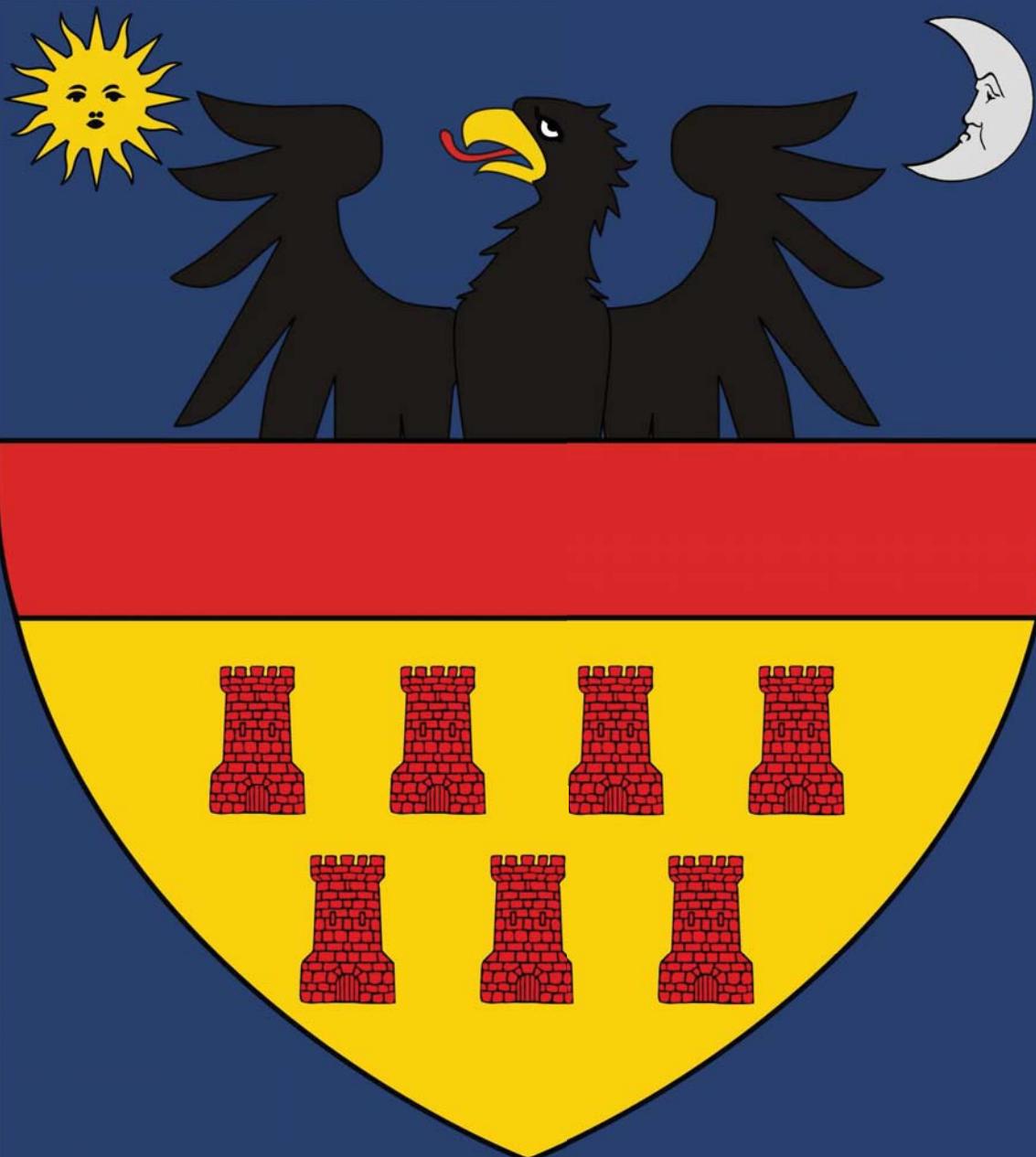


# ROMANIAN TRADITIONALISM



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## RENÉ GUÉNON AND AGARTTHA

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**THE QUESTIONS ABOUT AGARTTHA** emerged in minds infected by the modern and profane perspective, minds ready to admit any SF explanation or to look for sensational elements, minds that are incapable to accept God, even though they think they do, minds that are ready to encourage a “quest” for “Guénon’s Agartha,” but no longer for the “Realm of Prester John.”

Herodotus narrated:

For myself, I have been told by the Greeks who dwell beside the Hellespont and Pontus that this Zalmoxis was a man who was once a slave in Samos, his master being Pythagoras, son of Mnesarchus; presently, after being freed and gaining great wealth, he returned to his own country. Now the Thracians were a meanly-living and simple witted folk, but this Zalmoxis knew Ionian usages and a fuller way of life than the Thracian; for he had consorted with Greeks, and moreover with one of the greatest Greek teachers, Pythagoras; wherefore he made himself a hall, where he entertained and feasted the chief among his countrymen, and taught them that neither he nor his guests nor any of their descendants should ever die, but that they should go to a place where they would live for ever and have all good things. While he was doing as I have said and teaching this doctrine, he was all the while making him an underground chamber. When this was finished, he vanished from the sight of the Thracians, and descended into the underground chamber, where he lived for three years, the Thracians wishing him back and mourning him for dead; then in the fourth year he appeared to the Thracians, and thus they came to believe what Zalmoxis had told them. Such is the Greek story about him.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of finding Zalmoxis’ cave is, of course, not a very good idea, but the modern mentality tried to relate his underground disappearance with the theory of reincarnation and spiritism, which illustrates again how any real understanding of the traditional symbolism is forbidden to the modern mind.

René Guénon mentioned Agartha in his book **Le Roi du Monde**. He wrote many books, but this specific one was very convenient for the modern mentality, since it brought up something sensational indeed: an underground realm with a King reigning over the whole World; it represented something that the profane and corrupted mind could understand. And some individuals hurried to find this realm! Can you imagine Marco Pallis entering the underground territory and meeting the Lord of the World? Sensational! Such a discovery could have been so profitable. Travel agencies could have book trips and holidays to Agartha, the Lord of the World could have been on a television show! And “Louis de

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<sup>1</sup> **Histories**, IV, 95.

Maistre” could have been their guide. We mention here that the Templars’ treasure, the Masonic secrets and the Grail’s mystery are all, together with the “Agartha syndrome,” part of the same diabolic plan aiming at creating Kubin’s “Dream Land.”

Reading **Le Roi du Monde** today is an interesting experience, but a very disappointing one for the modern reader. The first chapter<sup>1</sup> starts well: Guénon elaborates on Agartha, as described by Saint-Yves and Ossendowski, and the modern reader is anxious to find in the following pages the secrets of the underground realm. The second chapter talks about the spiritual authority and temporal power, about the “Realm of Preaster John” (its mention should have been a clue for the “Agartha hunters”), and not really about Agartha. The third chapter is even worse, since it deals with the Jewish Kabbalah, with Shekinah and Metatron, with Mikael and Samael, and not a word about Agartha.

The next chapter though, the fourth chapter, seems to be about Agartha; however, it is not really about Agartha, since Guénon used what Saint-Yves and Ossendowski recounted as an opportunity to develop the doctrine of the three supreme functions. You really have to be narrow minded and have a profane mindset to continue, after studying this chapter, to think that René Guénon blindly, or mischievously, or by pure ignorance, or by naivety, promoted Agartha as an underground realm similar to the one described by Kubin, for example, or similar to a subway station. You have to be especially malevolent, and even diabolical, to suggest that the author of **L'Erreur spirite** (1923), of **Orient et Occident** (1924), of **L'Homme et son devenir selon le Védânta** (1925), became in 1927 blind and ignorant, forgetting his metaphysical lore, that he decided to advertise a sensational place, competing with James Hilton and his Shangri-La. What his detractors and enemies try to hide is that René Guénon was not a scholar, not a pundit, not a university professor, not a theosophist or an occultist, for whom initiation meant nothing more than a parody, not a political agent, with a tenebrous agenda; René Guénon was a veritable initiate whose function was to transmit the Truth. We are not sure that people can comprehend what a real initiate means in our days, when so many false prophets preach, when nobody listens and everybody talks, when to tell untruths is normal and when words have no meaning. However, René Guénon was an initiate and, as we said before, he must be measured with the compasses; could anybody draw a line using compasses, instead of the square? In Guénon’s case, he could.

In the fourth chapter, René Guénon explained that the Lord of the World is not the modern minds’ dream as seen in James Bond movies, he is not a political dictator reigning over mankind, and implicitly he is not *princeps hujus mundi*. The Lord of the World is the “Lord of the Three Worlds.” This is what Guénon said at the beginning of this chapter. Maybe his detractors can imagine the Second World, but for sure they have no access, of any kind, to the Third World, not to say that they could not think about the Fourth World. Modern people always look downwards, their eyes are glued to our insignificant earthly world.

René Guénon prepared his reader, in the previous chapters, explaining what the “real presence” (Shekinah) and the spiritual influences mean, how Shekinah is the synthesis of the

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<sup>1</sup> There are 12 short chapters composing **Le Roi du Monde**.

right and left sephirotic pillars,<sup>1</sup> and how, in a similar way, the Center has two arms, the spiritual authority and the temporal power, Peace and Justice. In the fourth chapter, Guénon developed what he said in the previous ones, stressing some essential truths. Saint-Yves' hierarchy (and also Ossendowski's) represents in fact the hierarchy of the Three Worlds. This truth is a universal truth, found in the Hindu tradition, but also in any other genuine tradition. As we explained in other works,<sup>2</sup> spiritual influences descend by countless degrees and eventually reach the human being's state; correspondingly, Shekinah is present in all Three Worlds, but even more, she is present, similarly, in each world or degree of the Existence. Equally, Agartha is present in each world, and, whereas the ignorant people hunt for it in the profane world, the seer's quest aims at a very sacred, very inaccessible Agartha.

This fourth chapter of **Le Roi du Monde**, which apparently deals with Saint-Yves' Agartha, is a real blow to Guénon's detractors, even though they did not seem to be aware of this. Presenting the traditional hierarchy, Guénon compared the three leaders of Agartha to Ishwara, Hiranyagarbha and Virâj, who are respectively the lords of the Three Worlds, and to the Three Magi. This is enough to make us understand what Agartha meant for Guénon. However, to further elucidate what he was transmitting, René Guénon wrote in 1929 (**Le Roi du Monde** was published in 1927) **Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporal**, where he developed the traditional significance of the three functions. Much later, in 1942, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy tackled the same subject in his **Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government**,<sup>3</sup> and, for the benefit of Guénon's detractors, we will refer to Coomaraswamy's work to illustrate what René Guénon said in **Le Roi du Monde**.

Coomaraswamy illustrated the concept of the "Lord of the World," in the Hindu tradition, with "the Mixta Persona of Mitrâvarunau, Supreme Identity of Conjoint Principles, [that] is the same as that of «One Akshara that is both Agni the Sacerdotum [spiritual authority] and Indra the Regnum [temporal power].»"<sup>4</sup> Guénon stressed that, in the Agartha's case, each of the three functions, Brahâtmâ, Mahâtmâ, and Mahângâ, possesses in itself a dual authority, sacerdotal and temporal, even though the first corresponds to the Lord of the World, the second to the spiritual authority, and the third to the temporal power. Likewise, Agni is not only the spiritual authority,<sup>5</sup> Coomaraswamy said, but he is "the marriage of the two Agni, kshatra and brahma ... a union of mutually antagonistic principles, [that] reflects the natural opposition of Sacerdotium and Regnum" (p. 23; French p. 40). Moreover, Manu corresponds to the Lord of the World, and Yama, his brother, to the spiritual authority, and Yamî, his sister, to the temporal power (pp. 32, 34; French pp. 52, 55). And Agni, united to Indra, represents the Lord of the World: "In the same way in SB X.4.1.8, in connection with the union of Sacerdotium and Regnum, here represented by Indrâgni..." (p. 39; French p. 62).

<sup>1</sup> In the Hindu tradition, there are three "channels," *sushumna*, *ida* and *pingala*. Since Guénon's detractors repeatedly mumbled that they could not find in India or Tibet any reference to what Guénon said in **Le Roi du Monde**, it is not futile to turn to the Hindu tradition, from time to time.

<sup>2</sup> René Guénon et le Centre du Monde, pp. 74-75.

<sup>3</sup> Manshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1978; French translation: **Autorité Spirituelle et Pouvoir Temporel**, Archè, 1985.

<sup>4</sup> **Spiritual Authority**, p. 6. **Autorité Spirituelle**, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> "Agni and Indra, Sacerdotium and Regnum..." *Ibid.* p. 37 (French p. 58).

Heinrich Zimmer described “the great Shiva-Trinity of Elephanta”: “The middle head of the threefold image is a representation of the Absolute... Over the right shoulder of this presence, perpetually growing out of the central form, is the male profile of Shiva... Correspondingly, to the left of the central mask is the profile of the female principle.”<sup>1</sup> Even though Zimmer is just a scholar, his descriptions are good illustrations of Agartha’s symbolism in the Hindu tradition.

In terms of René Guénon’s statement that Saint-Yves’ hierarchy (and also Ossendowski’s) represents in fact the hierarchy of the Three Worlds, we should quote Coomaraswamy again: “Agni, Vâyu and Âditya are the «Threefold Brahma» ... To this «Threefold Sovereign» correspond the «Threefold» World of Rig Vêda, the «Three Bright» Realms.”<sup>2</sup> This three-partition found in Saint Yves’ work is common in the Hindu tradition; “the Three Gandharvas or Lights, Agni, Vâyu, Âditya (the Persons of the Vedic «Trinity,» and the Universal Lights of the Fire-altar)” (*Ibid.* p. 42; French p. 67). “The King of Kings is thus the progenitive Solar Spirit, who takes the form of Agni, Vâyu and Âditya in relation to the triple Dominion or Three Dominions which are so often spoken as Dawn or Dawns, and are the Three Worlds” (*Ibid.* p. 43; French p. 68).

With respect to this three-partition, we should add that at the end of the universal manifestation, the Three Worlds will be invaded by “counter-initiatory” forces, by the demonic forces, in the same way Dante’s Dis was a city invaded and occupied by the devils.<sup>3</sup> “The story goes, that, once again in the course of history, the demons, titans, or anti-gods (*asura*), half-brothers and eternal rivals of the proper rulers of the world, had snatched to themselves the reigns of the government. As usual, they were led by an austere and crafty tyrant... Maya [Mayasura] was this tyrant’s name... he constructed three mighty strongholds [as centers of the Three Worlds, these three cities being called *Tripura*]. By a feat of magic he then amalgamated his three fortresses into one – a prodigious center of demon-chaos and world-tyranny, practically unassailable.”<sup>4</sup>

This unassailable *Tripura* is not Agartha. We know that the modern and profane individuals are easily tempted by the devil. We know that these people lack the power of discrimination, and, furthermore, they are manipulated to confuse Mikael with Samael, reality with illusion, Shiva with Mayasura.<sup>5</sup> This unassailable *Tripura* was built by Mayasura, who is a master of illusion. At the end of the universal manifestation, the real, true and inviolable *Tripura* disappeared “underground” and became hidden. In its place, Mayasura deployed his illusory *Tripura* that was not in fact unassailable, since Shiva could destroy it with an arrow. There is no doubt that authors like “Louis de Maistre” and others are completely under the power of Mâyâ. For example, the elephant is a sacred and divine

<sup>1</sup> Heinrich Zimmer, **Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization**, Harper, 1962, pp. 148-9.

