian principle of analogy (i.e. : that the same concept can be used in an analogical manner to designate various things) will say that the reality of essence is the sui generis reality inherent to that which is in potentia, as distinct from actual reality in the literal sense. But, if so, it is meaningless to assert that the essence remains passive and distinct beneath the divine command which makes of it an actual existent, since one and the same thing cannot be in potentia and in actu at the same time and in the same respect, and one falls therefore into a pantheism, since it will follow that the realities of the essences in potentia and the existents in actu would be one, without residual (1). It can be added that, besides, one enters into pantheism by two other ways:

(i) By analysing the principle of analogy. In fact, unless there is a degree of univocality between the things analogated, we have not analogous but merely homonymous notions. Analogy is equality in a certain respect. In respect of this common aspect, we are brought back to a principle of equality. It follows that it is worthless, in the service of Catholic theism, to distinguish the essential reality of the creatures from their existential reality: these two realities can only be such with regard to a deeper principle of reality, in respect of which they will be identical.

This can be explained by means of an examination of the argument of S. Bonaventure. Assuming that the idea of the absolute excludes that of any determination (we hold that true absoluteness is not indeterminacy, but rather the infinite, unconditioned power to determine oneself, to “be absolutely what one wants”) ; given this, when one refers to the principle, as opposed to the essences, in order to explain the limited and differentiated existences which comprise the world, one will certainly not want to posit, in a Manichaean manner, a second God against God : this principle of essential limitation will have to be explained by a divine will which has created it and which wants it. This means : in a determinate being it is God himself who wants to take the determinate form of this being (2). It is not worth while here to appeal to *malum metaphysicum* : that is, to the thought that the concept of creature implicitly contains, legitimately or a priori, that of limitation, that God, as Malebranche says, does not create gods ; since it may be asked whether the Law of Identity is something against which God Himself can do nothing, in which case the strange conclusion would be that, in order to explain the impotence of the creature, one is forced to make of God an impotent being.

It only remains to indicate the dangers of misunderstanding which are due to mere paralogsms.

The idea of God as most perfect being may imply the idea of an existing being, but it does not imply that this being exists in fact, since the idea of existence is one thing, and effective existence is another.

(ii) By reasoning within the analogy itself : from the fact that the definition of man does not imply his existence, it follows that the concept of man is that of a being which does not exist by himself, but not at all that this being really exists and that in order to explain him one must go back to a principle from which his existence comes and from the point of view of which, a priori, he is contingent – as in the ‘a posteriori’ proof of God.

(b) Dogma of trinity. – how do we account for the presence of three really distinct persons, defined by relationships of origin (generation for the Father, filiation for the Son, and spiration for the Spirit) within the supposed absolute simplicity in divine nature? The difficulty is the following : either the distinction of the persons is real, and then one falls into the tritheistic heresy (that is: realiter we would have three gods rather than one abstract divinity); or it is not real, by saying which one falls in the modalistic and Sabellian heresy (that is: the three persons would only be modes or accidental aspects of one and the same God). Thomism resolves the problem by means of positing a real distinction between ‘esse ad’ and ‘esse in’, which is closely connected to that between essence and existence. The reasoning is as follows : the former is what the persons are for the various relations (‘esse ad’, analogous to essence), the latter is what they are in substance (‘esse in’, analogous to existence). According to ‘esse ad’, there are really in God three persons (relation of the Father to the Son, etc.); according to ‘esse in’, that is, with respect to the substantial nature of these, they are one and the same thing. Thus God is, at the same time, one and trine.

Against this reasoning one may argue that, for the purpose in hand, it forgets the previously admitted principle of the identity of essence and existence in God, which here transmute into that of ‘esse ad’ and of ‘esse in’. Quite simply, a relation implies distinct terms, to which it is applied : it is relationship between one thing and another thing. Consequently, either these terms are identical – only the relation of identity will subsist and any other will be excluded – and then it will be necessary to renounce any understanding of the differences between the three divine persons as essential and we pass to the modalistic heresy ; or they are different, and then there are three substances which are distinct according to their essential characters, and, in this way, we fall into tritheism. Deprived of the notion of the real distinction between essence and existence, the trinitarian dogma is ruined by the explanation of the latent contradiction in this distinction itself.

(c) Dogma of incarnation. – Here we meet the opposite difficulty to that found in the trinitarian dogma. There, it concerned the conceivability of there being three persons in one single nature, and here, instead, it concerns that of how in a single person (Christ), there can two natures, the divine and the human. On the presupposition of the identity of essence and existence, this dogma cannot be justified: one is forced either to deduce from the presence of the two natures or essences in Christ that of two distinct persons (Nestorian heresy), or, holding tight to the unity of natures, to deny as mere appearance the duplicity of the persons (Eustachian heresy). If, instead, one holds that essence (or nature) and existence (or person) are distinct in real terms, things change, and one can argue that that human existence which, in a natural manner, would be assigned to the being by a rational nature, could be taken away supernaturally, and substituted for by the existence peculiar to a supra-eminent person (the Logos).

This argument requires the rather absurd expedient of splitting in two parts the unity of the individual. In fact, existence, or form, according to Aristotle, is the act of the body. But if the dogma is true, it is necessary to admit an act related to the life of Christ as human nature which would be distinct from the act of its divine existence. This means breaking the unity of the concrete being : the life of such a being would be, and, at the same time, would not be, its own. Its actuality would not be one, but co-extensively double, which is contradictory.

The real distinction between essence and existence, understood as that between substance and accidents, in an analogous manner provides the basis for the Eucharistic dogma : if substance exists in itself, as distinct from its accidents, the mystery of transubstantiation of the species does not offer any difficulty. If however it is admitted – as, from the critical point of view, it cannot but be admitted – that a substance separated from the accidents in which it asserts itself is a flat, unreal abstraction, then this appearance of intelligibility entirely vanishes.

(d) & (e) Dogma of the subsisting pure forms. – the argument and the difficulty are similar to those we have found in the dogma of incarnation. We are forced to transcend the immanent concept of form and existence, understood as the act from which a being is individually this given being, and to duplicate it with a new distinction. In fact, it has already been said that, according to Aristotelianism, a discarnate spirit cannot retain the principle of personality, nor have the character of a contingent and dependent thing, since it is only in relation to matter that individuation and contingency have any signification. The discarnate spirit would be instead a pure act, a God – while the dogmatic data asserts the contrary. We then have this alternative : either to maintain the hylemorphism (the inherence to a certain vehicle composed of matter, even if ‘subtle’) of the angels and the discarnate spirits, and thus to put ourselves in contradiction with the letter of the Scriptures ; or we may reaffirm, by using the concept of form, a principle of distinction and contingency, in grinding contrast to the Aristotelian principle of the simplicity and of the being in themselves of the pure forms. This latter view is that of Thomism : it does not content itself with having weakened into composites the concrete unities of natural beings, but it weakens into composites the subsisting pure forms themselves, establishing a new and even more conflict-ridden distinction than that between essence and existence, one completely unknown to Aristotle : the distinction between form and existence. Even where matter has vanished – they claim – existence is not *causa sui*, but created by God contingently, through form; and since a *sui generis* principle of individuation (called ‘*ecceity*’ by Duns Scotus) is thus associated with form (quite apart from, and in the absence of, matter), the method by which angels and discarnate spirits, while being pure spirits, would still keep their individuality, and not be gods but created beings, is explained.

In this distinction between form and existence the *aporia* indicated in a) and c) are exasperated. In fact, here, existence cannot be a ‘*potentia*’ which form would actualise, because of the premise that ‘*potentia*’ is innate in matter, whereas here it is a question of immaterial beings : thus there remains

only the empty logical possibility that the factual existence of the immaterial spirit is identical to the form which actualises it.

In addition to these specific difficulties met by the real distinction in its various forms, there are generic ones, connected with its realistic presupposition. To imagine that, in reality, what is only distinct in the abstract intellect, and in language, is distinct also in things, is to condemn oneself to a world of antinomies and insoluble problems. If essence and substance are real, on one hand, and existence and accidents are real, on the other hand, how is one to conceive that union in act of theirs in which the concrete individual consists? What sense and what gnoseological foundation has an essence in itself, an essence which is neither the essence of this nor the essence of that particular existing being? If the 'universals' are essences, how can we get from them to the variety of the individuals?

There is more : once the concepts are reified in distinct substances, the possibility of knowledge and transitive actions becomes inconceivable, as well as that of synthetic judgments; the logical consequence of such a presupposition is either Parmenidean 'being', intransigently incommunicable with everything which is not it, or the logical atomism of Antistene and Stilpone which, as is well-known, contested the legitimacy of connecting any attribute to any subject, for instance by saying : "man is white", for this reason : either whiteness is comprised in the idea of man, and then one need only say : "man is man"; or it is not, in which case one cannot proceed from one term to the other.

These are only a few examples, from among many other possible ones, of the absurdities and difficulties to which the realistic presupposition leads. Despite having been overcome by Aristotle by means of the doctrines of 'res in potentia' and 'res in actu', of the 'transcendentals', and of the immanence of the genera, it reappears, via the precarious compromises and verbal games of which Rougier has collected so many, in scholasticism, since, here, the point of concrete application vanishes and one is submerged, in the pursuit of one's faith, in an ocean of reified logical abstractions.

V. The dilemma and the failure of scholasticism

With this we have reached the central point of our enquiry. We need to ask why, in spite of the patent contradictions that it implies, Thomism has held on tight to the principle of the real distinction between essence and existence, and why Catholicism, in its turn, has held on tight to Thomism, to the point of acknowledging it almost as the official philosophy of orthodoxy? The answer is : because it is only by means of the acknowledgement of this principle that any rational justification of dogma is possible.

Here, then, is the dilemma of scholasticism : either to provide revelation with a rational basis, but at the cost of an antinomy and of an initial irrationality which taints the whole value of the proposed explanation, and in addition does violence to the spirit of Aristotelianism ; or to confine itself, impotent, to the problem of reconciling faith and reason. It would have been easy for anti-Thomists to reject, in agreement with both logic and Aristotle, the Thomist principle, were it not that by doing so, they would have arrived either at heresy, or at a confession of theological agnosticism ; it would have been easy for Thomists to pride themselves on having rationalised the dogma, and easy for them to expose the dormant heresy of their adversaries, but they are powerless to found their own principles intelligibly.

This means that scholasticism completely failed to achieve its purpose.