<sup>2</sup> **Spiritual Authority**, p. 40; **Autorité Spirituelle**, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> See our **The Everlasting Sacred Kernel**, p. 76.

<sup>4</sup> Zimmer, **Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization**, p. 185.

<sup>5</sup> For this reason, “Louis de Maistre” shamelessly suggested that Agartha is a parody or a “counter-initiatory” center, and, moreover, that René Guénon himself is malefic and connected to the “counter-initiation” (*L’Énigme René Guénon et les “Supérieurs Inconnus,” Contribution à l’étude de l’histoire mondiale “souterraine,”* pp. 213, 214, 220, 231, 368).

symbol both in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions; but, because of Mâyâ, the elephant can also be a demon.<sup>1</sup>

As we said, Mâyâ has a peremptory role in confusing the modern minds, and we should give one more example. Mayasura is the king of the *Asuras*, *Daityas* and *Râkshasas*, representing the past cycles, the races that revolted,<sup>2</sup> and the “counter-initiatory” forces, which makes his symbolism complicated, since he appears also as the Lord of Tripura, the center of the Three Worlds (whose architect Mayasura is)<sup>3</sup>; but most of all, he symbolizes the “illusion.” Yet here this “illusion” is aggressive and deceptive, belonging to the “counter-initiation,” as attested by the **Râmâyana** episode of the “black cave,” when Hanumân and the *Vânaras*, in quest for Sítâ, entered a dark cave in the Vindhya mountains and discovered a paradise-like center built by Mayasura.<sup>4</sup> It is a deceiving center,<sup>5</sup> which tempts the hero of the quest away from the straight route, like the many other temptations present in various initiatory stories<sup>6</sup>; it is an “illusory” center, but at the same time, from a higher perspective and obeying the *lîlâ* of Brahma, it appears like a subterranean, hidden, and inaccessible center, similar to Agartha,<sup>7</sup> which is protected by a thick curtain of darkness,<sup>8</sup> and where Mayasura kept Hema captive.<sup>9</sup>

Coming back to Guénon’s **Le Roi du Monde** and the other chapters, from five to twelve, we observe that all the other chapters are not about Agartha at all; they clarify the Holy Grail’s symbolism, the symbolism of Melki-Tsedeq, they expose the doctrine of the spiritual centers, insisting on the fact that at the end of the present cycle the spiritual center became hidden (that is, “subterranean”).<sup>10</sup>

Agartha, as discussed by Guénon’s detractors, is just not there. For René Guénon, the works of Saint-Yves and Ossendowski were only an opportunity to reveal the symbolism of

<sup>1</sup> Zimmer, **Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization**, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> To revolt against the normal hierarchy means to create disorder (“anti-Cosmos”) and confusion (Guénon, **Autorité spirituelle**, p. 17). Normally, the *Dêvas* are associated with the “truth” (*satyam*) and the *Asuras* with “falsehood” and “disorder” (*anritam*) (Coomaraswamy, **La doctrine du sacrifice**, p. 169).

<sup>3</sup> In this case, Mayasura is comparable to Râvana, being described at the end of the cycle, when the unrighteousness reigned in Tripura and Shiva had to destroy the triple center. Nowadays, in India, the capital-city of the small province Tripura is Agartala.

<sup>4</sup> “Here the monkeys beheld choicest mansions everywhere made out of gold and silver, some with golden and some with silver domes, while some with golden and some with silver multi-stories, but all are studded with lapis gems with golden windows covered with laceworks of pearls. They have also seen everywhere flowered and fruited trees that are similar in shine to red corals and rubies, and golden honeybees, as well as honeys.”

<sup>5</sup> In the Grail stories, this paradise-like center is the initiatory starting point, and illustrates the adage that the “Paradise is a prison.” This paradise-like center was born at the same time with the need for initiation.

<sup>6</sup> The *Vânaras* decide to give up the quest and remain in the cave, which, as in the Grail stories, suggests how the “Paradise is a prison.”

<sup>7</sup> At the beginning of the cycle, the spiritual center was situated on the top of the mountain; at the end, it hid in the cave (Guénon, **Symboles fondamentaux**, p. 223).

<sup>8</sup> This tenebrous curtain could be penetrated only because Hanumân chanted Râma’s name as a *mantra*.

<sup>9</sup> We see the similarity with Râvana, who abducted Sítâ; Hema is here the daughter of Mount Mérû.

<sup>10</sup> “Louis de Maistre” thoughtlessly declared: “Without their [Saint-Yves’ and Ossendowski’s] revelations about the effective presence of a subterranean world, **Le Roi du Monde** would have remained just a work containing general and interesting views about the symbolism of the «center,» but which in themselves are not at all sensational and upsetting” (**L’Énigme René Guénon**, p. 184); on the contrary, these views are fundamental and essential!

the center, and he could not care less about the materialistic view regarding the underground world. For Guénon, Agartha was another name for the Center; from the beginning of the present cycle (the Earthly Paradise) to the end of the cycle (Heavenly Jerusalem), he said, the Center had various names like Tula, Luz, Salem or Agartha.<sup>1</sup> Guénon also said: “We must point out that the word *Salem*, contrary to the common opinion, has never really designated a city, but, if we consider it as the symbolic name of *Melki-Tsedeq*’s residence, it can be viewed as an equivalent of the term *Agartha*.<sup>2</sup>

There is no doubt that, from René Guénon’s perspective, Agartha was an equivalent of the Earthly Paradise. If we understand that, the “Agartha-hunt,” pursued by Pallis and others, becomes a ridiculous enterprise, if not worse. Anybody, with a normal, just, and traditional state of mind, when reading **Le Roi du Monde**, understands that this book is not about Agartha at all; it is about the inaccessible, inviolable, and untouchable doctrine of the spiritual centers.<sup>3</sup> Why would someone, after reading the book, want to go to Asia and find the “underground realm”? Why would many others write books about Guénon and Agartha? The answer is obvious.

The idea of an “underground center” must be correlated to two other ideas: that of the “lost center” and that of the “hidden center.” In fact, the “underground” center illustrates the reality of the *Kali-yuga*, when the Tradition is lost and the center becomes hidden. Wolfram von Eschenbach’s **Parzival and Titurel** ended with the same conclusion. After Perceval fought and made peace with his brother Feirefiz Angevin, they left Arthur’s center together to acquire the Holy Grail. But only Repanse de Schoye could carry the Grail; she married Feirefiz and left the Occident, travelling to India, to the Realm of Prester John, which, as we know, represents the supreme center, *Oriens*, “near Paradise”; Munsalvaesche also left the West and was transported to the same *Oriens*.<sup>4</sup>

René Guénon explained at the beginning of the seventh chapter of his **Le Roi du Monde** how the cave can symbolize a “hidden” center. In the **Rāmāyana**, at the end, it is said: “Then a heavenly throne rose up from within the earth, borne on the heads of mighty *nāgas*, decked in shining jewels; and the Earth stretched out her arms and welcomed Sītā and placed her on the throne, and the throne sank down again.”<sup>5</sup> Sītā retreating underground symbolizes the lost Tradition and is equivalent to the lost Holy Grail. Sri Aurobindo also said: “The Martanda or eighth Surya is the black or dark, the lost, the hidden sun. The Titans have taken and concealed him in their cavern of darkness.”<sup>6</sup>

Even today the idea of a “subterranean” center is alive in India. At Haridwār, there is a *Shiva Lingam*, which naturally emerged, and which, with the evolvement of the cycle,

<sup>1</sup> Guénon, **Symboles fondamentaux**, pp. 108-109.

<sup>2</sup> Guénon, **Le Roi du Monde**, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> The Hindu tradition says: “The knowledge of the Three Worlds and their Rulers is the «Triple Science»” (**Spiritual Authority**, p. 44, **Autorité Spirituelle**, p. 68).

<sup>4</sup> See Guénon, **Le Roi du Monde**, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita, **Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists**, Dover, 1967, p. 114. There is another symbol of the throne that stresses how the absolute center is “underground.” On the “Island of Jewels” (*mani-dwīpa*), a symbol of the center, there is a throne with the goddess Māyā, and she sits on Sakala Shiva, who is laying on Nishkala Shiva (Zimmer, **Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization**, p. 197 ff).

<sup>6</sup> Sri Aurobindo, **The Secret of the Veda**, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1971, p. 426.

progressively retracted underground. Today, you can just see its top, since it is the end of the *Kali-yuga* and the center is almost completely subterranean.

However, for the twisted minds of Guénon's detractors, all this is just a huge "manipulation." These individuals are so caught by their ridiculous game that they cannot see how absurd their affirmations are; they cannot see because, obviously, they are themselves manipulated.

In 1995, Marco Baistrocchi published the article **Agartha: una manipolazione guénoniana?** This article was brought to our attention only after we published our **Agartha, the Invisible Center**, and so, we could not comment on it. Nevertheless, Joscelyn Godwin translated Baistrocchi's article, which was recently published,<sup>1</sup> and the antitraditionalist Mark Sedgwick hurried to praise it.

We must declare that Marco Baistrocchi cannot be trusted at all. As Jean-Marc Vivenza is a "neo-martinist," so Baistrocchi was a "neo-theosophist," and both hated René Guénon, since Guénon has torn apart the occultists and the theosophists. You need to have some qualities to be able to understand your errors and give up the arrogance, admitting that you have made a wrong choice, instead of using your energies to defend it because it's "your baby." But, of course, there are other reasons, more sinister, for Baistrocchi's article.

Joscelyn Godwin considers, in his *Introduction*, that "Baistrocchi's is the first attempt at a rational solution to the puzzle, supported by a formidable apparatus of erudition and documentation." Now, such a presentation kills any desire to read the article. To bring a "rational solution" to the doctrine of the spiritual centers, by using "erudition and documentation," is a futile and absurd endeavour. Yet Baistrocchi's endeavour was not so much about finding a "rational solution" as it was about fighting Guénon and praising Theosophism.

Baistrocchi's "formidable apparatus of erudition and documentation" is based on very unreliable sources. But Baistrocchi uses a shrewd technique, which is very efficient even though it is not original. At one point Baistrocchi declared: "Now that the origin of the legend of Agartha has been clarified..." (p. 24); in fact, nothing was "clarified," but this is the technique: you confuse the reader with all kinds of elements and after a while you declare that everything is now solved, and after that, the reader is manipulated to think that, indeed, it is so. The same technique was used by "Louis de Maistre."

There is another technique. We do not have time to list here various examples, but there are many that illustrate how an author uses a reference without checking its validity, and then this author becomes a reference for another one, and now the error is not anymore an error. In Baistrocchi's case, using the works of Jean-Pierre Laurant and Marie-France James as references meant perpetuating an error. What happened is that, because Laurant and James published their works about Guénon many years ago (1975 and 1981), they became some sort of taboo references, and Baistrocchi forgot to say that both Laurant and James wrote based on their own individual fantasies, and that they are not at all reliable sources.

For Baistrocchi, René Guénon was an "intellectual," a "scholar."<sup>2</sup> Also, you have to have a special kind of mind, indeed, to declare that "the Judeo-Christian documentation, which is Guénon's truly innovative contribution to the subject, rather than being a response to Saint-

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<sup>1</sup> Marco Baistrocchi, **Agartha: A Guénonian Manipulation?**, Theosophical History, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Ridiculous and insulting is also Baistrocchi's affirmation that Michel Valsan was a "scholar" (p. 66).

Yves is intended to furnish a sort of doctrinal basis and consistency to the new myth of Agartha” (p. 10). Baistrocchi, as many others, is so totally contaminated by modern mentality, that he cannot (or does not want to) understand that a traditional writer, like Guénon (or a traditional painter, or a traditional architect), does not innovate and does not try to be original. Baistrocchi’s hypothesis is that René Guénon manipulated his readers to reject India and the Theosophism in favour of the “Judeo-Christian” tradition or Islam, and that Guénon was an agent of the Jesuits and of the Jews (pp. 25, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 38).

Baistrocchi wrote about Theosophism: “The Theosophical Society’s noteworthy contribution to reviving the metaphysical and religious traditions of India was recognized ... by the most authoritative Western scholars of Indian spiritual traditions” (pp. 27-28). As Alvin Moore Jr. said, “Blavatsky was not a mere vulgar adventuress, she was a high skilled impostor.” Blavatsky was, no doubt about it, a crook. And Theosophism is an invention, not because René Guénon said so, but because that is how it was built. Baistrocchi’s above declaration is so foolish, when talking about Western scholars recognizing how the Theosophism revived the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, that we must accept that it is the end of the *Kali-yuga*. Baistrocchi complained that people considered his article to be “impious”; it is not “impious”, it is pure and simple unintelligent.

However, we mention here that he attacked Guénon for his “baseless ... anti-reincarnationist statements” and for his “study of cycles, in which he seems basically ignorant of the Hindu doctrine of cosmic cycles” (p. 40). Both these subjects are fundamental parts of Theosophism, and, of course, Baistrocchi cannot accept René Guénon’s “statements.” Regarding the doctrine of the cosmic cycles, the numerous zeros composing the cyclical numbers, so dear to Baistrocchi, are, evidently, just a “cover,” and there is no need for a lot of elaborated and bright studies to understand that.

Regarding the theory of reincarnation, this one is antimetaphysical and a modern invention. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy said that “The notion of «reincarnation» in the ordinary sense of a rebirth on Earth of departed individuals, represents only an error of understanding of the doctrines of heredity, of transmigration and of regeneration.”<sup>1</sup> If transmigration means the passing from one state of being to another, metempsychosis represents, as René Guénon said, “the transmission of certain psychic elements from an individuality to another” and only this metempsychosis could be somehow confused with reincarnation.

As Coomaraswamy stated, the only one transmigrant is the Self, *Ātmā*. And this Self is the One that gives reality to any “incarnation,” which is called *jīvātmā*. The body and the soul, *Corpus* and *Anima*, they have no existence without *Ātmā*, and therefore they cannot “reincarnate” by themselves. If we understand the Chinese concept of the “current of forms,” illustrated by the river, with its ever changing waters, we will comprehend that the body and the soul will be disintegrated and their components will reintegrate in other combinations. *Ātmā*, because is not different from Brahma, is Infinite, and we have to conceive the universal manifestation not from a temporal perspective (as succession), but as a sum of simultaneous events, like an infinite (in fact, indefinite) canvas, a canvas weaved by the “incarnations” of *Ātmā*, and where there is no place for “reincarnation.”

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<sup>1</sup> **Hindouisme et Bouddhisme**, Gallimard, 1980, p. 14.

The modern mind and the sentimentalism and arrogance of profane people cannot accept that death is a change of state and everything belonging to this state will remain in this state. There is transmigration, but never reincarnation. Theosophism enthusiastically helped to spread this inanity regarding reincarnation in the Western world, and hence Baistrocchi's foolish reaction.

Before ending this chapter, let us mention one last element from Baistrocchi's article. Baistrocchi quoted René Guénon on his comparison of the Hindu and Islamic traditions, and he interpreted Guénon's words as suggesting that, today, salvation can only come from Islam (p. 36). It is strange that Baistrocchi, with his conclusion, is in concert with Charles-André Gilis, who in his recent works, and especially in his **L'héritage doctrinal de Michel Vâlsan**,<sup>1</sup> declared the same thing.

Guénon wrote:

the accomplishment of the cycle must have some correlation, in the historic order, with the encounter of two traditional forms that correspond to its beginning and to its end, and which have Sanskrit and Arabic as sacred languages: the Hindu tradition, which represents the most direct heritage of the primordial Tradition, and the Islamic tradition, insofar as it is the «seal of Prophecy» and consequently the ultimate form of traditional orthodoxy for the present cycle.<sup>2</sup>

Using this text, Charles-André Gilis tried to demonstrate that the Islamic tradition is destined to engulf the whole world, to save it from profanation, and to bring it under the Islamic law. Gilis, who wrote many good things in the past, but who became at the end of his life obsessed with the task of "Islamizing" Guénon, made a fundamental mistake, because he did not want to accept two traditional truths. First, René Guénon did not say that the Hindu tradition *is* the primordial Tradition and the unique tradition; he only said that the Hindu tradition is the most direct heir of the primordial Tradition, and, therefore, other orthodox traditions have coexisted with the Hindu tradition; similarly, the Islamic tradition *is not* the primordial Tradition and the unique tradition, but the last revealed tradition, which will coexist with other orthodox traditions until the end of times. Second, the revival Gilis dreams of, and which means that the whole world will embrace Islam, is too similar to the New Age fantasies, where it is said that the return of the "Golden Age" will occur in this present cycle. In fact, the "reversal of the poles" happens *outside* this cycle, and the only event that we can expect inside the cycle is its end. The revival Gilis talks about already happened when Islam was revealed.

Today, we are in the last phase of *Manvantara*, and nobody should assume that the people of Agartha will surface to recreate a "Golden Age" for this cycle.

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<sup>1</sup> Le Turban Noir, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> **Symboles fondamentaux**, p. 176.



## The Everlasting Sacred Kernel

### AVOWAL

Mircea A Tamas



1

In *The Everlasting Sacred Kernel*, our goal was to follow the Hindu method called *Arundhati-darshananyâya*, a method based on the obvious fact that not all individuals are capable of understanding the same truth.<sup>2</sup> To reach the Principle – Brahma –, the Hindu teachings say, is such a difficult task for the majority of honest seekers that the master advises the student to meditate first on a physical object, let's say the physical sun (or the star *Arundhati*, which is usually given as example); after a while, the student will understand that the physical sun is not his real target and will move to a higher object and so on, until the spiritual Sun, the supernal Sun is reached.

This method is used in different traditions, from *Yoga-mârga* to *Hesychasm*. The neophytes simulate a state of peace and bliss, which will really become their transformed and permanent nature only after a spiritual realization. Such a *modus operandi* offers also the possibility – at least, theoretically – of integrating the series of disharmonies (the lower or external stages) into a final perfect harmony. René Guénon, writing about contrarieties and contrasts that function at the corporeal and subtle (psychical) levels, but disappear at a higher level, explained: “Who says contrast or opposition, says, by this, disharmony or unbalance, that is, something that can exist only from a very particular and limited perspective; as a whole, the equilibrium is composed of the sum of all the unbalanced parts, and each partial disorder concurs, willy-nilly, to a perfect order.”<sup>3</sup> For

<sup>1</sup> The illustration represents the cover of the revised edition of *The Everlasting Sacred Kernel* and is the work of art of Nigel Jackson.

<sup>2</sup> In the Hindu tradition, this is related to *adhikâribheda*.

<sup>3</sup> René Guénon, *Études sur l'hindouisme*, Éd. Trad., 1979, p. 15.

Guénon, this truth is so important that he uses it to explain the rank of the profane and antitraditional elements in our modern world. He states that any antitraditional, profane and even counter-initiatory actions or forces cannot surpass the individual domain (the “psycho-physical” world) and it is an illusion to think that they can oppose the spiritual order itself. Without their awareness and despite their will, these entities are subjugated to *Spiritus*, the same way everything is, even if unwitting or involuntarily, subjugated to the Divine Will. And they are used, against their will, to the realization of the “divine plan in the human domain.” And Guénon added:

If we consider the matter from an overall perspective, and not only in respect of these beings [representing the counter-initiation], we may say that, similar to all the others, they are necessary in their places, as elements of the assembly, and as “providential” instruments – speaking in a theological language – of the advance of this world through its cycle of manifestation, because in this way each partial disorder, even when it appears as *the disorder*, concurs necessarily to total order. (Guénon, **Le règne**, p. 355)

The traditional vestiges, that is, the debris that survived the disappearance of different genuine traditions and traditional civilizations, could become part of these disharmonies, after the spirit withdrew and inferior forces took control of them. It was very common during recent centuries to collect all kinds of vestiges belonging to various traditions and build a so-called “doctrine,” which is purely and simply a fake (Guénon, **Le règne**, p. 328), without any spiritual power and often open to counter-initiatory influences. The interference of a human or individual element, that is, reorganizing, changing, abusing and altering the traditional vestiges, constitutes a significant danger. The traditional doctrines that are alive suffer the same abuse and alteration, yet their representatives can still react and protect them against “maleficent” actions; by contrast, the traditional vestiges are without protection and consequently more exposed to the dangers of counter-initiatory influence. It is no surprise that Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabî wrote:

It is better if the companions of our Way keep silent on the subject of the operative sciences of the spiritual order. Moreover: it is forbidden to expose them in a manner that makes them comprehensible at the same time to the initiatory elite and to the common people, because the corrupters could use them in their malefic works.<sup>4</sup>

This kind of subversion and abuse is, today, almost impossible to stop. The least we can do is to try to suggest the real meanings of the symbols that are still alive. About the importance of the symbols, René Guénon wrote:

For the people who succeeded in penetrating its profound significance, the symbol can transmit inestimably more [sacred knowledge] than any direct discursive teaching; thus, it is the only way to transmit – insofar as is possible – the inexpressible that constitutes the proper domain of initiation ... We must not forget that, if the symbolic initiation, which is merely the base and the support of the effective initiation, is inevitably the only one that can be communicated on the outside, at least this symbolic initiation can be

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Arabî, **Le Livre du Mîm, du Wâw et du Nûn**, trans. in French by Charles-André Gilis, Albouraq, 2002, p. 59.

preserved and transmitted even by people who don't understand its meaning and importance; it is enough to keep and preserve the symbols intact, and they will always be able to awaken – in those who are capable – all the concepts they contain in a synthetic mode. (Guénon, *Aperç. sur l'Init.*, p. 205)

Modern literature can serve as a preparatory exercise to understand how fundamental symbols operate, but at the same time it shows how dangerous and pernicious are the effects of “originality,” “individuality” and “inventiveness,” by altering and diverting the essential meanings of symbols. A special case is that of so-called “folklore.” Folklore, like mythology, is a reservoir, which preserves the vestiges of vanished traditional societies, of sacred rituals and initiatory rites. If modern mentality didn't touch it, that is, if nobody tried to alter its content and form, “folklore” could be a valuable support in the study of traditional symbolism; otherwise, “fabricated” folklore is no better than profane and “original” literature.<sup>5</sup>

We must stress that literature has no initiatory power and does not constitute an initiatory tool of any kind. Moreover, the popularity of the authors, or the fact that they are some famous characters in the international literary domain, means nothing. If we talk about Balzac or Patrick Süskind, for example, their works are not initiatory because the authors are profane and there is no “super-human” element involved. If the literary works carry some traditional data or initiatory symbols, it does not mean much if the author does not have the necessary esoteric qualification; on the contrary, the author's intervention can bring a counter-initiatory viewpoint, as was the case of Umberto Eco or of Paulo Coelho.

In short, we may view modern literature from a quadruple perspective, with respect to the author: there are authors, albeit very few, who possess initiatory data and these are reflected in their works<sup>6</sup>; there are authors who, unconsciously, transmit in their works unaltered traditional vestiges; there are antitraditional authors who willingly abuse the sacred symbols and fabricate others, writing maleficent literature; finally, there are authors who, often manipulated without their knowing it by counter-initiatory forces, issue noxious writings.

In our present work, we did not limit our preferences to one type of authors. When, ten years ago, we decided to go public for a while and publish this first book, *The Everlasting Sacred Kernel* was specifically designed to target Occidental mentality, by using well known written texts.<sup>7</sup> The intent was to stir interest for the traditional perspective, to show that we still can reverse our upside-down and profane state of mind, and to stress how essential it is to open the “eye of the heart” and choose between “the wheat and the darnel.”

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<sup>5</sup> We have shown, in another work, the difference between modern literature and genuine fairy tales, between pseudo-initiatory texts and the legitimate symbolism safeguarded in myths, ballads and fairy tales (See **Agartha, the Invisible Center**).

<sup>6</sup> Of course, in the situation where the authors only think that they are endowed with an initiatory knowledge, fantasizing that they have the key of the secret treasure, without actually belonging to an initiatory organization or an authentic tradition, their work possesses little if any worth.

<sup>7</sup> Coomaraswamy mentioned oral and written literature; of course, he used the word “literature” in its general sense, even if in Latin *litera* represents mainly “written letters, inscriptions.” For modern man, as well, “literature” refers firstly to written works, and especially to fiction.

We used Western literature as a pretext. It was a risky endeavour, considering the subversive modern mind, which postulated that humankind hides an unconscious yearning for initiatory subjects and initiatory symbolism, and has a secret need for religiosity. Such an opinion degrades the spiritual domain, bringing it down to the psychological level of individuality. And not once was the attraction towards initiatory meanings and religious implications in literary works considered a confirmation of this unwitting longing for a spiritual completion.

It is dangerous to consider literary texts, especially the modern ones, as initiatory means. What is usually called “literature” belongs completely to the profane order. As we said, modern and profane literary works have no power to transmit an initiation or to be a support for spiritual realization. Even sacred writings do not automatically confer initiation on an individual. Reading a sacred text or a thousand sacred texts doesn’t allow readers to initiate themselves.

In our work, *The Everlasting Sacred Kernel*, we only used Western literature to introduce the essence of traditional thinking and to illustrate how the laws of sacred symbolism should be considered. We stressed the importance of looking upwards, in a *sattwic* manner, and not downwards as many are doing today. We assumed that, looking upwards, it is still possible to uncover a sacred kernel in literature, even if this had become desecrated. We underlined the major role of the power of discrimination to identify the traditional vestiges carried by profane literature, and in some cases we showed how these were abused and altered.

In fact, our work distinguished between two types of “literature”: one initiatory and traditional, the other occult and antitraditional. In the first category we included the biblical story of Samson, Homer’s epics, fairy tales, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare’s plays, and two modern works, *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas and *The Little Prince* by Saint-Exupéry; in the second category, which is extremely rich, we chose as exemplification other works by Dumas and also works by Jules Verne, Mark Twain and Edgar Allan Poe.

The fact that we included *The Three Musketeers* and *The Little Prince* in the first class was done for “didactic” reason: to illustrate how we should read the dormant symbols and how we should purify our profane mentality. Yet, we never suggested that such works, belonging to profane literature, could be called “initiatory,” or that they can confer an initiation, or even that their authors were some sort of initiates. Contrary to Homer, Dante and Shakespeare, who represented genuine initiatory currents (not to say more), authors like Alexandre Dumas or Antoine de Saint-Exupéry did not have any spiritual qualification and their books have nothing sacred about them. What happened was that literature inherited some esoteric vestiges and transmitted them further, yet they were all too often altered, misunderstood, or counterfeited.

In Alexandre Dumas’ case, for example, *The Three Musketeers* is an exception. Dumas (and, of course, his readers) knew nothing about any initiatory symbolism and rather enjoyed “dark” subjects.<sup>8</sup> We described Dumas’ interest in vampirism, ghosts and infernal characters; even in *The Three Musketeers*, there are two demonic characters: Rochefort and Milady,<sup>9</sup> both without real names (here it is not about a supernal anonymity, but an infernal one); nonetheless, we could consider that they represent the

<sup>8</sup> However, the modern society’s attraction for the infrahuman domain was not a phenomenon limited to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and it developed continuously in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

dragon, and their roles and fate are in accord with a traditional scenario, which makes *The Three Musketeers* not a “dark” story or parody, but a sort of fairy tale, hiding traditional data.

On the contrary, the modern Spanish novel, *El Club Dumas*, by Arturo Pérez-Reverte, is nothing else but a parody, an occultist and infernal tale, using Rochefort to stress the demonic characteristic of the story<sup>10</sup>; it combines fiction with non-fiction, where the non-fiction includes Alexandre Dumas’ work and his sources.<sup>11</sup> If, in some cases, finding the sources is a *sine qua non* (or seems to be), then these sources must be verified and not taken from second hand references, as it happens with many occultist and New Age works, and even with some works about traditional subjects.<sup>12</sup>

Let us say one more word about *Les Trois Mousquetaires*. After Dumas’ death, many epigones invaded the book market with sequels exploiting the success of the *Musketeers*. The first assault was carried immediately after Dumas’ disappearance, with Albert Maurin publishing, in 1874, *Les Véritables Mémoires de D’Artagnan le Mousquetaire*. This work, compared to Dumas’ *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, discloses another “classification”: there are texts that shelter a sacred kernel, and *The Three Musketeers* is

<sup>9</sup> Milady appears to be a ghost from hell. Rochefort is “the cursed man, my evil genius,” as d’Artagnan says, “the devil,” as Athos says. Rochefort and Milady are “two kinds of demons,” and Rochefort will salute Milady saying “My compliments to Satan!”.

<sup>10</sup> The movie, *The Ninth Gate* (1999), based upon the novel *The Club Dumas*, pushed the infernal and parodic characteristics to the extreme. Similarly, the recent movie *The Three Musketeers* (2011) is nothing else than another degradation, where the “Star Wars & ninja” style is visible, illustrating how successful the infernal forces are today.