That the rejection of the principle of real distinction necessitates either a dormant heresy or an open divorce between faith and reason, can be shown from the doctrines of the main anti-Thomists. Duns Scotus, who admits in a coherent manner that there is no real distinction between things existing in actu and things existing in a physically distinct manner, i. e., that being and being in actu are one and the same thing, and that potential existence, or essential existence if one wants, is not existence at all but a mere logical abstraction, wavers terribly, when it comes to the doctrine of the Trinity, between tritheism and modalism, and grants a distinct existence to the human nature of the Incarnate Christ, a view verging on Nestorianism ; in general, he tends to see in dogmas mere practical maxims of behaviour, in a way that presages pragmatism. Ockham, who starts from the idea that only individual beings are real and that, therefore, 'universals' are nothing but abstractions that these arouse in the mind, and that substance is inseparable from its accidents, is forced to the expedient of the 'double truth' implied by a divine voluntarism : philosophy shows us the natural ways of the economy of the world, but theology, the supernatural and impenetrable ones which it pleased the omnipotence of God to choose, so that nothing can be inferred from the opposition between the principles of faith and those of reason, neither against faith, nor against reason – a view which leads to the dissolution of the scholastic problem in a mere fideism. Since Suarez acknowledged an ideal and modal, rather than a real, distinction between essence and existence (essence, for him, is the mere conceptual aspect of the possibility in the divine mind of this essence, which, realiter, actualised, is nothing but existence) he is also led, when it comes to the Incarnation, to waver between the Nestorian heresy and the Eustachian one, and, in regard to the Trinity, to deny that the principle of non-contradiction can be applied to God as it is to the creatures, and to treat it as if it were a mere contingent law of nature – which amounts to a declared profession of theological agnosticism, with mere faith as only way out.

Thus the inescapability of the dilemma of Catholicism, and of any transcendental religion, is confirmed : either it must renounce, or rationalise, faith, or it must do violence to reason.

VI. Criteriological evolution

All this holds true whether or not we accept the presuppositions of scholasticism, which are, that the natural philosophy of the human spirit is Aristotelianism, and that revelation coincides exactly with the dogmas established by the Council of Trent.

It is in the question of the revision of these presuppositions that we will have to part company with Rougier, as our paths diverge from the route which we have travelled together so far. Rougier starts this parting of the ways by saying that, even if one had managed to bring together Aristotle and the Scriptures, this would not mean that one would have established the agreement between reason and faith, but, rather, that this achievement itself would constitute one more presumption against the revealed dogma, since peripateticism is disavowed by science and philosophy.

We retort that Aristotelianism cannot be disavowed by science for the simple reason that what is living in it is a metaphysics, so that it has nothing to do with science – even those elements which seem completely fallen (i.e. physics and astronomy) are not positive sciences but rational systematisations of a spiritual science, resonant with the Mysteries, which, although little known, is nonetheless real. As for philosophy as such (i.e., what is not a mere reflection on scientific method), its 'progress' brings so little discredit on Aristotle that, nowadays, albeit with a very different consciousness, philosophy seems to be returning to him. So Hegel, Ravaisson, Boutroux, Hamelin teach – we shall pursue this below.

We agree even less with Rougier when he limits the noetic capacity of the 'I' to the mere empirical intellect, when he mixes the concept of reason with the "sum of prejudices and opinions universally substantiated owing to the state of [positive] knowledge in a given epoch, in a people of a given culture". It would be tempting to retort in this way : if this is true, your very concept that reason is the product of the epoch, of prejudices, etc., is itself nothing but a contingent product of the epoch, of prejudices, etc., so that, in brief, you should be mute as a plant, even as a stone, without pretending to give any value to this idea, which is a mere contingency reassumed in an unforeseeable event. As for us, we think that, in man, there is the capacity for a metaphysical understanding of things, a power not of intellection of phenomena, but of organic and unitary comprehension of a system of significations and cosmic values. Therefore, if what was hidden behind the return to scholasticism was a reaction against the careless pretensions of empiricists and scientists, and a sincere need to rise to a supra-mundane comprehension of the mundane, to make everything which is wasted in exteriority and in particularity transparent, living and one in the spirit, we would definitively be for this return, while warning

nevertheless that the turning of this need towards medieval scholasticism rather than towards a further development of modern metaphysics is on the wrong track or is afraid of itself.

As for the significance of the dogmatic data, we think that Rougier excuses himself a bit thoughtlessly. Here, we cannot examine this question thoroughly. That dogmas contain much more than can be derived from the Scriptures, and that to speak of a literal fall from the sky of these dogmas has not much sense, is agreed. However, even when the Jewish and Christian texts are restored to their natural connection with the body of myths common to the former or contemporary literatures of the Euro-Asiatic, Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, Canaanite, etc., trunk, in which certain historical facts were cloaked, and when, thus, the human origin of these texts is shown, with this not much has been said on what matters. By humanising the divine, one only divinises the human, so that the position is not demolished, but, on the contrary, confirmed, as deriving from a deeper, more interior, root. Bearing this in mind, it will be more useful to say a few words about the problem of emancipation from dogmatic authority, as a transition to the last point of the current examination.

With the Renaissance there is the first step towards such an emancipation : the traditional interpretation of the Scriptures by which the Roman Church purported to justify its dogmatism is rejected and one refers, as a firmer ground, to the writings of the Church Fathers and to the texts themselves, conscious of the arbitrary elements added to them by the subsequent conciliar definitions. This is already an overcoming of the criterion of authority, a principle of emancipation. This material is however not as simple and clearly defined as it first seemed. Abélard, in the "Sic et non", had already indicated 250 points in which the original texts are conflicting and contradictory with respect to the fundamental points of dogma, and even before him Celsus and Porphyry had done so, hence the expedient of the first apologists, which consisted in distinguishing in the Scriptures four meanings : the literal, the allegorical, the tropological, and the moral. In these conditions, it was necessary to substitute a new criterion for the disappeared one of authority, in order to determine a meaning among the possible ones allowed by the equivocal nature of the texts.

Thus the problem of Reform is solved by means of the principle of divine subjective illumination. But, once this step is made, another is necessary : that of theological rationalism. As a matter of fact, if the word of God within us is sufficient on its own to authenticate the inspiration of the Scriptures, this direct word of God in us has a higher authority, when it comes to faith, than the word of God indirectly gathered by the Scriptures, in which there can always be confusion and error. In this view the idea is implicit that, in the Scriptures, one can consider as inspired only what, interiorly, according to reason, one can acknowledge as such : that is, that rationality is the criterion of revelation and not vice versa. Here we arrive at Spinoza : religion is nothing but a transcription in symbols for the masses, which could not understand it otherwise, of philosophical truths which the gifted ones know by demonstration (3). I

will not judge any given element as rational and true because I am told that it is revealed by God, but from its being intrinsically rational and true I will judge if it really proceeds from divine revelation.

This is the point at which subjective reason acquires complete autonomy and, when the leashes of its puerility are thrown away, proceeds by itself : its further development is no longer critique and extrinsic research into the texts and the dogmas, but rather, the auto-critique of reason, the effort of reason to become the producer of a system in which the object and its science, being identical, constitute according to the Aristotelian principle a system of absolute knowledge, a complete reconciliation of the 'I' with itself in the context of the inner world. Thus, here arise the problem of extrinsic certainty (Descartes), the gnoseological problem, the transcendental problem or the problem of the "conditions of experience" (German Romanticism), and, finally, the problem of power and of the absolute individual in contemporary thought ; thus we approach the constitution of an immanentist neo-Aristotelianism. A continuity, a unique conatus directs this whole development.

It can be noted in passing that this point confirms a priori the absurdity of the scholastic problem, which the dilemma between orthodox incoherence and heretical coherence shows a posteriori. In fact, either one admits that the data of faith cannot on their own produce rational assent, and that such assent, if it occurs, is not to faith, but to its own rationality ; or one denies this presupposition, and then faith remains an irreducible principle, which cannot be called suprarational, but either anti-rational or hetero-rational. This is an insurmountable dilemma for the simple reason that faith (or will) and reason are one and the same thing only at the level of a creative power, and, thus, as man becomes more capable of thinking of a solution which is really adequate, he ceases to expatiate and construct syllogisms, and instead makes himself capable of communication at the level of such a power.

VII. Neo-Aristotelianism – the problem of essence and existence in modern philosophy.

Rougier would certainly be highly surprised if we told him that the difference between the scholastic attitude and the empirical-scientific one which he supports, is minimal from a higher point of view, in the sense that both agree on a passive concept of the human spirit. For both, reason is not a self-sufficient principle and a power, but rather an instrument subordinate to a 'given' which is rigidly that which it is, according to a brute alterity. For the former, this 'given' is the Catholic corpus of dogma, which it seeks to rationalise, thus making reason an 'ancilla theologiae' ; for the latter, the 'given' is physical nature, which it seeks to comprehend according to the supposedly incontrovertible necessity of mechanical and a-spiritual laws which govern its dead exteriority, thus making reason an 'ancilla rerum naturae'.

Now, in the aforementioned question of the internalisation and the immanentisation of the criterion of certainty, there was entailed the overcoming of this attitude (the philosophical criteriological doubt which leads, in Descartes, to the 'cogito') ; beyond this point a more and more precise assertion of the concept of the 'I', not as a mere instrument or spectator from which it is possible to abstract, but as the very substance of this whole reality in which one lives, is accomplished. Let us cut out the intermediary steps, and indicate how the new attitude is at the root of transcendental philosophy, for which reason is no longer the 'receptacle' of knowledge (the conditioned) but rather the creator of knowledge (the condition or, better, the conditioning agent) and let us see what follows from this point of view for the scholastic question of essence and existence.

The first point is the following : I cannot coherently speak of another reality beyond the one that, either by intuition, or by inference, or by any of my other faculties, I imagine. My imagination of this being – that is to say, this elementary act or assent by which, in general, I realise the thing, understand it, or posit it for myself – is therefore the first of the conditions necessary for any reality whatsoever. We can define this state of being imagined as the essence of such reality, and as what combines with existent of the being imagined or known, whatever it is per se.

Hence, we are faced with this problem : concretely, the distinction between that which is objectively real and that which is not (which is pure idea, illusion or fiction) has a meaning. Now, what has been said does not account for such a distinction, both a reality and an illusion, both a house and, for instance, its poetic fantasm, being equally nothing apart from my imagining of them. What then defines the reality of what is specifically called real?

The answer is : actuality, not insofar as it is simply such, but insofar as it is potent will, is the criterion of distinction. A real thing is basically simply a thing I cannot do anything against. Some of my particular representations, normally, I cannot change, destroy or create as I wish, as I can a mere thought, and these I distinguish with the attribute of reality.

Let us clarify straight away a central issue : once I have reached the fact of my relative non-power, the temptation to explain it by means of the concept of a real thing which resists me must itself be rejected, since, concretely, the question is precisely the opposite, that is to say that what comes first, the immediate and original data of consciousness, is the non-power, and the 'real thing' is nothing but a symbol and a conceptual transcription, created by the logical category of causality. There is something on which I can and something on which I cannot – this is the whole thing. This aspect of the representations, by which these are representations to which I cannot do anything (arbitrarily change them, create them or cancel them), we will call existence. Let us note : the nature of this existence is

purely negative ; since it is nothing but a privation (steresis) of my activity, and this is precisely what cannot be called being, but must be called non-being.

A third point. As soon as one questions the legitimacy of referring to a heteron, to a 'thing-in-itself', to explain the fact of my non-power, it will be asked how then one can realise this non-power itself (4)? Our answer is : there is no explanation, and, better, there is not to be an explanation. And let us clarify this as follows :

Realists start from the presupposition that a human activity which is imperfect per se is inconceivable as such, so that, as soon as one thinks of a limited human activity, one must necessarily think of something else, which is the cause of such limitation. Basically, it is by arguing that there is in things a side which depends on the 'I' (the side related to their being imagined or known, i.e. their essence), and also another side which does not depend on the 'I', that realism is led to posit a reality distinct from the 'I' as cause of what the 'I' imagines. Now, this presupposition can be questioned. It derives from this conception : that what comes first is the absolute, and that everything which is particularity and finitude is only a negation made by 'another' in the fullness of this pre-existing absolute. It is thus related to the Platonist or Spinozist position which finds expression in the principle : what really is, is the universal, and the particular as such does not exist, which is to say that insofar as it exists, it is the universal, and insofar as it is specifically particular it does not exist at all but is cold and dull negation.

Now, we can oppose to this conception another, inspired by Aristotle, according to which the absolute is not presupposed by the finite and the individual, but on the contrary it is argued that what comes first is precisely what is individual – understood, however, not as something contradictory in itself, but rather as something incomplete ; not as something which does not exist by itself, but rather as something which already possesses being to a certain extent ; so that the absolute is not its negation, but its development, the point at which it perfects its principal existence according to a process from negativity to positivity, from the power to the act, from a poorer grade to a richer grade, which formerly did not exist, of actuality and being.

Now, in such a conception – which is a necessary one if development, synthesis, and 'becoming' are not to be mere empty names – a certain degree of privation or non-power (steresis) is naturally inherent to what comes first, in that it comes first – a steresis which is the condition for the appearance of things and beings existing by themselves, and for which it is meaningless to seek an explanation beyond the thought that it is simply an insufficiency of the 'I', for which only the 'I' is therefore responsible, insofar it does not at this initial stage yet will itself perfectly.

An explanation of this sort is not retrogressive, based on the idea of an absolute limited by another, but progressive, based on the process of the attainment of wholeness of the incomplete, of the potential which consumes and fulfils itself in action, of the insufficiency which makes itself sufficiency – so that it is not really in fact a matter of explaining existence (in the discursive sense), but of acting, fulfilling oneself more intensely, making oneself more and more sufficient to oneself and to anything within one's own potential. Accomplishing its potential, essence (the 'I') consumes or fulfils its existence, gradually pushing away the boundaries presented by the non-'I', and it is only in this way that it 'explains' the non-'I' to itself. The rest is nothing but pseudo-explanation, the lazy sophism of those inadequates who evade activity (5).

To make ourselves even clearer : things are essence and existence : the idea of one hundred thalers and the reality of one hundred thalers are obviously not the same thing. But, since, from the logical point of view, in the real one hundred thalers, there is – as observed by Kant – nothing not also present in the idea of one hundred thalers, it follows that, when one makes a distinction between one and the other, one refers to something irreducible to mere logic. This 'something' is existence, as opposed to essence.

Now, for essence, for the 'what it is' of a given reality, the concept is the explanatory principle. If this reality is accounted for through the concept genetically constructed in all the characters which determine it, the explanatory instance for the essence of the given reality is exhausted. Therefore, that an object of which one has given an exhaustive account, in addition, 'is', the brute fact of its 'being here' as real object, constitutes a point which escapes the conceptual explanation entirely, it is an alonon – and the explanatory principle appropriate to it is not the concept, but rather will or, better : power.

In fact, the pure 'being here' of things constitutes for me a mystery, insofar it has the character of a brute fact, of something which is there without the participation of my will, even asserting itself by violence to it – in short, insofar it is a privation of my activity. While essence I can think of and, thus, 'construct', existence I am simply subject to, and this is why it constitutes for me an obscurity. Let us imagine instead a situation in which I could link the 'being here' of things to my willing them, that is, in which my will would have the value of creative spiritual power : then their existence in fact, over and above their concept (their existence over and above their essence) would cease to be a mystery for me, it would be instead perfectly intelligible to me – it would be explained. Essence and existence thus have as respective explanatory principles the ideal construction by means of the concept and the real causation of will. This is the second point.

The third point is as follows : between ideal construction and creative will – thus, between essence and existence – there is no difference of nature, but only of degree. The idea is already a first degree of real

affirmation ; and the so-called 'objective reality' is nothing but the most intense and complete affirmation of this power which, in an elementary form, determined the merely thought or imagined thing. Reality is nothing but the actualisation of the idea, in which it determines and expresses itself entirely, just as the idea is nothing but a reality in potentia, that is, a reality merely sketched out or at the state of birth. There is no jump between them, but rather a progression. The thought of one hundred thalers and the one hundred real thalers are obviously not the same thing – but they are not qualitatively distinct (as it might seem according to the view that the thought is a mere representation of an objective reality), but rather they are distinct in their degree of intensity, in a sense that the real one hundred thalers is the deepest, the most intense potentiation resulting from the magical act (or, if one prefers, the active faith) of the affirmation corresponding to the thought of the one hundred thalers.

Now we can arrive at our conclusion. There is an existence which, from the point of view of the spiritual and of the liberty of the 'I', is death, privation, and obscurity ; this is the existence in which the representative activity of the 'I' is passive and insufficient, which it does not dominate as its master but with which it is identical according to spontaneity. This existence, which is the very existence of the 'other', of nature and of the physical object, there is no certainty of. If my representative activity is limited to that which is in me, but does not depend on me, such as passion or emotion, a principle of radical contingency reassumes it.

But there is a second existence, which is that which a will raised to power can unconditionally produce : this is the true, absolute existence, and it is only in this existence, reconciled with itself in possession and in dominion, that the 'I' can have real, unconditioned certainty. These two existences are in the relation of potential to actual (in the Aristotelian sense of the words), of insufficiency and sufficiency. The ideal attitude is in between these two extremes, and is the attitude to which, according to what has already been said, intellectual essence corresponds, that is : even under the reign of pure necessity, even in his state of privation, his being 'in potentia', the individual delights in the ideal activity of a first, and sufficient, degree of actuality and liberty. From this degree he proceeds towards the perfection of his development, as his 'I' dominates continually deeper and more complex levels of his being, up to the very intensive limit to which his real or physical existence corresponds. Then, from the obscure passions and ferocious deserts of necessity, from the 'crucifixion of the celestial man', the world will make itself the very act of the individual, and, in this, he will be redeemed and 'persuaded'.

God is this final self-manifestation : the act of the individual (or essence), and, in him, of all things, so that the individual can consider himself to be God in potentia. Not by a jump between two co-existents (Catholic dualism), but by continuity and progression of construction, one passes from one term to the other. Then, it can be said, like Meister Eckhart : all the creatures want their supreme perfection, all of them want the essential life, all of them move into my reason to become reason. I – the Unique – raise

all the creatures from their consciousness to mine because they become unity in it. The individual must comprehend, according to the principle of cosmic responsibility, what it is that he does.

It seems to the author that modern speculation, when closely examined, necessarily leads to this neo-Aristotelianism, which is at the same time the doctrine of power, and of the absolute individual : those who really and positively want to overcome the crisis of the modern spirit, to go beyond the abstraction of a certain formless, dreamy and sensualising mysticism, as well as of the even worse abstraction of a philosophy which exhausts or exacerbates itself in an empty formal sufficiency, if not bluntly in verbal games, and of a dead, lethargic knowledge of phenomena (by which, perhaps, some breathless spirits aiming at something more, but jejune and muddle-headed, were pushed towards the Thomist pseudo-synthesis) must, he considers, turn their gaze in this direction.

(1) This is the nonsensicality of the ex nihilo, in which 'nothing' – correlative to essence – is constituted as a distinct principle which subsists by virtue of the 'being' which, once it engages in the creational act, cannot but deny it. But this requires us to say that creatures are, and, at the same time, in that they are made of nothing, they are not – without thinking either that God is really such, in which case there can be nothing outside of him, not even 'nothing'...; or, that having 'another' over against him, he is not really God.

(2) This is the root of the famous dilemma of Kirilov in 'The Obsessed' by Dostoevsky : either God does not exist, and then my will is the supreme reason of itself, and I am God ; or he exists – and, then, I cannot escape His will, and my will must be His own will, which he has chosen to express in this form. There are only three alternatives : either Manichean dualism, or divine solipsism, or human solipsism.

(3) This view was already formulated by Celsus. Cf. Origen, Adv. Cels., VI, I.

(4) This is the opposite difficulty to that on which was based the aforementioned argument of S. Bonaventure. As we do not start dogmatically from pure existence (God), but rather critically from determined existence (the 'I' as partially sufficient condition of his own experience), it is no longer a matter of going back to the finite capacity of essence as what determines being, but, instead, of explaining this privation, this limit which existence represents against the 'I'. There, the negative was essence, here existence.

(5) Here, philosophy goes beyond itself, and acknowledges that only by means of the absolute value of activity can its greatest problems find solution. Cf. J. Lagneau, *Ecrits*, Paris, p. 297 : "Philosophy is the reflection which comes to acknowledge its own insufficiency and the necessity of recognising the absolute value of activity ... Philosophy is the search of reality through reflection first, and then through fulfilment". This thesis is developed in our 'Saggi sull'idealismo magico' (Roma, 1925), as well as in 'L'Uomo come potenza' (ed. Atanor) and 'Teoria dell'Individuo assoluto' (ed. Bocca, in two volumes) which will be published next year.

Action, Contemplation, and the Western Tradition

Esoterically, when we speak of 'tradition', we mean the 'transmission' (traditio) from generation to generation of a 'presence' of 'transcendent' nature, just as a flame lights another flame. A chain of individuals thus becomes the mediator of a continuity of contact with metaphysical reality and a non-human force.