<sup>11</sup> No doubt, the main source for Dumas’ *The Three Musketeers* was *Mémoires de Mr. D’Artagnan*, written by Gatien de Courtiz de Sandras in 1700 (the edition available to us was published in 1966 at Jean de Bonnot, Paris). We find here the main characters, some episodes, including the one about Milady and her chambermaid (Bonnot edition, pp. 203, 239). The same Gatien de Courtiz wrote in 1687 *Mémoires de Mr. M.L.C.D.R. (Mémoires de Monsieur Le Comte de Rochefort)* (the edition available to us was published in 1710, at Henry van Bulderen), and this book is the source for the name of Dumas’ Rochefort, but there were other elements that inspired Dumas and Maquet: Rochefort’s journey to Brussels (*Mémoires de Mr. M.L.C.D.R.*, pp. 53 ff. and Alexandre Dumas, *The Three Musketeers*, Peter Fenelon Collier Publisher, 1893, p. 19); the involvement of Rochefort’s father with a branded (marked with a fleur-de-lis) woman (*Mémoires de Mr. M.L.C.D.R.*, p. 5) inspired the episode about Athos and his wife; and Dumas used even a verbal expression found in Rochefort’s *Mémoires*, where Rochefort admitted to be one of Richelieu’s “creatures” (p. 93), and that is how Milady is described (“she was some creature of the cardinal’s,” **The Three Musketeers**, chapter XXXI, p. 186). The episode of the twelve diamond studs has an important place in Dumas’ novel. There is more than one source for it: *Mémoires du Duc de la Rochefoucauld* and Antoine-Marie Roederer, *Intrigues politiques et galantes de la Cour de France* (Librairie de Charles Gosselin, 1832, *Les aiguillettes d’Anne d’Autriche*, pp. 195 ff.). However, the printing history of La Rochefoucauld’s *Mémoires* is a tumultuous one, and therefore, the mentioned episode is not to be found in the early editions (the edition available to us was published in 1664, at “Pierre van Dyck,” as *Mémoires de M.D.L.R.*), but much later (see, for example, *Mémoires du Duc de la Rochefoucauld*, première partie, Renouard, 1817, pp. 8-9).

<sup>12</sup> Arturo Pérez-Reverte, in his *El Club Dumas*, refers to all the three *Mémoires* and to Roederer’s work we cited in the previous note (**The Club Dumas**, Vintage Books, 1998, pp. 14-15, 96, 196), but he adds *Mémoires of De La Porte* (p. 196) as a source for “Constance [Bonacieux]’s kidnapping.” Constance Bonacieux, as D’Artagnan’s mistress, appears (without a name, just as “la cabaretière”) in the *Mémoires de Mr. D’Artagnan*, p. 121. Nonetheless, for “Constance’s kidnapping,” it is true that the *Mémoires de M. de la Porte* (the edition available to us was published in 1756, in Geneva) was the source, but in the *Mémoires La Porte* describes his own kidnapping (p. 121) and not Constance’s (a character invented by Dumas, who said she was La Porte’s goddaughter).

one of them; then, there is neutral “literature,” like Maurin’s book, which hides no symbolism, no traditional elements, but it is built on fiction and some historical facts.<sup>13</sup> Finally, there are texts plainly directed against any traditional elements that could still subsist in our modern world, and we should say a few words about this last category.

The counter-initiatory forces have no access to the “power of discrimination.” On the contrary, they use indiscriminately all the tools they can get and, because they need to create confusion, these tools can appear as being opposed to one another. Some of these tools are writers like Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), Mark Twain (1835-1910), Gustav Meyrink (1868-1932) and Alfred Kubin (1877-1959). We already mentioned Poe and Twain in the main text of our *The Everlasting Sacred Kernel*; however, it is instructive to augment the exposé by concisely examining the last two authors.

Alfred Kubin, a friend of Meyrink and so foolishly labelled “prophet of Agartha,”<sup>14</sup> is a sad and troubled character. In his *My Life*,<sup>15</sup> Kubin describes a life that is interesting only because illustrates pseudo-tradition, pseudo-initiation and counter-initiatory influences at work. His main work, *The Other Side*,<sup>16</sup> is a dark parody, where the “center” is called the “Dream Empire,” and we see the same idea like in Mark Twain’s case. The “Dream Empire,” located in Asia, is isolated by an impenetrable wall, a parody of Cusanus’ paradisiacal wall; it is a shelter, Kubin says, for all who are against the modern world and everything is organized with respect to a higher spiritual life.<sup>17</sup> The author is invited to travel to this “Dream Land,” a “secret” place, having as center a city called Pearl.<sup>18</sup> Yet, what seems to be just a parody of Agartha, of a spiritual center, is, in fact, an anti-center.<sup>19</sup>

The other author is Gustav Meyrink, who makes good company with Kubin, Verne, Poe and Twain. Likewise, he uses some symbols, but it is obvious that his work is a “parody” of the genuine initiatory stories and creates a terrible confusion. Like Kubin, and akin to Jules Verne in his works *The Carpathian Castle* and *Mathias Sandorf*, Gustav Meyrink uses (in fact, abuses) the symbolism of the center. The centers presented by Kubin, Verne and Meyrink are pseudo-centers or even anti-centers, “occultist” centers, a caricature and a mockery, suspect centers influenced by counter-initiatory forces, and we have to use our power of discrimination to understand Guénon’s sayings that the

<sup>13</sup> If someone had the patience to read *Les Véritables Mémoires de D’Artagnan le Mousquetaire*, this someone would see what a fundamental difference is between this book and Dumas’ *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, a difference almost identical with the one between the profane and sacred viewpoints.

<sup>14</sup> Louis de Maistre, *L’Énigme René Guénon et les “Supérieurs Inconnus,” Contribution à l’étude de l’histoire mondiale “souterraine,”*, 2004, Archè – Milan, p. 133.

<sup>15</sup> Alfred Kubin, *Ma vie*, Allia, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Alfred Kubin, *L’Autre côté*, Jose Corti, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 27.

<sup>19</sup> *The Other Side* is really boring. But North-American schools would love to have it for their students, since the only interesting works for the School Boards are those connected with mental illness and psychical disorders (hence their favourite painter is Van Gogh). They are not alone, of course. We should mention here a curious fact: the most famous ancient sculptures exposed in the Louvre Museum are *Venus de Milo* and *Victory of Samothrace*. Why, when there are many others similar beautiful ancient Greek sculptures, these two became the most celebrated? The only reason is that these two specific pieces have something special: *Venus de Milo* has no arms and *Victory of Samothrace* has no head, and these kinds of mutilations are compatible with the mutilated state of the modern mind.

“‘counter-initiation’ derived from the unique source to which every initiation is attached.”

In a letter to Julius Evola (from 1949), René Guénon wrote: “There are cases in which the influence of counter-initiation is clearly visible. Among these cases we must include those in which the traditional elements are presented in an intentionally ‘parodic’ form; this is, in particular, the case of Meyrink, which, of course, does not mean that he was clearly aware of the influence which was exercised upon him. Therefore, I am surprised to learn that you seem to respect Meyrink.”<sup>20</sup>

When Meyrink’s last book, *Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster* (*The Angel of the West Window*), was translated in French, it was published with a *Foreword* by Julius Evola, and this *Preface* shows how such books can create confusion, even in the case of people like Evola, who knew Guénon’s teachings. However, Evola himself made his contribution to the general confusion, with his erroneous ideas about initiation, Masonry and spiritual authority. Even though Evola tried to highlight some of Meyrink’s errors, the *Preface* remains dubious, especially at the end when Evola compares Agartha from Guénon’s *Le Roi du Monde* to Meyrink’s Elsbethstein.<sup>21</sup> Meyrink’s center is, at best, a pseudo-Agartha; nonetheless, it is instructive to see how Meyrink abuses the traditional symbols. For example, in Evola’s opinion (expressed in his *Foreword*<sup>22</sup>) the novel transmits a real teaching when, at the end, the Angel is denounced as just an echo, an illusion,<sup>23</sup> a spiritist error. What Evola could not see is that the title, which represents the quintessence of the work, is *The Angel of the West Window*, emphasizing the importance of this “Angel,” and if Meyrink at the end negates it, he only divulges his own confusions. Not to say that the idea of using the term “angel” for this ghost is not only inadequate, but directly diabolical, and even if it seems that Meyrink eventually rejects the “Angel,” his book extensively presents spiritist sessions.<sup>24</sup>

*The Angel of the West Window* continued the confusion created by Verne, Poe, and Twain, and influenced modern antitraditional authors. Meyrink introduces a character called Lipotine or Nitchevo,<sup>25</sup> a name similar to Verne’s Nemo (in Russian, *nitchevo* means “nothing”). As in Twain’s case, the (malefic) dream plays an important role<sup>26</sup>; but

<sup>20</sup> Julius Evola, **René Guénon, A Teacher for Modern Times**, Sure Fire Press, 1994, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> “[Meyrink] talks about a supreme center of the world (Elsbethstein, an analogue idea to that of Agartha)” (Gustave Meyrink, *L’Ange à la fenêtre d’Occident*, La Colombe, 1962, p. 17). We should add that, inexplicably, Julius Evola considered Gustave Meyrink as expressing in his work some “magico-initiatory teachings” (Julius Evola, *Masques et visages du spiritualisme contemporain*, Les Éditions de l’homme, 1972, p. 271).

<sup>22</sup> See also *Masques et visages*, p. 288.

<sup>23</sup> That is what Meyrink says at the end of his book (Gustav Meyrink, *L’Ange de la fenêtre d’Occident*, Le Rocher, 1986, pp. 292, 312-313). We see here the same pattern that Twain used in *The Great Dark*, where the conclusion was that everything is illusion, but, in comparison with the sacred writings, there is nothing beyond this illusion. The Angel could be compared to Twain’s “Superintendent of Dreams.”

<sup>24</sup> *L’ange de la fenêtre d’Occident*, p. 138. Marcel Clavelle (Jean Reyor) published in 1932, in *Le Voile d’Isis*, an article about Meyrink, and it is depressing to read that this collaborator of Guénon could say that Meyrink’s *Green Face* offers practical guidance with respect to the initiatory process (Jean Reyor, *Études et recherches traditionnelles*, Éditions Traditionnelles, 1991, p. 179); however, Clavelle and Evola were not the only dupes, since Vasile Lovinescu appreciated Meyrink too.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

also the abyss, the Templars<sup>27</sup> and Baphomet, which becomes a substitute for the Principle, the head turned backward, the blood, Tula,<sup>28</sup> St. Patrick and St. Dunstan,<sup>29</sup> are elements participating to the general confusion. Meyrink makes of Bartlett Green a mock imitation of Christ.<sup>30</sup> Even though Evola tried to defend Meyrink, the latter uses the erroneous theory of reincarnation<sup>31</sup> and employs expressions such as “the satanic astral body,”<sup>32</sup> “Golden Rose,”<sup>33</sup> “vampirism,”<sup>34</sup> “the Lodge of the West Window,”<sup>35</sup> and “the realization of Baphomet.”<sup>36</sup> We find in this work the same pattern used today in books like *The Da Vinci Code, Mysteries and Secrets of the Masons* and many others, where Alchemy, the Rose-Cross, Masonry, Templars, etc. are mingled in an atrocious way. But *The Angel of the West Window* is not only a sinister mixture; it is a “parody”<sup>37</sup>; and furthermore, it transmits an upside down symbolism, which represents actual “Satanism.” Alchemy is combined with Chemistry,<sup>38</sup> the Pentagram is abused,<sup>39</sup> the angels are ghosts, and the spiritual forces are magnetic forces.<sup>40</sup> At the end, it is said: “Brother, you have crossed the threshold of initiation with your face turned backwards.”<sup>41</sup> In fact, in a genuine spiritual realization, the neophyte must not look back, and all the initiatory stories are adamant in warning about it.

Meyrink engages in a considerable effort narrating about the Angel to conclude in the end that the Angel is an illusion. The same effort is made in all the modern occultist books about the “Secret,” which in the end appears to be something very disappointing, a *nitchevo*.<sup>42</sup>

With these two last authors we are far away from the works we presented in the first chapters of our *The Everlasting Sacred Kernel*. Nonetheless, they prove that, in our modern times, the doctrine of the Eye of the Heart is, more than ever, profoundly

<sup>27</sup> “The Knights Templar of the New Grail,” see *ibid.*, p. 254.

<sup>28</sup> And also Thule of Greenland, *ibid.*, pp. 84-5.

<sup>29</sup> It is known that both, St. Patrick and St. Dunstan, were connected by some authors to Glastonbury. “St. Patrick’s well,” often used by Meyrink, is, in this case, similar to the abyss of Poe and Twain, or to Dumas’ “le trou de l’enfer.” *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 30-31, 133.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61, 63 (Green is resurrected), 65 (he comes back to visit the main character of the book, but he is a ghost).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114. Guénon revealed the imposture of an organization like *Rose-Croix d’Or* (*Aperçus sur l’initiation*, p. 246). Also, the symbol of the Rose-Cross is suggested by Meyrink at page 282.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>37</sup> It presents a parody of initiation (see *ibid.*, p. 175).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147, 150.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 315.

<sup>42</sup> This is not new. When Baron Hund promised to reveal his great secret, everybody was thinking of something magic and miraculous, yet his secret was that every Mason is a Knight Templar. René Guénon was very explicit about what an initiatory secret really is. Today, many execrable books about Masonry abuse the word “secret” in their titles, but it is only a revival of the title of a book written at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

indispensable. There are other domains of our contemporary world where the sacred kernel is also present and ready to be seen. To see it, we have to open the Eye of the Heart and use the power of discrimination. Living in the world, we cannot expect to see only good or only evil. The good and the bad plants grow together as on the Little Prince's planet. But we can identify and remove the weeds and unveil the sacred kernel.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The *Qor'ān* is defined as *al-Furqān*, “the Instrument of Discrimination” (Lings, **Sufism**, p. 30). This is also the deep meaning of Solomon's heart; Solomon, the king of Peace and Wisdom, is an emblem of the Universal Man whose Heart is the Eye of discrimination. Solomon asks the Lord: “Give your servant a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil” (**1 Kings** 3:9). “The Lord gave Solomon immense wisdom and understanding, and a heart as vast as the sand on the seashore” (**1 Kings** 5:9).



## The Shûdras (I)

Mircea A. Tamas

Today, the Great Disarray spreads like a plague. It is no surprise, considering – as everybody knows – that we live the end of *Kali-yuga*, and this “Iron Age” is under the government of the Shûdras. When we say “the Shûdras” we have in mind firstly the symbolic partition in castes, since we cannot just copy the Hindu traditional system of castes and apply it everywhere. There was a similar partition in the Middle Ages, in Occident, and René Guénon compared the Bolsheviks with the Shûdras.<sup>1</sup>

The modern and occidentalized world considers the system of castes as something unfair and obsolete, promoting a terrible confusion of castes. Yet, in fact, the modern mentality, even if – apparently – seems to be a “Vaishya mentality,” is a product of the Shûdras.

From a traditional point of view, there is nothing wrong to be a Shûdra. Like in the case of the races, each individual or group of individuals has to take the place that is in concert with its nature, and participate at the evolvement of the present cycle (the Hindu *Manvantara*). The Shûdras, in compliance with their duties, are important for the well being of the society and they could also be a good example of how people should behave as “Muslims,” that is, obeying God and being His servants. With this respect, the fact that the Shûdras correspond to God’s feet should be related to the symbol of God’s footprint into the world and to the respect paid to His feet.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, when the Shûdras revolt against the normal order they lose this special characteristic of being “Muslim” and for this reason we should stress that the modern

<sup>1</sup> “... et comme l’usurpation appelle l’usurpation, après les Vaishyas, ce sont maintenant les Shûdras qui, à leur tour, aspirent à la domination : c’est là, très exactement, la signification du bolchevisme. (...) si les éléments sociaux les plus inférieurs accèdent au pouvoir d’une façon ou d’une autre, leur règne sera vraisemblablement le plus bref de tous, et il marquera la dernière phase d’un certain cycle historique... ” (René Guénon, **Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel**, Véga, 1976, pp. 91-92).

<sup>2</sup> The footprint of God is, as Ananda K. Coomaraswamy explained, the presence of the Principle into the manifestation. In Sri Lanka, for example, there is such an imprint of Buddha’s foot, considered by Muslims as being the footprint of Adam, by Christians that of St. Thomas and by Hindus the footprint of Shiva.

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society is a world of “revolted Shûdras,” and in any domain, including priesthood, this “Shûdra mentality” is active.<sup>1</sup>

There is a bigger picture though, which is connected to the doctrine of the cosmic cycles, since with respect to this doctrine our present *Manvantara* contains numerous sub-cycles, longer and shorter, more or less important, and each of these cycles presents a similar development like the *Manvantara* itself, and therefore, even though at one moment from a main cycle perspective the human society is marked by a “Shûdra mentality,” from a secondary cycle perspective there still are “castes” corresponding to Brâhmana and Kshatriya; and that is why we can say that Jesus Christ or Buddha is of Kshatriya descendency.

To understand the symbolic hierarchy and development of the castes we may compare them with the principal elements (*bhûtas*) from the Hindu tradition. René Guénon described the five elements using two different representations: a ladder-like and a cross-like one. The ladder-like representation presents the elements from a cosmogonic perspective, as given in the Upanishads, in the progression: ether – air – fire – water – earth.

The cross-like representation places the air as a neutral element along the horizontal diameter of a circle, the fire as the upwards element along the vertical diameter, and the water as the downwards element along the vertical diameter. The ether is on the top and the earth at the bottom.<sup>2</sup>

A similar picture could be drawn for the castes. In fact, René Guénon presents such a diagram for the castes, similar to the one for the elements, in which Brâhmana is the upwards half-diameter, Kshatriya the horizontal diameter and Vaishya the downwards half-diameter; Hamsa (the primordial people beyond the castes) is on the top and Shûdra is at the bottom.<sup>3</sup>

From a cosmogonic perspective, the castes are in the following progression: Brâhmana – Kshatriya – Vaishya – Shûdra, and in the Hindu tradition the four castes are in correspondence to the cardinal points North – East – South – West.<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Gaston Georgel, Guénon suggested these associations: North – white race – water; East – yellow race – air; South – black race – fire; West – red race – earth.<sup>5</sup>

René Guénon built the cross-like diagrams for the elements and for the castes based on the traditional theory of the three gunas. We find in *Vishnu Purana*: “When Brahmâ, with respect to his goal, wanted to produce the world, the beings in whom sattva prevailed were generated from his mouth; others in whom rajas prevailed were produced

<sup>1</sup> Dante was not against the papacy, but against popes with a “Shûdra mentality.” We underline again, when we refer to “Shûdra mentality” that is not the vassalage, considered from a religious perspective, that we have in mind, but all the specific characteristics defining the fourth caste, in comparison to the “twice-born” (*dwijas*) castes.

<sup>2</sup> See the figure in René Guénon, *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Éditions Traditionnelles, 1979, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> See the figure in René Guénon, *Études sur l'Hindouisme*, Éditions Traditionnelles, 1979, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> See A. M. Hocart, *Caste*, Methuen & Co., 1950, p. 27, and René Guénon, *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée*, Gallimard, 1980, pp. 120-121.

<sup>5</sup> Gaston Georgel, *Les Quatre Âges de l'Humanité*, Archè, 1976, p. 17.

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from his bosom; others in whom rajas and tamas were strong were produced from his thighs; eventually, others were born from his feet, having tamas as main characteristic. From these beings the four castes (varnas) were composed: Brâhmaṇa, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shûdra, which were born from his mouth, bosom, thighs and feet.”<sup>1</sup>

Guénon said: “... the hierarchisation of the four varnas, imposed by the gunas that predominate in each caste, is identical with that of the elements (bhûtas).” If we consider the production of the castes and races following a cosmogonic succession, like in the case of the elements, we should assume the associations: Ether – Hamsa – primordial race; Air – Brâhmaṇa – yellow race; Fire – Kshatriya – black race; Water – Vaishya – red race; Earth – Shûdra – white race. On the other hand, with respect to the cardinal points, the associations should be: North – Brâhmaṇa – white race – water; East – Kshatriya – yellow race – air; South – Vaishya – black race – fire; West – Shûdra – red race – earth.

From the point of view of the doctrine of the three gunas, as we have already mentioned, sattwa (and the white colour) predominates in Brâhmaṇa, rajas (the red colour) predominates in Kshatriya, rajas mixed with tamas (the yellow colour) predominate in Vaishya, and tamas (the black colour) predominates in Shûdra, revealing an obvious correspondence with the “degrees of subtlety” of the elements.

However, in a traditional society, the organization of the city required the four castes to be placed in the four cardinal points, in connection with the four yugas. Following a solar circumambulation (*pradakshinâ*), starting with the Northern point, the successive four castes are obtained, in a natural descendent order. Guénon remarked that Brâhmaṇa is placed at North, being linked to the polar tradition, and Kshatriya is placed at East, belonging to the solar tradition.

There is an interesting similarity between the text of **Vishnu Purana** and the dream of Nebuchadnezzar from the **Old Testament**, a dream translated by Daniel as follows:

Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart. Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.<sup>2</sup> Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled

<sup>1</sup> The **Laws of Manu** says the same thing: “But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds he caused the Brâhmaṇa, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs, and his feet.”

<sup>2</sup> We note that the four ages are in direct correspondence with the four castes.

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the whole earth. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that reaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

In Hesiod's **Works and Days** the four yugas are described as follows:

First of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus made a golden race of mortal men who lived in the time of Cronos when he was reigning in heaven. And they lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them; but with legs and arms never failing they made merry with feasting beyond the reach of all evils. When they died, it was as though they were overcome with sleep, and they had all good things; for the fruitful earth unforced bare them fruit abundantly and without stint. They dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods.

But after earth had covered this generation – they are called pure spirits dwelling on the earth, and are kindly, delivering from harm, and guardians of mortal men; for they roam everywhere over the earth, clothed in mist and keep watch on judgments and cruel deeds, givers of wealth; for this royal right also they received; – then they who dwell on Olympus made a second generation which was of silver and less noble by far. It was like the golden race neither in body nor in spirit. A child was brought up at his good mother's side an hundred years, an utter simpleton, playing childishly in his own home. But when they were full grown and were come to the full measure of their prime, they lived only a little time in sorrow because of their foolishness, for they could not keep from sinning and from wronging one another, nor would they serve the immortals, nor sacrifice on the holy altars of the blessed ones as it is right for men to do wherever they dwell. Then Zeus the son of Cronos was angry and put them away, because they would not give honour to the blessed gods who live on Olympus.

But when earth had covered this generation also – they are called blessed spirits of the underworld by men, and, though they are of second order, yet honour attends them also – Zeus the Father made a third generation of mortal men, a brazen race, sprung from ash-trees; and it was in no way equal to the silver age, but was terrible and strong. They loved the lamentable works of Ares and deeds of violence; they ate no bread, but were hard of heart like adamant, fearful men. Great was their strength and unconquerable the arms which grew from their shoulders on their strong limbs. Their armour was of bronze, and their houses of bronze, and of bronze were their implements: there was no black iron. These were destroyed by their own hands and passed to the

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dank house of chill Hades, and left no name: terrible though they were, black Death seized them, and they left the bright light of the sun.

But when earth had covered this generation also, Zeus the son of Cronos made yet another, the fourth, upon the fruitful earth, which was nobler and more righteous, a god-like race of hero-men who are called demi-gods,<sup>1</sup> the race before our own, throughout the boundless earth. Grim war and dread battle destroyed a part of them, some in the land of Cadmus at seven-gated Thebe when they fought for the flocks of Oedipus, and some, when it had brought them in ships over the great sea gulf to Troy for rich-haired Helen's sake: there death's end enshrouded a part of them. But to the others father Zeus the son of Cronos gave a living and an abode apart from men, and made them dwell at the ends of earth. And they live untouched by sorrow in the islands of the blessed along the shore of deep swirling Ocean, happy heroes for whom the grain-giving earth bears honey-sweet fruit flourishing thrice a year, far from the deathless gods, and Cronos rules over them; for the father of men and gods released him from his bonds. And these last equally have honour and glory.

And again far-seeing Zeus made yet another generation, the fifth, of men who are upon the bounteous earth.

Thereafter, would that I were not among the men of the fifth generation, but either had died before or been born afterwards. For now truly is a race of iron, and men never rest from labour and sorrow by day, and from perishing by night; and the gods shall lay sore trouble upon them. But, notwithstanding, even these shall have some good mingled with their evils. And Zeus will destroy this race of mortal men also when they come to have gray hair on the temples at their birth. The father will not agree with his children, nor the children with their father, nor guest with his host, nor comrade with comrade; nor will brother be dear to brother as aforetime. Men will dishonour their parents as they grow quickly old, and will carp at them, chiding them with bitter words, hard-hearted they, not knowing the fear of the gods. They will not repay their aged parents the cost their nurture, for might shall be their right: and one man will sack another's city. There will be no favour for the man who keeps his oath or for the just or for the good; but rather men will praise the evil-doer and his violent dealing. Strength will be right and reverence will cease to be; and the wicked will hurt the worthy man, speaking false words against him, and will swear an oath upon them. Envy, foul-mouthed, delighting in evil, with scowling face, will go along with wretched men one and all. And then Aidos and Nemesis, with their sweet forms wrapped in white robes, will go from the wide-pathed earth and forsake mankind to join the company of the deathless gods: and bitter sorrows will be left for mortal men, and there will be no help against evil.

In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid told also the story of the four ages:

The golden age was first; when Man yet new, No rule but uncorrupted reason knew: And, with a native bent, did good pursue. Unforc'd by punishment, un-aw'd by fear, His words were simple, and his soul sincere; Needless was written law, where none opprest: The law of Man was written in his breast: No suppliant crowds before the judge appear'd, No court erected yet, nor cause was heard: But all was safe, for conscience was their guard. The mountain-trees in distant prospect please, E're yet the pine descended to the seas: E're sails were spread, new oceans to explore: And happy mortals, unconcern'd for more, Confin'd their wishes to their native shore. No walls were yet; nor fence, nor mote, nor mound, Nor drum was heard, nor trumpet's angry sound: Nor swords were forg'd; but void of care and crime, The soft creation slept away their time. The teeming

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<sup>1</sup> René Guénon said: "The Age of Heroes is none of the four ages that divide the Manvantara, nor is a different and special age, which should be added to these, but rather a simple subdivision."

## The Shûdras (I)

Earth, yet guiltless of the plough, And unprovok'd, did fruitful stores allow: Content with food, which Nature freely bred, On wildings and on strawberries they fed; Cornel's and bramble-berries gave the rest, And falling acorns furnish'd out a feast. The flow'rs unsown, in fields and meadows reign'd: And Western winds immortal spring maintain'd. In following years, the bearded corn ensu'd From Earth unask'd, nor was that Earth renew'd. From veins of vallies, milk and nectar broke; And honey sweating through the pores of oak.

But when good Saturn, banish'd from above, Was driv'n to Hell, the world was under Jove. Succeeding times a silver age beheld, Excelling brass, but more excell'd by gold. Then summer, autumn, winter did appear: And spring was but a season of the year. The sun his annual course obliquely made, Good days contracted, and enlarg'd the bad. Then air with sultry heats began to glow; The wings of winds were clogg'd with ice and snow; And shivering mortals, into houses driv'n, Sought shelter from th' inclemency of Heav'n. Those houses, then, were caves, or homely sheds; With twining oziers fenc'd; and moss their beds. Then ploughs, for seed, the fruitful furrows broke, And oxen labour'd first beneath the yoke.

To this came next in course, the brazen age: A warlike offspring, prompt to bloody rage, Not impious yet...

Hard steel succeeded then: And stubborn as the metal, were the men. Truth, modesty, and shame, the world forsook: Fraud, avarice, and force, their places took. Then sails were spread, to every wind that blew. Raw were the sailors, and the depths were new: Trees, rudely hollow'd, did the waves sustain; E're ships in triumph plough'd the watery plain. Then land-marks limited to each his right: For all before was common as the light. Nor was the ground alone requir'd to bear Her annual income to the crooked share, But greedy mortals, rummaging her store, Digg'd from her entrails first the precious oar; Which next to Hell, the prudent Gods had laid; And that alluring ill, to sight display'd. Thus cursed steel, and more accursed gold, Gave mischief birth, and made that mischief bold: And double death did wretched Man invade, By steel assaulted, and by gold betray'd, Now (brandish'd weapons glittering in their hands) Mankind is broken loose from moral bands; No rights of hospitality remain: The guest, by him who harbour'd him, is slain, The son-in-law pursues the father's life; The wife her husband murders, he the wife. The step-dame poyon for the son prepares; The son inquires into his father's years. Faith flies, and piety in exile mourns; And justice, here opprest, to Heav'n returns.

And Plato, in his **Republic**, underlined: “the god who formed you mixed gold in the composition of those who are capable to command; also, these are the most precious; he mixed silver in the composition of the guardians; brass and iron in that of the workers and other artisans.”

An Arabic text, quoted by Guénon, illustrates also this decay of the cycle: “In the ancient times, the people were differentiated by knowledge; after that, the birth and the family ties were taken into consideration; then, the wealth was considered a sign of superiority; eventually, in the present times, the people are judged only by the exterior appearance.” It is easy to note the correlation between the four castes and the four ages (yugas).

In a fairy-tale, called **The Grain of Wheat**, the descent of the cycle is vividly described: an emperor tries to find out the place where the wheat has grains as big as the hen's egg. In front of him will come, one after another, an old man, supported by two crutches, then his father, supported by one crutch, and eventually the latter's father, who, without crutches, explained to the emperor that in his time the grain of wheat was as big as an egg, men were men, but today, the men are undeveloped beings, their life is shorter and

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shorter, their only concern being the food, the drink and the clothes, that is, the exterior things. We remark the invert analogy: the old man with the two crutches suggests the four feet of the last age (complete solidification); then, in an ascendant sense, the old man's father with a crutch represents the three feet (more mobility), the man without crutches indicates the two feet and, eventually, even if the fairy-tale does not say, there should be a man with one foot symbolizing the Golden Age.

Lao Zi described the four ages as follows: "In the highest antiquity, (the people) did not know that there were (their rulers). In the next age they loved them and praised them. In the next they feared them; in the next they despised them. Thus it was that when faith (in the Dao) was deficient (in the rulers) a want of faith in them ensued (in the people)."

The vestiges of the Toltec tradition saved the "Legend of the Suns" in which the cycle (*Manvantara*) is parted in five Great Years, these "Years" corresponding to the different races that dominated the world, in conformity with the evolvement of the cycle.<sup>1</sup> We should say that, if the passing from one yuga to the other was marked by a revolt of an inferior caste,<sup>2</sup> the passing from one Year to another was accompanied by a cataclysm linked to one of the five elements (bhûtas), which was predominant in that age.