This transmission can happen in an elite existing as a hidden vein behind the great historical and ethnic forces. But it can also occur that the occult shows itself and dominates, that is to say, that, in a given civilisation, all activities become organised around this elite, which becomes their manifest centre, the axis from which they draw their meaning and their orientation in a system of hierarchic participation.

All the original civilisations, albeit to varying degrees, have a traditional character in this sense. It must however be noticed that, from a certain point, a law of differentiation comes into play. When it appears as spirit of a given epoch or civilisation, the metaphysical identity bifurcates itself. In its most immediate manifestation, it produces two distinct trunks and gives rise to two fundamental forms.

The two trunks are: action and contemplation.

The two related forms are: royal initiation and sacerdotal initiation - hence there are two types of tradition: warlike-magic tradition and ascetic- contemplative or Brahmanic tradition.

The Two Traditions

Mortal life's rule is 'flow'. It does not possess Being, and, caught in varying external fortunes, it moves, restless, in the world of particular things and temporal interests. This law has been pointed out many times in these pages. Above this is the area of Being, according to which life becomes basis, reason and value in itself, gains stability, possesses in itself its own principle. Identical to that of the incorruptible and the eternal, this area can be reached either by means of Action as well as by means of Contemplative Knowledge.

Action can lead to it insofar as it is pure. At the inferior limit, there is the purity of the one who follows faithfully the rule of his own life and gives to his action the meaning of a rite and of a sacrificial offering. On a higher plane, there is the internalisation and development of this bent in the one who acts without aiming at contingent and particular fruits, considering as the same happiness and calamity, good and evil, even victory and defeat, looking neither at the 'I' nor at the 'you', overcoming love as well as hatred and any other pair of opposites. This man sets himself free from the individual condition; in the supranatural certainty of a borderline intensity, here 'life' is reversed into a 'more-than-life' and the contact with a state of light and power is achieved, which surpasses, dominates and carries off everything that is of a merely human or material order, giving way to actions, excitements and visions which would be impossible otherwise. We may summarise this as: heroic state, magic state, state of the Master of the Law. By transposition: warlike caste - warlike-magic and warlike traditions - finally: royal and imperial traditions.

In contemplation the metaphysical state, rather than by the means of assertion and liberation of action, is achieved by rejecting action. In the higher forms it resembles the fire of an intellectual catharsis. The bond of individuation dissolves in knowledge, in universality, in a vision of an eternal kind. It is the impulse towards the One. It is the path of the mystic identifications whose direction is opposed to that which leads towards form and differentiation. To summarise: ascetic (in a specific sense) and sacerdotal state. By transposition: sacerdotal caste, mediator and bearer of the sacred - sacerdotal, hieratic-sapiential and religious-pontifical (the king-priest) traditions.

It should be noted that these two forms of tradition are to be considered as distinct not insofar as that each of them would be based on a term which the other would be deprived of, but, rather, insofar as that each of them has both but in a different hierarchical order. As a matter of fact, the heroic path and the magic path involve 'asceticism', yet according to action, achieved as a way of being of action. Conversely, high contemplation is realisation and as such entails the element 'action', which, however, remains here dependent on pure knowledge, interest in the universal and pure transcendence. In the same way, on the concrete and historical plane a tradition of a warlike kind can certainly admit sacerdotal castes, but subordinated to the royal and warlike castes, that is to say that it is characterised by a synthesis of what is sacred and what is royal which is determined by the predominance of the active and sovereign aspect of the force from above. The opposite occurs in the other case: for example, here the warlike caste is given the role of defending the sacerdotal caste and of being its secular arm.

The spirit of both traditions having been briefly and approximatively indicated, we offer a few suggestions as to what 'Western Tradition' may mean.

The modern world and Christianity

First of all, it must be borne in mind that it is not possible to speak in any way of 'Tradition' in the West if one identifies the West with the 'modern world', that is, with the civilisation which has developed in Europe from the century of the Renaissance onwards with the ideologies of the French revolution and the advent of science and technology.

Such civilisation, in fact, systematically destroyed the premise of any tradition, whatever type it may be, and, thus, the contact with the metaphysical reality and the hierarchical coordination of the activities and the ways of living based on the principles which are related to this reality. The 'modern world' is characterised by a development along purely material, practical and industrial lines, in which what is at work is completely human and social forces, and, moreover, by the fact that forces once turned towards transcendence, towards what in man goes beyond man, so as to at least counterbalance purely material and temporal interests, instead stir, incite and foment what has a practical, political and merely human character, so as to make every higher point of reference vanish.

What opposes the modern world to any traditional civilisation, what is at the root of all its crises and precludes it from healing is not so much its being a body without spirit as its being a body which has reduced the spirit to being its instrument. This is why it is meaningless to refer in any way to a 'Western Tradition' if it is the modern West that we have in mind. The modern West and antitradition are the same thing. The fact is nonetheless that there were still in Europe, at least until a certain period, centres in possession of esoteric knowledge, that is, of the occult tradition. However, even though those centres had a genuine Western character, they did not exert a direct influence on the formation of the overall civilisation, when it comes to tradition in the broad sense. The modern West has constructed itself by breaking from any influence of that kind. If anything, it is 'counter-initiation' (1) which has played this role of influence.

In the second place, it is a matter of not granting to the religion which has come to prevail in the West either the character of a true, complete tradition, or of a 'Western Tradition'. In support of the second point, Pietro Negri has already made some interesting observations (2). On the whole, what follows must be borne in mind.

No doubt, Christianity, and especially Catholicism, had for centuries the power to organise the various races in the West according to its unique corpus of doctrines and faiths. However, it is questionable whether this corpus retained within itself any higher elements of a truly metaphysical character and whether the organisation which is usually indicated generically as 'Christian civilisation' was ever 'traditional' in the complete sense of which we have spoken.

We must distinguish very clearly between religion as a devotional, emotional and popular fact accompanied by theologising philosophy, dogma and apologetics, on the one hand, and spirituality as metaphysical realisation by means of regular initiation, on the other. Faith, hope, charity, the 'need of the soul', the 'fear of God' and all elements of that kind by themselves do not lead by an inch beyond what is merely human, nor have they had anything to do with true spirituality, either with a heroic spirituality or a tradition of sacred knowledge.

But it is precisely a body of elements of that kind which, in fact, makes up the substance of the Christian tradition, in which it takes the place of spirituality, and this results in the frequent and contaminating humanisation of the divine. That, in spite of this, in rites and symbols taken to a large extent from previous or different traditions, the consciousness of the most profound meaning of which is however almost always non-existent, the Christian tradition still retains traces of a metaphysical teaching - this is too little for a real and operative traditional 'orthodoxy', as opposed to a merely formal one.

The human, devotional plane, or rather the plane of theological speculation onto which these traditional traces have been transposed and within which they have been preserved, is not a plane on which they can be completely validated. And it is Catholicism itself which gives the confirmation of this: with the harsh loathing it has always nursed for any attempt to complete on esoteric lines its doctrines - from some 'non-orthodox' branches of the Greek Patristic Age and that of the Gnostics to that of the Templars and of various Christian Hermeticists, and to today. Nowadays, Catholicism worries much more about 'getting sorted out' with 'modern thought' than about gaining height in any way through elements of esoteric character.

Experientially, leaving aside the merely charismatic or sacramental life, whose significance we will speak of on another occasion, in Christianity everything comes down to the climactic achievements of some mystics, who do not form any tradition, any continuity or chain and do not have any determining, standard-setting, regular or direct relation with the centre of orthodoxy. Moreover, Christianity cannot claim, with respect to the West, the character of a native tradition, congenital to its races, as is the case for, for instance, Brahmanism for Hindus, Islam for the Arabs, or the whole Far-Eastern tradition. Christianity asserted itself in the West on the ruins of a previous Western tradition, which had its achieved heroic and sacred traditional character; with that former world it has maintained only a very relative and apparent continuity, in spite of everything it has borrowed and has sought to absorb and ratify.

A great part has been played within Christianity by influences that are in no way Western or even, more broadly, Aryan: influences deriving either from Judaism or from the devious substratum of pre-Aryan and anti-Aryan Mediterranean spirituality. In some cases, these influences are limited to the superficial, to the most popular and sentimental aspects of Christianity. In other cases, however, they corrode the essence. The doctrine of Original Sin, the exacerbated dualism, the very concept of 'Redemption', the anti-Olympian root theme of the god who suffers, dies and rises again, all this shows the presence of external influences, neither Aryan, nor Western, in Christianity and in Catholicism itself (3).

This is why we think that, in regard to the 'modern world' and to the 'Christian world', it would be risky to speak, in general, of a 'Western tradition'.

The Real Western Tradition

This is no longer the case, however, if we return to the ancient Aryo-Mediterranean and Roman world. We find here, albeit interspersed with forces from various other traditions, traces of a formative force and of a spirituality to which the true face of the West can be specifically attributed. This force and this spirituality refer to a tradition of an essentially heroic type. If, from the principle, already indicated, which defines a warlike tradition we deduce its expression on the plane of conditioned events, we find forms and ideas which characterise precisely the Western civilisation and spirit. On the most external plane, the law of action actually finds _expression in the style of races of navigators, conquerors, colonisers - in the Homeric and Roman epic world: a free, liberated, heroic world, devoid of uncertainties, of any idea of an 'infinite' in the romantic sense, constituted of simple forces and elementary purities: the Doric style, the Roman virtus, the monumental element, the solar ideal of the Imperium, the type of the Augustus.

Further, action requires objects, limits, boundaries : it implies form, difference, individuation. While within a sacerdotal tradition form is almost always only symbol, concealment of a mysterious, ineffable, incorporeal spirituality, in the opposite tradition the form almost always gains importance and value. Here the physical and the metaphysical, the material and the immaterial, the corporeal and the incorporeal coincide in the balance of two coessential terms, in very distinct and intensively individuated types and forms. In fact, here we find the classico-Aryan cult of form, strength, corporeal perfection, of beauty itself as expressions of spirituality; here is a natural overcoming of the dualisms of Levantine character; here is the anti-romantic doctrine, and, therefore, everything that is 'infinite' is seen as an abstract potentiality, an imperfection and the finite, on the contrary, is seen as a value, recognising in it the limit of a force which has managed to give a form, a law, an achieved individuality to itself. The particular value assumed by law refers, partly, to the same order of ideas.