Consequently, the Iron Age or Kali-yuga appears to be under the sign of the revolted Shûdras. If the first three castes were *dwija*, twice-born, fully participating to the Tradition, the Shûdras represent the last possibilities, the inferior ones of the manifestation, a fact that was clearly illustrated by how the different traditions described this final age, but also by the present events of our modern world. In Kali-yuga, the Hindu tradition affirms, reign the deceit, falseness, inertia, greed and depravity; the Brâhmanas become addicted to luxury, the servants quit their masters, *the Shûdras take the power*; the whole world is filled with perverted people, and the strongest among the Brâhmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas or Shûdras will become kings; the kings will behave like villains; *the castes will be all like Shûdra*.

And the people with the mentality of the revolted Shûdras will spread all these absurd modern theories about progress and evolution, when in fact they are the end of the string, not the beginning. They will promote the stupid idea of taming and mastering the Nature and its "fearful" forces, because they will try with any price to get rid of their real status, that of servants. They will invent automatons and machines, robots and remote controls, to appear as masters having the whole world as their servant. They will dream to dominate the outer space and the other planets. Yet, a mild storm is enough to disrupt these Shûdras, to see their machines impotent and their democracy crashing.

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<sup>1</sup> Guénon said: "... finally, there is no consequence to be drawn with respect to the superiority of one race or another, they are only different and they have, each one, their own possibilities, and each race has or had its period of supremacy or domination, in conformity with the laws of cosmic cycles."

<sup>2</sup> These revolts appear, in conformity with the laws of cosmic cycles, also in the secondary cycles.

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The modern democracy is the result of the same “Shûdra mentality,” but we have to understand that countries where dictators or kings reign do not have a very different mentality today.<sup>1</sup>

The present humanity will last, even if today the Shûdra mentality, corresponding to the Iron Age, is in power, as long as a Brâhmana mentality, corresponding to our secondary cycle, somehow subsists. When the Shûdras of the Shûdras will prevail, the end of times will have to come.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Un gouvernement dans lequel des hommes de caste inférieure s’attribuent le titre et les fonctions de la royauté est ce que les anciens Grecs appelaient «tyrannie»” (René Guénon, **Autorité spirituelle et pouvoir temporel**, Véga, 1976, p. 78).

<sup>2</sup> As an example, if somebody sees today an angry, vulgar and hectic priest, instructor or spiritual master, there is no doubt that this one has a Shûdra mentality not a Brâhmana one.



## The Shudras (II)

Mircea A. Tamas

If one has the curiosity to look at India's map, one will notice that various regions of the country are called *pradesh*. The word *pradesh*, in fact *paradesh*, means in Sanskrit "supreme region," from this word deriving the well-known appellative "paradise," a remarkable thing suggesting that, for a traditional mentality, any country has the right and even the obligation to represent a land of prosperity and peace, based on the concord (*cum – cordia*, "the union of hearts") government – people, on justice and natural laws (*dharma*).

In the Judaic and Christian traditions, the legitimate leader of such an ideal *paradesh* is the mysterious Melkisedek, "the King of Justice" (Ebr. *melek* = "king," *tsedeq* = "justice"), the Lord of Salem, that is, the Lord of Peace.

In other words, in a traditional society, the king, obeying the cosmic Law, was seen as a warrantor of peace and justice, his residence being the core of the World Wheel, from where he regulates<sup>1</sup> its rotation, interfering as little as possible with the public activities,<sup>2</sup> striving to realize a perfect harmony between himself and the people,<sup>3</sup> establishing a prosperous and good government.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the Hindu tradition, the king was Chakravarti, "the one who turns the wheel," and Dharmachakra, "The Wheel of Law," symbolizes the World; the king is the Latin *rex*, who regulates and guards the rules (the words *rex*, regulate and rule are related).

<sup>2</sup> The traditional leader had the duty to oversee that the natural regulations were observed; fewer artificial decrees he promulgated, less he interfered in the public details, more the country prospered.

<sup>3</sup> Tit Livy affirmed: *Multitudo semper ferme regenti est similis* ("the people is always similar to its leader"). Yet Joseph de Maistre said: "No nation owes its character to the government; on the contrary, the nation owes its government to its character," that is, "each nation has the leader it deserves." Therefore, the people must contribute, in the same proportion as its leader, to the realization of the "paradise," obeying the Law (in the Islamic tradition, each member of the society is a Muslim, that is, "complying to the divine Will"). The *Yi Jing* stated: "The Dao of emperor signifies to supervise, from the height of his exceptional rank, the plan of the Providence, while everything contained inside the four cardinal points follows his government and obeys him; if the emperor realizes and operates the celestial Way (Dao), all the provinces enjoy the peace."

<sup>4</sup> A good government means to respect and understand the *principal* Rule (in Daoism), the supreme Law (Dharma, in the Hindu tradition), means *eynomia*, the good legislation (see Plato). If the Law is tarnished and desecrated by ignorant, arrogant, and fake translators, who deceive the people, there are in that country no more "Muslims" but "anti-Muslims," and this truth applies to any nation, including the Islamic countries.

## The Shudras (II)

“The emperor Yao strived to rule the people of the kingdom, and he thought he maintained a perfect government within the four seas. Having gone to see the four (Perfect) Ones [the Guardians of the Rule] on the distant island [the World Center, the Pivot], when (he returned to his capital) he admitted to have ruined his government [with his artificial endeavor]” (**Zhuang-zi**, 1, 6). The traditional perspective<sup>1</sup> is so different that probably the modern mentality is completely opaque to it. No modern Shudra would understand today that a leader of a country, region, company, organization, or group must do nothing in discord with the natural law and with the welfare of people, that he must forbid completely his individual impulses, and repress the desire to express his power by inventing all types of rules.

“Therefore the superior man, who feels himself constrained to engage in the administration of the world will find it his best way to do nothing. In (that policy of) doing nothing, he can rest in the instincts of the nature with which he is endowed. Hence he who will administer (the government of) the world honouring it as he honours his own person, may have that government committed to him, and he who will administer it loving it as he loves his own person, may have it entrusted to him” (**Zhuang-zi**, 11, 2).

In our modern world, the individual initiative is the supreme praised characteristic. It is the characteristic of a revolted Shudra, of course.<sup>2</sup> Even if various leaders will try to hide their initiatives under the cover of stentorian words such as “in the name of the people” or “it is God’s Will,” make no mistake: it is all about their own limited, pitiful and ignorant desires and ideas, it is about their own greed and arrogance. It is amazing how such people cannot learn from the natural laws, how they cannot see that a simple storm is impossible to be stopped, how they, like puppets on strings, play their dissolvent roles.

“Therefore, if the superior man will keep (the faculties lodged in) his five viscera unemployed, and not display his powers of seeing and hearing, while he is motionless as a representative of the dead, his dragon-like presence will be seen; while he is profoundly silent, the thunder (of his words) will resound, while his movements are (unseen) like those of a spirit, all heavenly influences will follow them; while he is (thus) unconcerned and does nothing, his genial influence will attract and gather all things round him: what leisure has he to do anything more for the government of the world?” (**Zhuang-zi**, 11, 2).

What Zhuang Zi described here was, of course, an ideal case, difficult to follow in the Iron Age, and we have to keep in mind that in Zhuang Zi’s times the tenebrous age was in full evolvement. The following anecdote will stress why today’s endeavour to “subdue the nature in favour of humankind” and “for a better life” is, in fact, a lethal peril, even if it is truly desired, and, again, only a Shudra usurper could believe that such an enterprise will have an auspicious ending. *Quidquid agis prudenter agas et respice finem*. But what we see today in the whole world is a tremendous appetite to act without any intellectual

<sup>1</sup> We always have to keep in mind the difference between “religion” and Tradition; too often the modern people confuse, on purpose or not, these two domains, and we witness the inanity of accusing the Tradition for today’s contradictions. The Shaikh al-‘Arabi ad-Darqawi said in his *Letters*: “I understood the prophetic saying: «Better an hour of meditation than seventy years of religious practice.»”

<sup>2</sup> We must insist: when we talk about the modern or revolted Shudras we don’t have in mind the normal and natural Shudras, who have as main characteristic the obedience, a very important trait in any initiatory and spiritual process. We refer to the ages of disorder when the Shudras usurped the place of Brahmanas and Kshatriyas, becoming pseudo or unnatural Shudras.

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thinking, without any providential intuition, without any vision of the ending. When we witness the more or less “official” representatives of the three Oriental major regions (as defined by René Guénon with respect to their fundamental traditions) striving to change them in “super-powers,” in the worst materialistic and corporeal sense, accepting and enthusiastically adapting “the modern Shudra’s way,” we may wonder if Zhuang Zi is still heard outside the sacred kernel.

“Huang-di had been on the throne for nineteen years, and his ordinances were in operation all through the kingdom, when he heard that Guang cheng was living on the summit of Kung-tung, and went to see him. ‘I have heard,’ he said, ‘that you, Sir, are well acquainted with the perfect Dao. I venture to ask you what is the essential thing in it. I wish to take the subtlest influences of heaven and earth, and assist with them the (growth of the) five cereals for the (better) nourishment of the people. I also wish to direct the (operation of the) Yin and Yang, so as to secure the comfort of all living beings. How shall I proceed to accomplish those objects?’ Guang cheng replied, ‘You push your ambition to the limit, wanting to govern the nature. If you receive such a power, you will ruin all the beings. According to your government of the world, the vapours of the clouds, before they were collected, would descend in rain; the herbs and trees would shed their leaves before they became yellow; and the light of the sun and moon would hasten to extinction. Your mind is that of a flatterer with his plausible words; it is not fit that I should tell you the perfect Dao.’ Huang-di withdrew, gave up (his government of) the kingdom” (*Zhuang-zi*, 11, 4).

The next anecdote will elaborate about the difference between a real king and a Shudra leader, between a traditional government and a government of thieves and bandits. The major element of governing is, we must stress, the concord government – people, the peace of the kingdom and the welfare of the society. The slogan “fighting for peace” is a contradiction in terms, the real peace requiring a deep understanding of this metaphysical notion; and only the pseudo-Shudra mentality will be open for a continuous fight and revolt against something, since the Shudras are the climax of the series of revolts along the ages.

“Yao asked Hu Yu, saying, ‘Is Nie Kue fit to be the correlate of Heaven? (If you think he is), I will avail myself of the services of Wang Yi to constrain him (to take my place).’ Hu Yu replied, ‘Such a measure would be hazardous, and full of peril to the kingdom! The character of Nie Kue is this; he is acute, perspicacious, shrewd and knowing, ready in reply, sharp in retort, and hasty; his natural (endowments) surpass those of other men, but by his human qualities he prevents the Heaven, the Principle for governing; he exercises his discrimination in suppressing his errors, but he does not know what is the source from which his errors arise. Make him the correlate of Heaven! He would employ the human qualities, so that no regard would be paid to the Heavenly gift. Moreover, he would assign different functions to the different parts of the one person. Moreover, honour would be given to erudition, and he would have his plans take effect with the speed of fire. Moreover, he would be the slave of everything he initiated. Moreover, he would be embarrassed by things. Moreover, he would be looking all round for the response of things (to his measures). Moreover, he would be responding to the opinion of the multitude as to what was right. Moreover, he would be changing as things changed, and would not begin to have any principle of constancy. How can such a man be fit to be

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the correlate of Heaven? Nevertheless, as there are the smaller branches of a family and the common ancestor of all its branches, he might be the father of a branch, but not the father of the fathers of all the branches. Such government (as he would conduct) would lead to disorder. It would be calamity in one in the position of a minister, and ruin if he were in the position of the sovereign" (*Zhuang-zi*, 12, 5).

Various traditions dealt with this way of governing. In the **Dao De Jing**, Lao Zi stated: "In the highest antiquity, everything was in accordance with the Principle; (the people) did not know that there were (rulers). In the next age, they loved them and praised them (because of their benevolence). In the next, they feared them (because of their laws); in the next, they despised them (because of their injustice). Thus it was that when faith (in the Dao) was deficient (in the rulers) a want of faith in them ensued (in the people) (XVII). "Governing a large country is like frying a small fish. You spoil it with too much poking" (LX). "Why are the people starving? Because the rulers eat up the money in taxes. Therefore the people are starving. Why are the people rebellious? Because the rulers interfere too much. Therefore they are rebellious. Why do the people think so little of death? Because the rulers demand too much of life. Therefore the people take death lightly. Having little to live on, one knows better than to value life too much" (LXXV).

Lama Rajah of Dugyul affirmed: "The king who became rich by robbing his subjects, who rejects the white umbrella of the ten virtues, who does not reward or punish the good and bad deeds, such a king runs to his own end."

Finally, in the Hindu tradition, the **Mânavâ-Dharma-Shastra** stated: "For, when these creatures, being without a king, through fear dispersed in all directions, the Lord created a king for the protection of this whole (creation)" (7.3). "Let him act with justice in his own domain, with rigour chastise his enemies, behave without duplicity towards his friends, and be lenient towards Brahmanas. The fame of a king who behaves thus, even though he subsists by gleaning, is spread in the world, like a drop of oil on water" (7.32-33). "The king has been created (to be) the protector of the castes (*varna*) and orders, who, all according to their rank, discharge their several duties" (7.35). "Not to turn back in battle, to protect the people, to honour the Brahmanas, is the best means for a king to secure happiness" (7.88). "That king who through folly rashly oppresses his kingdom, (will), together with his relatives, ere long be deprived of his life and of his kingdom" (7.111).

With regard to the Shudras, the **Mânavâ-Dharma-Shastra** declared: "A Brahmana who subsists only by the name of his caste (*gati*), or one who merely calls himself a Brahmana (though his origin be uncertain), may, at the king's pleasure, interpret the law to him, but never a Shudra. The kingdom of that monarch, who looks on while a Shudra settles the law, will sink (low), like a cow in a morass. That kingdom where Shudras are very numerous, which is infested by atheists and destitute of twice-born (inhabitants), soon entirely perishes, afflicted by famine and disease" (8.20-22).

The **Mânavâ-Dharma-Shastra** also stated an apparent curious rule: "Day and night the king must strenuously exert himself to conquer his senses; for he (alone) who has conquered his own senses, can keep his subjects in obedience (7.44). Zhuang Zi said too: "Jian Wu went to see the fool (recluse), Ji-yu, who said to him, 'What did Ru-Zhung-Shu tell you?' The reply was, 'He told me that when rulers gave forth their regulations according to their own views and enacted righteous measures, no one would venture not

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to obey them, and all would be transformed.’ Ji-yu said, ‘That is but the hypocrisy of virtue. For the right ordering of the world it would be like trying to wade through the sea and dig through the Yellow River, or employing a mosquito to carry a mountain on its back. And when a sage is governing, does he govern men’s outward actions? He gives example of virtue [rectitude, *De*], which people, if they want, they will follow it” (*Zhuang-zi*, 7, 2).