The eye which stops at form and at limit sees harmony and number. Hence, from the time of Mediterranean antiquity, in Greece and in Rome, we see the blossoming of sacred sciences based on number and harmony ; a heritage perhaps esoteric, within which precedents in Chaldea, but, more immediately, Egyptian contributions of archaic Atlantico-Western origin, assume a very special development. If, compared with such sciences, the quantitative method of the modern exact sciences (which were formed almost exclusively in the West) represents a degenerative deviation, yet it is a degeneration which starts from the same stock. Something similar could even be said of Western rationalism, which started in Greece: the passion for the concept in the sense of distinct, definite, precise notion, which means this and nothing else, in the sense of notion which measures (mens could derive from mensurare, and a similar derivation can be supposed for ratio) is something specifically Western, which equally reveals the law of action, which, asserting itself, implies limit, difference.

When it prevails over contemplation, action thus moves in a definite world, constituted of forms, governed by a law of difference and, therefore, of plurality too : many forces, many consciousnesses, many types, distinct and unmistakable, almost 'Microcosms within the Macrocosm', since each of them contains and resolves in its own being the amorphous cosmic possibility. What is thus particularly significant for the Western Tradition is the Aristotelian vision of the world, which is characterised by the fact that, in a being, it considers what is 'universal' as less real, more abstract, incomplete (steresis - privation (of being)); the particular, on the contrary, it considers to be what has value, what is desirable, what is more than real, the fulfillment or end (telos) of a being. The Aristotelian doctrine of the sunolon is that, specifically classic, doctrine of the idea or of the 'engendering force' which is really real when it actualises itself, individuates itself, asserts itself as power and life of a form, in an indissoluble unity.

Naturally, this should not lead us to attribute to the Western vision of the world a mere pluralism or individualism. There is still a unity, the world is not pure plurality, but rather cosmos, uni-verse, divine order. However, in a warlike tradition, this unity does not have the exclusivist emphasis that the opposite tradition, the ascetic-contemplative one, grants it. Whence, too, the sense of polytheism of the pre-Christian Western world, considerably different from the Oriental one : it is focused, above all, on the concrete and individuated form of the divine powers at work in things, in heroes, in completed types as living works of art, within this clear and harmonious cosmos whose beauty the poets would sing and whose hidden laws and secret analogies the initiates would penetrate.

What is also typical is the importance that, especially in the ancient Roman world, the notion of numen had. The ancient Roman-occidental man was inclined to conceive any divinity not so much as deus but rather as numen, that is, as a force, a power, which was defined essentially through its action. Moreover, he would differentiate himself from the Greek spirit by the emphasis he would put on the political and historical element. While, in Greece, the contemplative tendency saw to it that the divine world was conceived of as a sort of atemporal supraworld and, so to speak, as absolute space, Rome strained to grasp this world in its manifestation in time, in history, in the state, in the actions and creations of men, without however diminishing its august character in any manner thereby. The Roman, much more than the Jew, had the sense of a sacred history. The Roman conception of the state, of law and of the Imperium was based essentially on this historical sense, active and sacred at the same time. The warlike and political caste in Rome typically held a sacred dignity.

Many traces of the 'heroic truth' were found in the West on the plane of initiatic myth too. Among the origin myths opposed to that, also present in the archaic Mediterranean, of the 'fall', there is that of the 'heroes' and of the sons greater than their fathers, who dominated the Mothers and reconquered the realm of the killed father.

This mysterious knowledge, which sometimes appears as that of the 'immaterial race of those without king', passed into certain initiatic currents, in the symbols of which new references to the active, creative spirit are not lacking.' We will limit ourselves to indicating the symbolism of building and to recalling how in Hermetism it is spoken of not as much as a knowledge but rather as an art, which was generally called *ars regia*. Its formula: 'corporealise the spirit, spiritualise the body', reconfirms the anti-mystical and anti-ecstatic classico-occidental ideal. The red and the gold, and not the white, mark here the supreme fulfillment. In the Graal tradition the warlike theme and the Regnum motif reappear, as they will continue to do in secret centres until the period of the later Rosicrucianism. More generally, we must note the persistence in the very Western Middle Ages of the symbol of magic, which, instead of exhausting itself on the lower plane of a mere science of psychic powers, was closely linked to a particular interpretation of the Initiatic ideal. And if, as pointed out, the development of positive sciences is a characteristic of the West, it is based on the tendency to an active knowledge and to a clarity which, even though it fell to a lower level and exerted itself only in a material and physical field, is nonetheless significant as a component of the Western spiritual attitude.

Christianity, whose external, non-Western and non-Aryan aspects have already been pointed out by us, is a maimed and truncated tradition of the hieratic-sacerdotal type which has managed to prevail over a tradition of the heroic type which predominated in the most ancient Mediterranean and, in general, Aryo-Western world.

But Christianity achieved this supremacy only insofar it adapted many forms peculiar to traditions different from it, especially that of Rome. It was more Roman Catholicism than Christianity which won in the West and, in its turn, Catholicism had its golden age in the feudal, knightly and crusading Middle Ages; and, until it decayed into mere spurious forms, the active and conquering contribution found expression in the proselytising, missionary and supremacist instinct that Christianity displayed, from its beginnings to Protestantism and Calvinism.

The tradition to which the event in Palestine gave birth has thus the character of an ambiguous and almost contradictory thing. However, it is precisely to this contradictoriness that Christianity owes its force ; it has given to it, until lately, the means to control races congenitally inspired by a warlike tradition, such as the Western one, before their complete secularisation and terrestrialisation. If Christianity is a counterfeiting of a tradition of a really sacred, ascetic-metaphysical, Brahmanic type, the 'modern world', which from one day to the next is undermining what remains of the Western religion, represents in its turn, in many respects, a teratological counterfeiting of a tradition of a warlike type.

It is therefore clear that, if it had been at all possible to rebuild a 'tradition' in the West, it could only essentially have been done via forces of a heroico-initiatic character, on the basis of a vision of the world of a more or less magical type (in the special sense that is always given here to this word).

Any attempt at a traditional Restoration along other lines in the West would meet quite definite difficulties and would lack any point of application. If this body of barbarian grandeur that the West has built with its civilisation reacted against any soul, that is to say, against any supernatural element intended to recapture it, to hold it up and to lead it, this reaction would be particularly vigorous if the soul were different from that of the warlike and active races whose degenerated heir the West is.

Clarifications

Just as the West is mainly stamped by the tradition of action, the East is mainly stamped with the tradition of contemplation. We say 'mainly' because the East too has known heroic and imperial cycles, and, for instance, it is difficult to find elsewhere such advanced motifs of transcendent justification as in the Bhagavad-Gita. In addition, the example of imperial and warlike Japan, in which, until the collapse of 1945, the ascetic formation of life played a great part, not to mention the frankly esotericist Zen schools, must not be forgotten. Further, for those who understand the tradition in which action prevails over contemplation equally with the one in which we have the opposite relation, as two paths both possible and competent to reach something which is beyond both action and contemplation, independent, as it is, of any particular conditionality, there is no contradiction between the two. These people will abstain from judging either tradition, they will limit themselves to understanding them and realising the truths, the perspectives and the principles that must be asserted, once, according to one's own nature, one adheres to one tradition or the other.

There is on the other hand an opposition between them and those who insist on the 'orthodoxy' and supremacy of one of the two traditions, condemning the other as a deviation and an error. This would merely produce the effect of a mental limitation. Yet we must eliminate any cause of misunderstanding by underlining that the supremacy of action in the tradition which corresponds to it has nothing to do with the usurpation of temporal power, since action always amounts here to a means of liberation and has always as its point of reference something transcendent and supersensible.

Ancient royalty can give us points of reference in this connection. Others can be given by oriental traditions, for instance by the Hindu one, when it speaks of Rajarshi, those who used to be simultaneously clairvoyants and keepers of the tradition of 'solar' knowledge, or when, in the Upanishads, we see figures of Kshatriya (warriors) competing in sacred knowledge with the representatives of the Brahmanic caste. Besides, we must recall the forms of unity of the two powers which appeared in ancient Rome and reappeared, here and there, as residues, in the Middle Ages.

What can be called the primordial tradition is anterior and superior to the bipartition we have discussed. The active path and the contemplative path, let us repeat, are approximations to this supreme unity. When it comes to analogy, despite some people's views, the active and warlike path, as explained here, has at least as much dignity as the other, because, fundamentally, it comprises both principles joined in the supreme synthesis, which is not simply light and liberation, but light and liberation joined in power with the basic principle of any manifestation and determination and with sovereignty.

On that basis, it would be appropriate to mention something to which we may come back later: the idea that the warlike-royal tradition leads normally and legitimately only to the 'Lesser Mysteries'. This is an arbitrary limitation deriving from an abstract doctrinal scheme, which becomes completely absurd when, rather than speaking of 'Lesser Mysteries' and 'Greater Mysteries' as degrees in the same development but as attaining a transcendent character only in the latter, they speak of the duality of the lunar, Demetrian or telluric mysteries on the one hand, and the solar or Ouranic mysteries on the other; since, according to a better founded doctrine, the 'Lesser Mysteries' can be associated with the former of these, it is obvious that there is a contradiction between them and the tradition of royalty, except in a few cases of evident degeneration.

In any case, we have now set forth succinctly the general principles on the basis of which the problem of the duality of traditions can be understood, before turning to what follows from it in the study of the metaphysic of history.

Ea

Masters of the Right: Joseph de Maistre

The publisher Rusconi, which is performing a meritorious service by printing a series of works constituting a precious nutriment for a culture of the Right, has just issued a new edition of Joseph de Maistre's "Soirées in St Petersburg", edited by Alfredo Cattabiani. This is the best known work of de Maistre. However, direct references to the political domain, in which de Maistre shows his worth as a "reactionary", are scarcer than in his other writings. In fact, there are above all considerations on moral and religious problems -- and the very subtitle of the book, "Conversations on the Temporal Government of Providence" indicates this line of thought -- which don't have much interest for us. Supposing exactly the existence of a Providence conceived in moralising terms, de Maistre confronts the problem of reconciling this with the spectacle that the world and history show us in their factuality: wicked acts that are not punished, virtues that have no compensation, and so on.

The solutions to such problems proposed by de Maistre cannot be said to be at all convincing, and it seems to us a return to the idea of a divine justice that only delays its sanctions (for support, de Maistre included in the appendix a tract by Plutarch entitled "De sera numinis vindicta"). However, de Maistre himself reaches a freer and more satisfying view when he compares the evils and the contingencies that rain on all the human types to the bullets that hit an army without making a distinction between the good and the wicked. One must think that the being, taking on the human state of existence (willing it either inconsiderately or through temerity, as is said in a hermetic tract), cannot but be exposed to the contingencies proper to such a state. To look for transcendent moral links in one or the other case, is something to which one can naturally be led to, but that always maintains the character of an ill-considered supposition.

But, taking leave of this order of problems, let us mention some ideas of de Maistre that are interesting from the traditional point of view. First of all, we can point to that of a Primordial Tradition. It may be that de Maistre was indebted to Claude de Saint-Martin, whom he knew, and who was an exponent of esoteric doctrines (in the field of Masonry, which at the time was somewhat different from more recent times, so that de Maistre himself took part in it). Then there is the thesis that the original natural state of humanity was not that of barbarianism. To the contrary, it would have been of light and consciousness, while the savage, the "primitive" of today, would be only *"the descendent of a man detached from the great tree of civilisation following an abuse of power that cannot be repeated."*

But, in other regards, man finds himself affected by an abuse of power and of a consequent degradation, causes of his vulnerability, not only spiritual and intellectual, but also physical. Such an idea is evidently similar to that of the "original sin" of Christian mythology, the context being, therefore, vaster and more acceptable. As for the mentioned thesis on the true nature of the "primitives", it would be such as to carry ethnological research to a higher level and to avoid making many blunders.

De Maistre accused the *savants*, scientists, and the like, who, as if in a cabal, do not admit that someone might know more than they do and in a different way.

"One judges a time in which men saw the effects in the causes with the mentality of a time in which men with difficulty go back from the effects to the cause, either one says the it is useless to be concerned with the causes, or one hardly knows anymore what a cause is."

He adds:

"They hear a thousand amenities on the ignorance of the ancients who saw spirits everywhere: it appears to me that we are much more foolish than they because we do not see any part of it. We always hear talk of physical causes. But what is, all in all, a physical cause?"

For him the axiom: *"No physical event regarding man can have a higher cause,"* is inauspicious and likely to promote a fundamental superficiality.

The idea of progress is denied. The idea of an involution appears rather more plausible. De Maistre notices that numerous traditions attest that:

"men have begun with science, but with a science different from ours and superior to it, because it took off from a higher point, which also made it more dangerous. And this explains to us how science, at its beginning, was always mysterious and was restricted to the temples, where ultimately it burned itself out when this flame could no longer serve except to burn."

De Maistre gave a great importance to prayer and its power. He even wrote: *"No one can demonstrate that a nation that prays has not been answered"*, but, properly, it is the opposite that must be demonstrated, which is not easy. He finds himself confronting the antitheses between prayer and virtue which is attributed to it on the one hand and the immutability of the laws of nature on the other hand, an antithesis that de Maistre tries to reconcile, although not very convincingly. He thinks that if some prayers are not granted, that is due only to a higher divine wisdom.

De Maistre's defence of the executioner as an instrument of God is often cited with horror, and even his conception of the divine character of war. Unfortunately, this view does not consider that war can propitiate, in fact, heroism and super-individual action, but it is seen in dismal terms as an expiation that strikes a humanity fundamentally guilty and debased. The difference between the just and unjust war, between the war of defence and of conquest, between war won and lost, is not considered. These views are little in accord with a positively "reactionary" orientation.

In another of his works, *Consideration on France*, de Maistre, declaring himself in favour of a restoration, states an important concept, saying that the counter-revolution must not be a *"revolution in the opposite direction"*, but rather the *"opposite of a revolution"*. We owe him a new type of theology of revolution; he highlights something "demonical" that generally hides itself under revolutionary phenomena. Such an aspect is noticeable even by the fact that the revolution carries along its makers, more so than it is led by them. Only in the modern epoch did it take on the character of a "permanent revolution" more of less institutionalised, with its technicians and slick manipulators.

In the *"Soirées of St. Petersburg"*, gleaning and leaving aside disquisitions (as, for example, the prolix discussion on Locke), the reader will be able to find many other interesting ideas. We cannot resist the temptation to refer to what de Maistre said about women:

"A woman can be superior only as a woman, but as soon as she tries to imitate a man, she is nothing but a monkey."

Pure truth, whether contemporary "feminist movements" like it or not.

The Jewish Question in the Spiritual World

In Italy, the Jewish question is not very keenly felt, unlike in other countries, in Germany in particular. There, as everyone knows, this question provokes deep tensions today not only on the plane of ideas, but also in society and politics. The most recent legislation, proposed by Göring, which bans not only marriages between Jews and non-Jews but also unmarried mixed couples, and permanently excludes Jews, or those already married to Jews, from all Nazi state organizations, are the ultimate consequence of these tensions.

The origins of the Jewish question are very ancient, varied and at times also enigmatic. Anti-Semitism is a theme that has accompanied almost all the phases of Western history. Even with regard to Italy, an examination of the Jewish question should not be devoid of interest. The fact that in Italy the special circumstances do not obtain that elsewhere have resulted in the more direct and unreflective forms of anti-Semitism, also lets us consider the issue more calmly and with greater objectivity. Let us state right from the beginning that anti-Semitism today is characterized by the lack of a truly comprehensive view of historical and doctrinal premises, a view that could really justify anti-Semitic social and political practices and form the basis from which they could be deduced. For our part, we hold that a certain kind of anti-Semitism is not unjustified: but the weakness and confusion of most of the arguments put forward by anti-Semites, together with the violent partisanship of the latter, ends up being counter-productive, arousing the suspicion in any impartial spectator that it all is just a matter of biased and arbitrary attitudes dictated not so much by authentic principles, as by contingent practical interests. Thus, in the following notes, we will examine of the real basis that can justify an anti-Semitic attitude.

It is said that while today there is a substantial Jewish peril in the domain of finance and the economy, there is also a substantial Jewish peril in the domain of ethics, and that in the domain of spirituality, religion, and world view, everything Semitic, and above all everything Jewish, has a specific character that is repulsive to other peoples of the white race. We will therefore examine the problem holistically, and in three texts examine the Jewish question in its three aspects, one after the other, the first spiritual or religious, the second ethical and cultural, and finally the socio-economic and political aspect. Our reference points will of course be provided by the German authors most specialized in the matter and most emblematic of the anti-Semitic "myth": but we will try to summarize everything in the most impersonal possible way, excluding any element that is not purely doctrinal. Is there, in general, a vision of the world, of life and of the "sacred" that is specifically Semitic?

That is the fundamental issue. The term "Semitic," as everyone knows, has a broader connotation than the word "Jewish" – and it is precisely in this broader meaning that we use it. The reason for this is that we believe that the Jewish element cannot be clearly separated from the general type of civilization that in ancient times spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean, from Asia Minor to the edges of Arabia: however great the differences may be between individual Semitic peoples. Without a comprehensive examination of the Semitic spirit and its action in more recent times are bound to escape us.

Some authors, who have transcended a purely biological racism and have begun to consider race also with regard to types of civilization — e. g. Günther in his most recent publications and Claus, have come more or less to this conclusion, speaking, in general, of what they called "the culture of the Levantine soul" (*der vorderasiatischen Seele*). The peoples with that soul are, more or less, the Semitic peoples.

What basis do we have for considering the spirituality and religious forms of the Semites to be inferior? Here, anti-Semites are far from clear and concordant in their statements. The fact is that in order to be able to say in what respects the Semitic spirit is negative, one would have to start by defining what one views as positive in the domain of spirit. Anti-Semites, however, are a good deal more concerned with polemical attacks than with positive assertions, and the positive term in the name of which they negate and condemn very often remains contradictory and uncertain. Thus, some refer to Catholicism (e.g. Moller van den Bruck), others to Nordic Protestantism (Chamberlain, Wolf) and yet others to a dubious paganism (Rosenberg, Reventlow) or to secular national ideals (Ludendorff).

The weakness of such positions is shown by the fact that all of these reference points consist in historical ideas that, chronologically, are later than the earliest Semitic civilizations, and are partly influenced by elements derived from the latter, instead of leading us back to a spiritual pole that is primordial and in a truly pure state. The opposition between the Semitic spirit and the Aryan spirit is, of course, the basis of any anti-Semitism.

But to provide a more serious basis for anti-Semitism, it is not enough to give the term "Aryan" a vague racist basis or a merely negative and polemical meaning, a meaning that would simply encompass everything that, in general, is not "Jewish." One must instead be able to define "Aryanness" in positive terms, as a universal idea, one that with regard to the type of divinity worshiped and the forms of worship, with regard to religious feeling and world-view, is opposed to everything that pertains to Semitic civilizations and in particular, to the Jews.

Therefore, we must return, but transcending the purely naturalistic plane, to the ideas of nineteenth century philologists and historians – especially of the school of Max Müller – concerning the fundamental unity of the civilizations, religions, symbols, and myths with Indo-European roots. We must connect these ideas with the theory that Wirth has recently – although often with severe confusions – tried to formulate with respect to a unitary, primordial, pre-Nordic civilization (we would say: Hyperborean) as the original root of the various more recent Indo-European civilizations. Finally, we must not neglect Bachofen’s brilliant intuitions regarding the antagonism between “solar” (Uranian) and “lunar” (or telluric) civilizations, between societies ruled by the virile principle and societies ruled by the female-maternal principle (gynocratic societies).

For obvious reasons, we cannot further elaborate on these matters here, but we have already undertaken a project of this kind in one of our works (*Revolt Against the Modern World*, Milan, 1935). We will only repeat our conclusions regarding the type of spirituality that we can call “Aryan,” “solar,” or “virile,” and which, by way of contrast, should also make it clear what really characterizes the Semitic spirit.

The àrya (a Sanskrit word that means the “noble,” in the sense of a race not only of the blood, but also, and essentially, of the spirit) were characterized by an affirmative attitude in the face of the divine. Their mythological symbols, drawn from the shining sky, expressed a sense of the “bodiless virility of light” and of “solar glory,” that is, of victorious, spiritual virility: so that those races not only believed in the real existence of a super-humanity, of a race of immortal men and divine heroes, but often attributed to this race a superiority and irresistible power over the supernatural forces themselves. Correspondingly, the ideal that characterized the àrya was more regal than priestly, more the warrior ideal of transfiguring affirmation than the religious ideal of devoted abandonment, more an ideal of ethos than of pathos.

Originally, the kings of the àrya were also their priests, in the sense that the possession of that mystical force that is tied not only to the “fortune” of the race, but also to the efficacy of its rites, conceived as operations acting upon real and objective supernatural forces, was preeminently attributed to the kings and to no-one else. On this basis, the idea of regnum had a sacred, and hence, potentially, a universal character. From the enigmatic Indo-Aryan conception of the Cakravarti or “universal sovereign,” via the idea of the Aryan-Iranian universal kingdom of the “faithful” and of the “God of light,” to the “solar” presuppositions of the *romana aeternitas imperi*, to the medieval Ghibelline idea of the *Sacrum Imperium* — in Aryan civilizations, or civilizations of the Aryan type, one finds the impulse to form a universal embodiment of the power from above, the power of which the àrya felt they were the pre-eminent bearers.