There is, in accordance with the traditional lore, a perfect analogy between macrocosm and microcosm, and also between a human being and the social organism. Therefore, the traditional leader, instead of governing the outside, will strive first to control his own being, realizing the inner kingdom,<sup>1</sup> the castle inside the heart, the Hindu *Brahma-pura*. As Plato showed in *Politeia*, the Cosmos (Gr. “order”)<sup>2</sup> is reflected accordingly in universe, city (or society), and in the individual’s soul, the royal man being the one who realizes, by way of wisdom, “the inner republic,” this realization being precisely the *politeia*!<sup>3</sup>

As *Yoga* or *Dao* means both the way toward the target, and the target itself, so *Politeia* designates not only the city or the kingdom itself, but also the realization of it; it represents the policy of the traditional leader, who, in order to establish a social and exterior *paradesh*, must first realize and accomplish an inner paradise, where will reign the Peace, the real Salem (identical to *Brahma-pura* and the Heavenly Jerusalem) residing in the heart, where *mishkat al-anwâr*, the tabernacle of Light, is placed.<sup>4</sup>

Such a *politeia*, for a traditional society, is the warrantor of a good government, but it appears nowadays as an ideal policy, much too different and incomprehensible for the modern mentality<sup>5</sup>; since it is clear enough that a *politeia*, to be successful today, requires a wisdom (*khawashsh al-khawashsh*) that facilitates avoiding the errors (*Al-Munqidh min al-Dalâl*), and that seems nowhere to be found in our profane world; the Buddhist adage *dharman saranam gacchâmi* (“I seek refuge in order and laws”) is in the present days more neglected than ever.

Let us offer one more quotation, even if we know that so many modern minds prefer a plain, simple text, exempted of footnotes and quotations.

<sup>1</sup> It is said in the Christian tradition: *Regnum Dei intra vos est*.

<sup>2</sup> The Cosmos is, of course, not the “cosmos” of the modern scientists, who are completely sunk in the domain of quantity.

<sup>3</sup> The monarch, through his orders, realizes the Order; placed in the center of the wheel, as Chakravarti, he, in a ritual mode, produces and regulates the Cosmos. In the Judaic tradition and also in the Christian one, the first order was *Fiat Lux*. In the Hindu tradition, the king is *antaryami*, “the inner ruler.” In the Islamic tradition, the realization of the “inner kingdom” means *el-jihâdul-akbar*.

<sup>4</sup> Ghazali stressed that the true Light corresponds to the “eye of the heart”: “There is truly in the man’s heart (*qalb*) an eye (*ayn*), which possesses the perfection [to see the absolute Light]. (...) This inner eye belongs to another world that is the heavenly kingdom (*Malakît*).” The light that shines in *Malkût*, the inner kingdom, is Dante’s “silent light” and the Hesychastic “perfumed light.”

<sup>5</sup> Without developing, we should mention the immense difference between the traditional civilizations of the so-called “native” people of the world, which were based on harmony and a complete accord with nature, and the modern civilization that destroyed them, in the name of “civilization.” The *politeia* of the native peoples meant a conformity to order that brought happiness, music and light, and all these without the help of a cell phone, a DVD player, or even an electric bulb.

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“A time arrived when a great disorder ensued in the world, and sages and worthies no longer shed their light on it. The Principle and its characteristics ceased to be regarded as uniform; other principles were invented, the discussions commenced, and everyone considered his opinion the right one. Many in different places got one glimpse of it, and plumed themselves on possessing it as a whole. They might be compared to the discussions among ear, eye, nose, and mouth. Each sense had its own faculty and was right, but their different faculties cannot be interchanged. So it was with the many branches of the various schools. Each had its peculiar excellence, and there was the time for the use of it; but notwithstanding no one covered or extended over the whole (range of truth). The case was that of the scholar who passes his judgment on all the beauties in heaven and earth, discriminates the principles that underlie all things, and attempts to estimate the success arrived at by the ancients. Seldom is it that such one can embrace all the beauties in heaven and earth, or rightly estimate the spiritual and intelligent ways; and thus it was that the Dao, which inwardly forms the sage and externally the king, became obscured and lost its clearness, became repressed and lost its development. Every one in the world did whatever he wished, and had his own rule. Alas! the various schools held on to their several ways, and could not come back to the same point, nor agree together. The students of that later age unfortunately did not see the undivided purity of heaven and earth, and the great scheme of truth held by the ancients. The system of the Dao was about to be torn in fragments all under the sky” (*Zhuang Zi*, 33, 1).

Zhuang Zi describes nothing else than the reign of the revolted Shudras; and all the more his sayings match the actual situation of the world. Each modern Shudra is so conceited, so arrogant of his pseudo-knowledge, so final with respect to his opinion, so thirsty for gossip, so ready and inflexible in criticizing any detail, any trivial mistake, but ignoring the essence and whole, that even the suggestion of such a notion like Politeia would be an insult for him.

The modern Shudras will try to persuade you that texts like Zhuang Zi’s are obsolete and the time for studying the sacred scriptures has passed; that to be traditional means to be anchored in the problems of actuality, and to express your individual opinion about the end of times, about Kali-yuga and what and how this will happen; that it is more interesting to read details about René Guénon, than to meditate over his work; that studying the Upanishads is old fashioned and much better would be to read some modern commentaries or essays about Vedanta.

The modern Shudras have no clue how important the spiritual activity is<sup>1</sup> and how this one occurs. They, who are the personification of selfishness, think that the salvation of the world could be done with common, individual and inferior means. They don’t understand what signifies the Liberation, as a result of an initiatory process, which is regarded as a selfish enterprise, a non-action; they don’t understand that the sage in his non-action develops a tremendous spiritual activity and this activity is not egoistic but regards the welfare of the whole world. Such an activity, like meditating upon a sacred text, during the initiatory realization, and plunging deeply into its real significance, represents enormously more than any humanitarian or militant actions.<sup>2</sup> The modern

<sup>1</sup> To prevent any misunderstanding, we must insist that “spiritual” has nothing to do with what the modern world tries to suggest it represents, and is not connected with religious notions like “faith” and “believe.”

<sup>2</sup> The Shaikh al-‘Arabî ad-Darqâwî said in his *Letters*: “Strike neither Jew nor Christian nor Moslem, but

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Shudras have no idea that there are other ways, beside the corporeal ones, much more efficient, which lead to Salem.

There are people who describe the Center of the World as a Christian center; there are others who think that the Center is an Islamic center.<sup>1</sup> These individuals should not even talk about the center, since they understand nothing. Only a revolted Shudra could give an attribute to the supreme Center, “his attribute.”

The Center, which is *Oriens*, has no place for this unnatural Shudras.

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strike your own soul (*nafs*) and do not cease to strike it until it dies!”

<sup>1</sup> In a normal traditional society, even from an exoteric point of view, the center had no epithet. Each secondary tradition had the right to pretend that it is the only genuine one, but all the more its center wouldn’t be particularized; the Incas, for example, never called their center “the Inca Center.”

# THE NEAR WEST

Mircea A. Tamas

RENÉ GUÉNON SYMBOLICALLY divides the world into “Orient” and “Occident,” not so much from a geographical point of view, as from a traditional perspective, calling the profane and modern world “Occident,” and the still living traditional societies, “Orient.” The “Orient,” says Guénon, contains three major regions: the Far East, with China and Indochina (where the Taoism flourished), the Middle East represented by India (the Hindu tradition), and the Near East considered by him identical to the Islamic tradition. In this classification, North America becomes the Far West. That is nothing new actually. Guénon followed the terminology in use during his times; the Far West, for example, being a well-known American emblem, and so the Far East being for China. Only the Middle East, which he identifies as India, is now, due to an excessive obsession for shortness, the common designation for the region containing all the countries from Egypt to Iran, a region that includes what was in the past called the Near East; and the Near East has shifted to the west, almost becoming for the Western world a label for Eastern Europe.

In fact, Eastern Europe is more likely the Near West, and we can complete Guénon’s classification by adding the Middle West as representing Catholic and Protestant Europe, and the Near West as designating the Orthodox Christian countries. Considering the whole picture, it is interesting to note the similarity between the Near West and Near East, the two regions occupying a central position, which empowers them with a special function.

The Near East and Near West have been at one point in the past, the bridge or, using an Islamic term, the isthmus (*barzakh*),<sup>1</sup> which, more than separating the Occident and Orient, has operated as a mediator, facilitating not only the traders’ voyages and the exchange of various merchandises, but especially making possible the communication of ideas, information and knowledge. Despite the opinion, erroneously established, that the West is a direct inheritor of Greek and Roman civilizations, this isthmus has been, in fact, the fundamental agent, which transmitted to Europe the Greco-Roman learning,

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<sup>1</sup> About the meaning of *barzakh* see Titus Burckhardt, *Mirror of the Intellect*, State Univ. of New York Press, 1987, p. 193 ff.

the ancient sciences and philosophy, influencing in an essential manner the constitution of the medieval traditional society, without diminishing, of course, the contribution of the West-European populations. In one of his articles, written at the end of his life, René Guénon says<sup>2</sup>:

Most of the Europeans haven't properly evaluated the importance of the contribution they have received from the Islamic civilization.... It is important to note that the European universities don't show in their teachings in history this influence.... It is very weird to see the Europeans considering themselves the direct inheritors of the Hellenistic civilization, when the facts invalidate this claim. The historical reality has established without doubt that the Greek science and philosophy have been transmitted to the Europeans through Muslims. Indeed, browsing the history textbooks and reviewing the main facts, it is easy to see the fundamental role played by the Near East in the birth and development of the Occidental civilization, culminating with the Middle Ages when the Christian traditional society became mature and powerful. The Near West played the same role, even stronger.

In his article, René Guénon stresses the influence of Islam; but, before its emergence, the Christian religion starts its growth precisely in that part of the world. The first bishoprics are founded there, in the Near East and Near West, excepting Rome, which had a privileged position as capital of the Roman Empire. After the first council of Constantinople, in AD 381, the same isthmus shelters the four great patriarchies: Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem and Constantinople. This is a normal development, hence in those centers early Christian communities prospered. Despite Rome's claims to supremacy, based on the evangelical statement, "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 16:19), the Gospels also affirm that Christ's first disciple was Peter's brother, Andrew, the apostle who preached in the Near West, covering Thrace and Scythia. "One of these two who became followers of Jesus after hearing what John had said was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' – which means the Christ (the Anointed)" (John 1:40-1). Andrew's testimony is essential and appears as a revelation; he is the first, after John the Baptist, to declare explicitly that Jesus is not "a messiah," or another prophet, but the Messiah.

Yet this special region is not only the preaching area of Jesus' first disciple; it is also the source of the main Christian vocabulary. Here, for the first time, appears the appellative "Christian": "It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'" (Acts 11:26). The word "church" (like the German

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<sup>2</sup> René Guénon, *Aperçus sur l'ésotérisme islamique et le Taoïsme*, Gallimard, 1978, pp. 76-7.

*Kirche*) derives from the Greek *Kyriakon*, “the House of God,” and the French *église* (and Italian *chiesa*) comes from another Greek word, *ekklesia*, which means “assembly.”<sup>3</sup> Without diminishing the authentic importance of Rome as a primeval bishopric in the history of Christianity, it has to be stressed, though, that an extraordinary effervescence develops in the Near West and Near East during the first Christian synods, under the reign of the Byzantine Empire (the Western Roman Empire being historically in agony). This spiritual tumult is maintained, in spite of deviations and erroneous sects, by esoteric Christian currents, some of which are banished as heresies, others going into hiding, yet all of them leaving visible and invisible traces. The Armenian Church, the Coptic Church, and the Ethiopian one, are good examples of some visible traces. The influence played by the Monophysites and Nestorians is less visible on an esoteric level. Both heresies, preserving elements of the primitive Christianity, have successfully flourished in the Near West and Near East. The Nestorians and the Armenian and Coptic Monophysitism become mediators between Orient and Occident, having a subtle influence, still not clearly deciphered, upon the Western Crusaders. During the Crusades, in the city of Nicosia, for example, coexist an Armenian cathedral, a Maronite church, a Coptic church and a Nestorian one; in Famagusta, Coptic monasteries and Nestorian churches prosper together. Monophysite Armenia is a transmitter of the Chivalry rites and Masonic arts, which come, despite the opposition of the Byzantine official religion, to enrich the content of the Crusades; at the beginning of the Armenian Christianity, the fourth-century Armenian apostle, St. Gregory the Illuminator, wanders the country with a square in his hand, praising the “Grand Architect of Heaven and Earth,” and being the patron of Armenian masons. At the same time, the Nestorians spread from the Near East and Near West to the Middle and Far East, covering Egypt, Syria, North Africa, Mesopotamia, Persia, Mongolia, India, and China, functioning as counselors and secret advisers, in exoteric and esoteric domains; in these positions, they bring a subtle contribution to the birth of Islam, and later they are among the Christian physicians, astronomers and philosophers that lived at the Islamic royal courts, as in the time of Harun al-Rashid.<sup>4</sup>

This succinct journey into the early Christian history highlights a significant aspect: if the West-European world is not the direct inheritor of the Hellenistic civilization, neither is the Islam. The Arabs, Moors or Saracens, received the various information and knowledge through the diverse Christian

<sup>3</sup> In the same way, Andrew’s name is Greek (*andros*, “man”). Peter’s name, even if apparently a Latin word, meaning “the rock,” originates from the Greek *petra*.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed analysis on Nestorians and Monophysitism, from an esoteric perspective, see Jean Tourniac, *Lumière d’Orient, Dervy-Livres*, 1979.

currents developed inside the Byzantine Empire, and we could say that the only successor, *de jure* and *de facto*, of the Greco-Roman civilization, has to be considered the Christian Byzantine Empire, including without reservation the heresies, too.

Early Christianity in the Near East and Near West assimilated the Greek sciences, Alexandria being a very good example. St. Paul stressed from the start that “the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:22), the Greeks’ *philo – sophia*, “the love for wisdom,” being the most appreciated, as Clement of Alexandria and other Fathers of the Church confirm, Clement considering the Greek philosophy a preparatory science for Christian theology.

The Byzantine Empire is incontestably the direct continuator of the Greco-Roman civilization; here, in the Near West, the union of Hellenism and Latinism takes place, and only here is it truly acceptable to use the hyphen in the expression “Greco-Roman.”<sup>5</sup> Byzantium, as Eastern Roman Empire, is the sole valid inheritor of Rome, and during the reign of the famous emperor Justinian the official documents were still written in Latin; only later, Latin was completely replaced by Greek, the first *basileus* of Greek language being Maurice, at the end of the Sixth Century. The Byzantines are the “Romans,” and the Saracens and Turks always called them “Rumi.” The Byzantine Empire becomes, after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, the only genuine “Romania,” for a long time the Greek language being known as “the Romaic language” and the emperor bearing the title *basileus ton Romaion*, “the emperor of the Romans.”<sup>6</sup>

It is essential to understand, though, that the Byzantine Empire is not an ordinary successor of the Greco-Roman culture and structures; Byzantium is primarily a Christian Empire, the first Christian temporary power ever established, the Orthodoxy being the cement that unified the various populations (which now would be considered different nations), fastening them into one – the traditional society of the Orthodox Christians, governed by the emperor who is the vicar of God on Earth. Hence, the appellation “Rumi” became for Muslims the equivalent for “Christians.”