Secondly, in the same way that instead of the pious servility of prayer, there was ritual — again, conceived as a dry operation that subdued the divine — so also, among the Arya, the highest and most privileged places of immortality were open not to Saints, but to Heroes: the Nordic Walhalla, the Doric-Achaean Isle of the Blessed, the heaven of Indra among Indo-Aryans. The conquest of immortality or knowledge retained virile traits; while Adam, in the Semitic myth, is cursed for having tried to steal from the tree of god, in Aryan myth similar adventures are given a victorious and immortalizing outcome in the figures of heroes, such as Hercules, Jason, Mithras, Siegfried. If, higher still than the “heroic” world, the supreme Aryan ideal is the “Olympic” realm of immutable, complete essences, detached from the lower world of becoming, in themselves luminous like the sun and sidereal natures — the Semitic gods are essentially gods that change, that are born, that live and suffer; they are the “year-gods” which, like vegetation, are subject to the law of death and rebirth. The Aryan symbol is solar, in the sense of a purity that is power and a power that is purity, of a radiant nature that — again — is luminous in itself, in opposition to the lunar (feminine) symbol, that of a nature that only gives off light insofar as it reflects and absorbs light emanating from a center outside of it. Finally, with regard to the corresponding ethical principles, characteristically Aryan are the principles of freedom and personality on the one hand, and loyalty and honor the other.

The Aryan enjoys independence and difference, and is repelled by every kind of mixing. But that does not stop him from obeying manfully, from recognizing a leader, taking pride in serving him according to a freely established bond: a disinterested bond between warriors, on that that is irreducible to anything that can be bought and sold or turned to profit. Bhakti — is what the Aryans of India called it; Fides — is what the Romans called it; fides — is what they continued to call it in the Middle Ages; Trust, Treue — were the watchwords of the feudal regime. In Mithraic religious communities the principle of brotherhood was above all the virile community of soldiers engaged in a common undertaking (miles was the name of a degree of Mithraic initiation), and the Aryans of ancient Persia until the time of Alexander were able to consecrate not only their persons and their actions, but also their very thoughts to their leaders, who were conceived as transcendent beings. Among the Aryans in India, the hierarchy of the caste system was founded not on violence, but on spiritual loyalty — dharma and bhakti. The serious and austere demeanor, devoid of mysticism, suspicious of every abandon of the soul, that characterized the relationship between the Roman civis, the Roman pater and his divinities, has the same traits as the ancient Doric-Achaean ritual and the “regal” and dominating attitude of the Brahmin or the “solar caste” of the first Vedic period or of the Mazdean Atharvan. Overall, what characterizes the Aryan spirit is a classicism of domination and action, a love of clarity, difference and personality, an “Olympic” ideal of divinity and heroic superhumanity, and an ethos of loyalty and honor.

With that, albeit summarily, the fundamental point of reference is given. What we must bear in mind are the basic features of an ideal antithesis, which will allow us to orient ourselves in everything that historical reality and the overall form of civilizations often manifests itself in a mixed state: because it

would be absurd, in times that are not absolutely primordial, to expect to find the Aryan and Semitic elements in their pure state.

What characterizes the spirituality of Semitic civilizations in general? The destruction of the Aryan synthesis of virility and spirituality. Among the Semites we have on one hand, a crudely material and sensualistic, or coarsely and ferociously warlike (Assyria) expression of the virile principle; on the other, a de-virilised spirituality, a "lunar" and predominantly priestly relationship to the divine, the pathos of guilt and atonement, an impure and disordered romanticism, and, beside it, almost as an escape, a naturalistic and mathematically based contemplativism.

Let us examine a few points in more detail. While the Aryans (like the Egyptians, whose earliest civilization must be considered as being of "Western" origin) viewed their king as an "equal among the Gods," even in the earliest times, the king of the Chaldeans was only considered a proxy of the gods, conceived as entities distinct from him (Maspero). There is a phenomenon even more characteristic of this Semitic deviation from the level of virile spirituality: the annual humiliation of the king of Babylon. The king, dressed as a slave or prisoner, confessed his sins, and only when, having been beaten by a priest who represented the god, tears started to well up in his eyes, was he confirmed in his office and allowed to put on his regalia.

In fact, just as the feeling of "guilt" and "sin" (almost unknown among the Aryans) is innate in Semites and is reflected in a characteristic way in the Old Testament, the pathos of the "confession of sins" and of redemption from them is characteristic of Semitic peoples in general, closely linked to the matriarchal type of civilization (Pettazzoni) and alien to Aryan societies governed by the paternal principle. We are already dealing with the "guilt complex" (in the psychoanalytic sense), which has usurped a "religious" value and distorts the calm purity and "Olympian" superiority of the Aryan aristocratic ideal. Semitic-Syrian and Assyrian civilizations are characterized by the predominance of female deities, of lunar or telluric goddesses of Life, often with the impure traits of prostitutes.

The gods, however, who accompany them as lovers, have none of the supernatural traits of the great Aryan Divinities of light and day. Usually they are subordinate beings with respect to the image of Woman or the Divine Mother. They are either "dying gods" who suffer, perish and rise again, or ferocious deities of war, hypostases of savage muscular strength or phallic virility.

In ancient Chaldea, the priestly sciences, especially astronomy, are precisely the expressions of a lunar-mathematical spirit, an abstract and fundamentally fatalistic contemplativism, divorced from any

interest in the heroic and supernatural affirmation of personality. A remnant of this component of the Semitic spirit, secular and intellectualized, is active in Jews of recent times: from Maimonides and Spinoza to modern Jewish mathematicians (e.g., Einstein, or in Italy, Levi-Civita and Enriques), we find a characteristic "passion" for abstract thought and for natural law expressed in lifeless numbers.

This, in the end, can be considered the best part of the ancient Semitic legacy. Here, of course, in order not to seem one-sided, we would have to undertake considerations of a much broader scope than this space would allow. We will only mention that the negative elements just mentioned can be found not just among the Semites, but also in other great civilizations, civilizations that were originally Indo-European. Except that in the latter, up to a certain period, these elements were secondary and subordinate to a completely different predominant type of spirituality, and almost always the result of decadence and the influence of a substrate of subjugated or infiltrating inferior races.

Between the eighth and sixth century B.C., a kind of crisis or decline occurred almost simultaneously in all of the greatest ancient civilizations, along with an insurrection of those inferior racial elements. One could say that in the East — from China to India and Iran — this crisis was overcome by a series of reactions or adequate reforms (Lao Tzu, Confucius, Buddha, Zoroaster). In the West, the dam appears to have broken and the insurrection seems to have encountered no major obstacle. In Egypt, it took the form of an outbreak of the popular worship of Isis and similar divinities, with its chaotic plebeian mysticism, in opposition to the ancient virile and solar royal cult of the first dynasties. In Greece, it was the decline of Doric-Achaean civilization with its heroic and Olympian ideals, the advent of secular, anti-traditional and naturalistic thinking on the one hand, and Orphic and Orphic-Pythagorean mysticism on the other.

But the center from which the ferment of decay mainly spread seems to have been precisely the group of Semitic-Eastern Mediterranean peoples and, ultimately, the Jewish people. Concerning the civilization of the Jews, to be objective, we should distinguish between two periods, which are definitively differentiated at that historical moment of crisis to which we have referred. If there is an accusation to be made positively towards the Jews, it is that they had no real tradition of their own, and owed to other peoples, Semites or non-Semites, both the positive elements, and the other, negative elements that they were subsequently able to more particularly develop.

Thus, if we consider the oldest Jewish religion, the ancient Philistine cult of Jehova (the Philistines, however, appear to have been a non-Jewish group of conquerors) and the line of priest-kings that Solomon and David belonged to, we not infrequently find forms that possess both purity and greatness. The alleged "formalism" of the rites of that religion most likely had the same anti-sentimental, active,

dominating spirit that we have indicated as a feature of primordial Aryan and Roman virile rituals. The idea itself of a “chosen people,” called to rule the world by divine mandate — apart from its naive exaggerations and the dubious right of the Jews to claim such a vocation for their own race — is, as we indicated, an idea that is found in Aryan traditions, especially among the Iranians: just as among Iranians one also finds, although with virile and not passively messianic traits, the figure of the future “universal lord” and King of kings. It was a moment of crisis, connected to the political collapse of the Jewish people, that overturned these elements of positive spirituality, which most probably derive less from the Jewish people itself than from the Amorites, a people some claim had Nordic, and not Semitic, origins.

Prophecy already represents the decay of the ancient Jewish civilization and the way to all subsequent decadence. The type of the “seer” — røeh — was replaced by the “prophet” — Nabi — a man inspired or possessed by god, a type of man who previously had been viewed almost as sick. The spiritual center shifts to him and his apocalyptic revelations — and away from the high priest or the priest-king who ruled in the name of the “god of Hosts,” Jehova sebaoth. Here the revolt against the ancient sacred ritualism in the name of a formless, romantic and unmastered “inner” spirituality is associated with a growing servility of man with respect to god, with an ever greater pleasure taken in self-humiliation and an increasing impairment of the heroic principle, culminating in the degradation of the figure of the Messiah to that of a “redeemer,” of a predestined “victim,” against the terrorizing backdrop of the apocalypse — and, on another plane, also culminating in that style of deception, servile hypocrisy, and tenacious, devious, disintegrating infiltration, that since then has been characteristic of the Jewish instinct in general.

Rising to power through the earliest, pre-Catholic forms of Christianity, in the Roman Empire, which at the time was already animated by all sorts of spurious Asian-Semitic cults, the Jewish spirit in effect led a vast insurrection of the East against the West, of the guarà against àrya, of the impure spirituality of the Pelasgian and pre-Hellenic South against the Uranian and Olympian spirituality of conquering, superior races: a clash of forces that repeated one that had already occurred in an earlier period, during the first colonization of the Mediterranean.

Now we have reached a point from which we can discern what, from this point of view, the arguments of anti-Semites boil down to. Let us say right away that there is hardly anyone who has shown themselves capable of viewing the question from this higher perspective. The only exception is, perhaps, Alfred Rosenberg who, however, in his most recent statements, has almost irreparably undermined his position with all sorts of confusions and especially with blatantly Enlightenment and racist-nationalist ideological admixtures. In the religious sphere, it is very naive to think that the aversion to the Jewish religion can be justified with a selection of biblical passages, which supposedly show that the Jewish god is a “false god,” a “humanized,” “fallible,” “capricious,” “cruel,” “unjust,” “dishonest” god, and so on

(Fritsch has mainly been the one to specialize in such accusations) and in stigmatizing such and such a dubious example of “Old Testament” morality (Rosenberg even calls the Bible “a collection of tales for horse traders and pimps”). Certainly, in the case of one Jew — Spinoza — we can recognize a prevailing tendency towards physicality and materiality in the Jewish mythological imagination.

However, that aside, if religions were to be judged by such contingent elements, it is questionable whether the mythologies of pure Nordic-Aryan stock would themselves be exempt from the very same accusations. Since the accusers in this case happen to be German, we could examine their own mythology. What should we then make of Odin/Wotan’s dishonesty in his pact with the “giants” who rebuild Asgard — and of the “morality” of king Günther who famously uses Siegfried so as to be able to rape Brünnhilde, for example? One cannot stoop to this low level of polemical tricks. And all the negative aspects of Jewish religiosity that we must recognize on the basis of what has already been stated should not lead us to ignore the fact that the Old Testament does contain elements and symbols of metaphysical, and hence universal value, even if they were borrowed from other sources.

When Günther, Oldenberg, and Clauss say that the Semitic-oriental spirit is characterized by “the oscillation between sensuality and spirituality, the mixing of the sacred and the brothel,” the enjoyment of carnality and at the same time, the enjoyment of the mortification of carnality, the opposition between spirit and body (which is arbitrarily claimed to have been unknown among the Aryans), the pleasure of exercising power over servile communities, its creeping way of insinuating itself into the emotions of others; when Wolf says that all the diseases we now suffer from have their origins in the Semitic East, that from “the marshy terrain of Eastern ethnic chaos were born imperialism and mammonism, the urbanization of peoples with the consequent destruction of marriage and family life, the rationalization and mechanization of religion, mummified priestly civilization, the absurd ideal of a divine State that would encompass the whole of humanity” — when anti-Semites say these things, we are served up a mixture of truths with some rather strange confusions. In order to see just how confused things sometimes get, we could take as an example the fact that for Wolf, Greeks and Romans supposedly have no other merit than to have developed “a thriving secular national civilization”: that shows how little he takes ancient Aryan spirituality as a reference point.

Wolf ends up putting Protestantism in the place of primordial Aryan spirituality, and as a result everything is inverted: he sees the triumph of the prophecy over ancient Jewish ritual spirituality as a progress rather than a degeneration, precisely because of its analogy with the Lutheran revolt against the ritualism and authority principle of the Catholic church. As for the accusations — typical of almost all anti-Semites and racists — leveled against the ideal of a universal sacred state, which they regard as Jewish and pernicious, it should be noted that although Semitic civilization sometimes espoused that ideal, it is not, however, originally Semitic, for it is found in the ascending cycle of any great traditional

civilization; it is in itself so far from being Jewish, that it was the very soul of the Catholic-Germanic Middle Ages and the dreams of Frederick II and Dante.

Strange to say, according to this anti-Semitic ideology, Rome ends up becoming a synonym of Jerusalem. Rome is not viewed so much as Christianity, but instead as Judaism, and at the same time as the legacy of the pagan empire, which, however, in its universalism, was supposedly already Jewish, or nearly so (the expression "Semitic Rome," referring to imperial Rome, dates back to de Gobineau). What, then, is supposed to be anti-Jewish? For Wolf, evidently following Chamberlain, it is evangelical, i.e., pre-Catholic Christianity, in its individualistic, formlessly fideistic and anti-dogmatic aspect, that goes right back to the impure ferment of Jewish prophecy, i.e., not only to Judaism, but to the decadent phase of Judaism; and then Luther, who in opposition to the "Romanism" of Rome — which he regarded as satanic — essentially brought back the Old Testament, so that there is no more philo-Semitic anti-Semite than he.

It is true that others, e.g. Rosenberg, for precisely this reason, reject Protestantism as well, but only to fall from the frying pan into the fire: they serve up a purely secular anti-Catholicism, a full repudiation of everything in Catholicism that is supernaturalism and ritual; basically, a rationalism — and racists regard rationalism as a Jewish creature!

Miller also denies the justification of considering Protestantism as a type of religion purified from the Semitic element, and if he directs accusations towards the Church of Rome, it is because of Jewish residues that it retains (e.g. the recognition that Israel was the chosen people, chosen for the revelation), and because of the fact that the Church has abandoned its earlier anti-Jewish rigor, and today has gradually moved towards a policy of tolerance towards Jews.

These are themes that are very widespread today in Germany. But equally widespread is the idea that Rome is the heir of a priestly Pharisaism that, like the Jewish one, aspires to world domination by every means. Even in the famous book *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, to which we will have to return, the ideal of a universal realm ruled by a sacred authority is presented as Jewish.

Here, once again, things are associated and mingled that, on the basis of the principles already indicated, should instead be quite distinct. While the ancient Roman universal imperial idea was unquestionably Asianized, undergoing, as a consequence, a process of decadence, this cannot be considered a valid argument against the idea in itself: nor is it a valid argument that Judaism, to some extent, has appropriated similar ideals. From an "Aryan" point of view, the value of the Catholic Church

consists in the fact that it was able to “Romanize” Christianity, reviving hierarchical ideas, traditions, symbols, and institutions that derive from a broader heritage and rectifying the deleterious element constituted by the revolution of early Christianity, which was closely connected with Jewish messianism and anti-virile Syrian mysticism. Of course, those who consider Catholicism more deeply will find many non-Aryan residues. Nevertheless, in recent times, Rome has remained the only relatively positive point of reference for tendencies to universality.

In relation to this, two points are to be fixed. As we shall see more clearly in the following chapters, there is in fact, today, a universal Jewish idea that is fighting against the remnants of the ancient European traditions, but this idea should be called international rather than universal, and represents the materialistic and plutocratic inversion of the ancient sacred idea of a universal regnum. Second, the hidden source of Nordic anti-Semitism betrays itself in its anti-universalist and anti-Roman polemics, through its confusion of universalism as a supranational idea with a universalism that only signifies the “active ferment of cosmopolitanism and of national decomposition” that, according to Mommsen, even in the ancient world was mainly caused by Judaism. In other words, that what anti-Semitism reveals in this respect, is a mere particularism.

Now, there is a very curious contradiction in those who on the one hand accuse the Jews of having a national god just for them, a morality and a feeling of solidarity that only applies to their own race, a principle of non-solidarity with the remainder of the human race, and so on — but then just follow the same Jewish “style” when they attack the other (alleged) aspect of the Semitic peril, which supposedly is universalism. Those who proclaim the well-known formula “gegen Rom und gegen Judentum” almost always do so in the name of the most narrow-minded, particularistic form of nationalism, conditioned by race in the purely naturalistic sense, to the point of manifesting, in their attempt to create an exclusively German national church — *deutsche Volkskirche* — the same spirit of schism as Gallicanism, Anglicanism, and similar heresies, which reflect, *mutatis mutandis*, the spirit of exclusiveness and monopoly of the divine for the benefit of a single race, that was characteristic of Israel. Thus, they naturally end up with an explicitly anti-Roman attitude, which, however, is equivalent to anti-Aryanism, mixed-up notions, devoid of strength and clarity, and cut off from freer, broader horizons. And it is noteworthy that in some cases, this anti-Roman attitude is not limited to the Catholic Church, but goes so far as to reject even the greatest Ghibelline emperors of German origin, precisely for their universalism!

These considerations, however, already bring us to another, ethical and political aspect of anti-Semitism, which will be the subject of subsequent writings. Now it is time to conclude this brief examination of the reasons for anti-Semitism on the religious and spiritual plane. Dühring once wrote that “the Jewish question would still exist even if all the Jews abandoned their religion and joined our dominant churches.” We must extend this idea and say that, in this regard, one can even set aside the reference to

race in the narrow sense, and talk about Semitism as a universal, as a typical attitude with regard to the spiritual world. This attitude can be defined in the abstract and can be detected even where a civilization lacks a clear and direct ethnic connection with the Semitic races and with the Jews. Everywhere where a heroic, triumphal, virile ascendance to divine dignity is lacking, and the pathos of a servile, de-personalizing, ambiguously mystical and messianic attitude with regard to the spiritual realm — there the primordial force of Semitism, of anti-Aryanism, resurfaces.

Semitic is the feeling of "guilt" and also the themes of "atonement" and self-humiliation. Semitic is the resentment of the "slaves of god" who cannot tolerate anyone above them and who strive to form an all-powerful collective (Nietzsche) — with all the consequences following from this anti-hierarchical idea, right down to its modern materialization in the form of Marxism and communism. Finally, Semitic is that underground spirit of dark and incessant unrest, of inner contamination and sudden revolt, so that according to the ancients, the Typhoon Set — the mythical serpent who is the enemy of the Egyptian Sun God — is the father of the Jews, and the Gnostics viewed the Jewish god as a "typhonic" creature.

Thus, today, in the spiritual realm, the Semitic ferment of decay can be discerned at the heart of the ideologies that culminate in the mysticism of a servile humanity collectivized under the sign of either the "white" or "red" internationals, or in the "romanticism" of the modern soul — the reemergence of the messianic "mood" — in its spiritually destructive, frenetic activity, its formless *élan vital*, in its neurotic restlessness, traversed by the impurest and most sensualistic forms of the "religion of life" or pseudo-spiritualist escapism.

In order to be rigorously anti-Semitic, we must have no recourse to half-measures, to ideas that are themselves contaminated by the evil we wish to combat. We have to be radical. We must invoke values that could really be called "Aryan," that are not based on vague and partial concepts suffused with a kind of biological materialism: values of solar and Olympian spirituality, of a classicism of clarity and mastered strength, of a new love for difference and free personality, and, at the same time, for hierarchy and for the universality that a race capable of rising again manfully from just "living" to a "more than life" could create in opposition to a mutilated world, a world without true principles and without peace.

Thus, we find a real reference-point only in an ideal antithesis, free from ethnic prejudice. Semitism, in this way, ends up becoming synonymous with that "subterranean" element that every great civilization — even the Jewish one, in its most ancient, royal phase — subdued in the act of realizing itself as a cosmos against chaos. Even without discussing the problem of the true unitary and prehistoric origin of

the “solar” spirituality that formed and animated the Indo-European civilizations — limiting ourselves only to the West, in what we have already stated about the spirit of the civilization of the eastern Mediterranean, about the crisis undergone by the people of Israel, about the connection between the active forces in this crisis with those that disfigured both Egyptian and Doric civilization, and, finally, Roman civilization — in all this we provided sufficient evidence to justify the possibility of an “anti-Semitism” free from bias and partisanship, as part of the battles that must now be fought in the name of the most luminous traditions of our past and, at the same time, for a better spiritual future.

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