If the Orthodox religion is the force that consolidates and unites the Empire, it also causes, with its increasing intransigency and rigidity, the flight of valuable spiritual and intellectual elements. This is the tragedy of the traditional societies. The foundation of a regular traditional kingdom or city

<sup>5</sup> Byzantium is Roman in its customs, Hellenic in its culture, and Oriental in its methods of government. See Louis Bréhier, *Vie et mort de Byzance*, Albin Michel, 1969, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> See the *Introductions* in Thomas F. Mathews, *Byzantium*, Prentice Hall, 1998 and in Charles Delvoye, *L’art byzantin*, Arthaud, 1967.

implies a sacrifice, that is, a sacred “cutting.” In Latin, we find an Indo-European word *seco*, “to cut”; its root provided the words *sacer*, “saint, sacred,” *sica*, “dagger” and the English *scythe*. The related Latin word *sacrificium*, “sacrifice, immolation,” means “to render sacred” and from there “to perform a sacred rite.” The kingdom’s border or the city’s wall represents the sacred “cutting”; what is inside the wall (or border) designates the “order” (in Greek *cosmos*) and the sacred; what is outside is the “chaos,” the profane and the “darkness.” For a specific traditional society, its capital-city symbolizes the Center of the World, an image of the Supreme Center, the Pole. At the beginning of present humankind there was one and only spiritual Center; together with the evolvement of our cycle, from the Golden Age to the Iron Age, the primordial and only Tradition has multiplied into secondary traditions, all valid, and the unique Center has generated secondary spiritual centers. A paradoxical situation appeared: the different traditional centers started to fight against each other in the name of the absolute Truth, each one considering itself the possessor of the real Tradition and the only sacred heart of the World, while the others were the “chaos” and the profane. In the same way, the Orthodox Byzantine Church, in order to consolidate its structure, started to persecute all the other Christian factions, labeling them as “heresies” and forcing them to find shelter in the neighborhood. The Near East (Islam) became the first beneficiary from this action, the fugitives spreading the Greco-Roman sciences among the Muslims.

The first academic school is founded at Constantinople in year 330, under the high patronage of the emperor Constantine the Great; in 425, under the emperor Theodosius II, it becomes the University of Constantinople.<sup>7</sup> Other pagan universities, converted to Christianity, continue to function at Antioch, Alexandria, Beirut, Gaza, and Athens, teaching, among other subjects, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, Music, Natural Sciences, and Medicine. Yet the emperor Justinian closes the University of Athens for its Neoplatonic tendencies, and after that, the *magisters* are recruited from among the Orthodox Christians exclusively; as a result, valuable teachers migrate to Gundeshapur, in Persia, which becomes a famous Islamic learning center. The same thing happened some decades earlier, when the emperor Zeno closed the School of Edessa, in 489, the Nestorians who were teaching there being forced to relocate to the Orient.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Philip Sherrard, *Byzantium*, Time-Life Books, 1966, p. 136.

<sup>8</sup> See René Taton (editor), *Histoire générale des sciences*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1966, tome I, part III, chap. II (the Arabic Science).

During the birth of Islam, the Orthodox Christian Church is already shaken by the diverse “heresies.” The new Islamic religion is seen as no more than a new Christian “heresy,” which comes to enhance the dangerous influence of others upon the stability and unity of the Byzantine Christian Church. As a defensive reaction, Byzantium has to banish the pagan sciences taught at the universities, and Byzantine education becomes completely controlled by the Church. This is the historical moment when Greco-Roman learning starts to migrate from the Near West to the Near East, i. e., from Orthodox Christianity to Islam. Moreover, the expansion of the Islamic power causes the universities at Alexandria, Beirut and Antioch to fall under Muslim domination.<sup>9</sup>

Curiously enough, for a long time, despite the divergences between the Byzantines and Muslims, the Near East and Near West are very close; in comparison, a fissure separates the Middle West and Near West, a fissure that will become a precipice full of intolerance and adversity. For that reason, the Islam will be the main beneficiary of the Greco-Roman heritage. During the Umayyad dynasty and then, the Abbasid dynasty, Byzantine artists and scholars, together with the Persian ones, have an important role in organizing the Islamic empire. The official documents of the Saracens are written in Greek; the Arabic coins are similar to the Byzantine ones; the Byzantine architects and masons build mosques; soldiers, deserting the Byzantine army, become generals of the Muslims; Byzantine women become mothers of caliphs. The famous St. John of Damascus is a high dignitary at the Umayyad court, and Nestorians and Monophysites enjoy complete religious freedom in the Islamic territories, a freedom they cannot have in Byzantium.

The Byzantine learning will join the Persian and Hindu contributions, everything being melted and remolded into a new shape, specifically Islamic; the Islam, assimilating this rich heritage, will elaborate its own Muslim sciences, in this form the knowledge being transmitted, particularly during the Crusades, to the Middle West. The Arabic scientific *corpus* is significantly indebted, despite the importance of Persian and Hindu influences, to Byzantine scholarship; in his *Tabaqât al-Umam*, Sa’îd al-Andalusî says that India is “the source of wisdom, law and political art,” the master in the science of numbers, geometry, astronomy and medicine, yet after that, he names the ancient Greeks

<sup>9</sup> We must not, though, simplify too much the Byzantine religious history. The times of the synods are very troubled and hazy times. Of course, to stabilize the Orthodox religion, the emperor and the heads of the Church had to fight against the pagans (Bréhier 28), and condemned the Christian deviations, like the doctrines of Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, and of Arius. The Arian heresy had spread among the Goths and other Teutonic tribes, so when emperor Justin, in 524, banished the Arians, the Empire lost the Germanic support (Bréhier 31). For that reason, the intransigency was alternated with tolerance, strong attempts being made to convert the Monophysites to the official Orthodox dogma, and for many years the Monophysitism heresy was allowed at Constantinople, even if censured in Syria and Egypt, in hope of a chimerical conciliation (Bréhier 33, 53).

as “the men of the highest rank, the most respected scholars” (Taton, *ibid.*). The first translations from Greek to Arabic take place during the Umayyad dynasty, at the end of seventh century, when – says Ibn al-Adim – the caliph Khalid called from Egypt some Greek philosophers who could speak Arabic perfectly, and asked them to translate, from Greek and Coptic, some books of Alchemy.<sup>10</sup> An important role in spreading the Near Western learning, through translations, is played by the two famous intellectual centers, Nisibis and Gundeshapur. In the Assyrian city of Nisibis, a Byzantine Christian school was founded at the beginning of the fourth century, and St. Ephraem Syrus was in charge of it; when the Persians conquered Nisibis, the school moved to Edessa, and later, when the emperor Zeno closed it, moved back to Nisibis. The school became a great Nestorian university, and contributed to the translation in Syriac of Greek treatises. Gundeshapur, the academic Neoplatonic center, also initiated numerous translations from Aristotle, Galen, Hippocrates, Euclid and others. The learning and the teachers will migrate in time to the Arabian Peninsula and to Baghdad. The Arabs themselves will hunt for the Greek manuscripts from the Byzantine Empire, and sometimes they will ask for books for war compensation (Clot, *Ibid.*).

The Arabic learning *corpus*, in this way consolidated, will radiate together with the Islamic expansion to the Middle West, first to Spain, Sicily and south of Italy, and then to Charlemagne’s empire, being translated into Latin. Even today we are able to see vivid evidence of the Islamic influence just considering the terminology we use in our Western sciences.<sup>11</sup> Of course, the Byzantine civilization also had a direct influence upon Western Europe. Nicholas of Cusa is an eminent example of this influence. In the spring of 1437, the Pope sent Nicholas to Constantinople as an official envoy; thus, he had a chance not only to learn directly about the Byzantine culture, but also to discover the Orthodox spirituality, visiting the sacred Mount Athos and reviewing the works of Dionysius the Areopagite. Cusanus confesses that, when he was on the ship returning from Constantinople, he received the divine grace and light.

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<sup>10</sup> André Clot, *Haroun al-Rachid et le temps des Mille et Une Nuits*, Fayard, 1986, chap. IX.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, the following sciences: Alchemy and Chemistry (even the word “alchemy” has an Arabic origin; besides, we mention: alcohol – *al-koh'l*, alembic – *al-anbiq*, alkali – *al-qali*); Astronomy and Navigation (azimuth – *as-sumút*, nadir, zenith, Algol – *al-ghúl*, Aldebaran – *al-dabarán*, admiral – *amir*); Mathematics (algebra, algorithm); and so on. The Arabic influence in Mathematics is very strong. In the time of Charlemagne, the Middle West assimilates the abacus, the astrolabe and the Arabic figures or “ciphers” (in French, *chiffre*), of Hindu origin, where the word “cipher” derives from Arabic *al-sífr* = void, zero. The great Arab mathematician Ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, teacher at the “House of Wisdom” in Baghdad, a university that followed the model of Alexandria, introduces the decimal system and elaborates the first book of Algebra (Arabic *al-djabar*); the word algorithm comes as an alteration of the name al-Khwarizmi. For the Arabic contribution to Mathematics see Carl B. Boyer, *A History of Mathematics*, John Wiley & Sons, 1991, p. 225 ff.

The Palatine Chapel, *Capella Palatina*, built in the center of Charlemagne's capital-city, Aix-la-Chapelle, is another exquisite example. The Chapel's architecture imitates the Byzantine church of San Vitale of Ravenna, which, in its turn, copies the basilica of Hagia Sophia of Constantinople. When Constantinople became the new center of the Roman Empire, it was called "the New Rome" (Sherrard 31) or "the second Rome" (Mathews 19). Constantinople is, like Rome, a sacred center, the city being founded on seven hills (Sherrard 33), obeying the laws of the sacred geography and symbolizing the seven *dwîpas* of the Hindu tradition.<sup>12</sup> Aix-la-Chapelle (or Aachen) was also called by Charlemagne's contemporaries, "the second Rome" or even "the New Jerusalem," which means an implicit admittance of the Near Western influence, especially when Alcuin calls Aachen "the New Athens," considering Charlemagne's educational program.<sup>13</sup>

There is a fundamental difference, though, between Rome and Constantinople: "the New Rome" is a Christian capital, the first Christian official center, having the church built at the heart of the city, while in Rome the Christian temples were located on the outskirts (Mathews 20, Sherrard 34). In this respect, Constantinople is not an imitation of Rome, while Aix-la-Chapelle is a reflection of Constantinople; in fact, a superb illustration of the fundamental meaning of Tradition is unveiling before us. The essential difference between a profane and a sacred society is that the profane one has cut its ties with the Principle; on the contrary, in a traditional society, every gesture, every activity is a sacred one, imitating what the gods did *in illo tempore*, at the beginning of the world.<sup>14</sup> A traditional person knows that mankind, at the moment of birth, was blessed with a holy lore, the Tradition descended from Heaven, which continued to live in all the day-to-day activities. For the profane person, this descent is just a legend. Etymologically, the word "tradition" describes this uninterrupted transmission of the divine lore and principles from the beginning of our human cycle; any break in this chain of transmission causes the fatal fall from sacred to profane. For that reason, Rome has considered itself the direct continuator of Troy, and Troy – it is well known – is the symbol of the spiritual center, a projection of the supreme Center. Aeneas carried to Italy the Palladium – the sacred statue of Pallas Athena, which had descended from Heaven as a divine token of Troy; this story symbolizes the transmission of the sacred lore from Troy to Rome,

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<sup>12</sup> René Guénon, *Le Roi du Monde*, Gallimard, 1981, pp. 57-8.

<sup>13</sup> Richard E. Sullivan, *Aix-la-Chapelle in the Age of Charlemagne*, Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1963, pp. 31-2, 150.

<sup>14</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour*, Gallimard, 1979, p. 34.

the Palladium, like the Holy Grail, being a symbol of the Tradition itself. In the same way, Constantinople becomes the continuator of Rome, Constantine the Great bringing the Palladium from Rome to the new capital (Sherrard 33), a gesture that reveals the unbroken transmission of the sacred Tradition, even if Rome is a “pagan” society and Constantinople represents a Christian one.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, Aix-la-Chapelle lacks this continuity, and its epithet of “second Rome,” like Charlemagne’s title of “Roman emperor,” is just an imitation.

Constantine the Great is the patron of many churches, the most important ones being Hagia Sophia, in the center of the city, and the Church of the Holy Apostles (Sherrard 34)<sup>16</sup>; in 532, the emperor Justinian rebuilds the famous *basilica*, Hagia Sophia, as it is known today. The name of the *basilica* deserves attention.<sup>17</sup> The Near West proves to be not only the inheritor of the Greco-Roman civilization, not only the dwelling of the first Christian empire, but also a “kingdom of wisdom.” The marriage between the Orthodox religion and Sophia, illustrated exoterically by the name of the most important church, suggests the existence of an esoteric kernel and of an intellectual tradition. And we are not talking about the outside appearance of the Byzantine monasticism.

The Orthodox monastic life is an important coordinate of the Near West. The sacred Mount Athos with its inaccessible monasteries is famous. The Orthodox monks secluded in caves or in the desert are well known. Monasteries built like fortresses are legendary and could represent a fine illustration of the Orthodox spiritual path.<sup>18</sup> In contrast with Islam or Catholicism, the Orthodoxy, after the chimerical attempt to attract the

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<sup>15</sup> Note the same continuity in the case of the sacred temples. The Christian churches are built over the ruins of the pagan temples.

<sup>16</sup> Note that the basilica of St. Mark in Venice is a replica of the Holy Apostles church. The famous icon of Blessed Virgin of Nikopoia, placed on St. Mark’s altar of the north transept, carried by the Venetians into battles at the head of the army, is, in fact, a Byzantine icon abducted from Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade.

<sup>17</sup> The churches in Thessaloniki, Edessa, Ohrid, Nicaea, and the Kiev’s cathedral are also called Hagia Sophia (Mathews 9, 164, and John Meyendorff, Byzantine Hesychasm, Variorum Reprints, London, 1974, p. 259). Moreover, the capital-city of Bulgaria is Sophia, Bulgaria belonging to the posterity of Byzantium.

<sup>18</sup> Monasticism flourished in the Byzantine Empire; in the six-century, there were 85 monasteries in Constantinople alone; books about the lives of great monks became best sellers in Byzantium (Sherrard 27). At the same time, the Near West, and especially Constantinople, is a huge reliquary (Sherrard 34). Many valorous Christian relics form a holy web, the infrastructure for the activity of the divine blessing, proving that Constantinople is a “New Jerusalem,” an image of Heaven (Sherrard 96), the relics being the support for Heaven’s spiritual influences. Constantinople, as a genuine spiritual center and image of the Heavenly Jerusalem, was girdled with formidable walls, the sacred “cutting,” which protected and separated the holy city from the exterior darkness and chaos. In a fifth-century ivory plaque (Sherrard 15), the “New Rome” is represented as an empress wearing a crown symbolizing the walls of Constantinople.

Monophysites and others, never promoted an aggressive proselytism. On the contrary, the Orthodox monks, like the Hindu seers or other genuine initiates, try to hide and escape the curiosity of the external world, answering questions very reluctantly, and often playing the role of the ignorant, the same way the Tibetans did when asked about the Lord of the World.<sup>19</sup>

The Orthodox seers built a strong wall around their inner spirituality, similar to the ramparts of the monasteries: it is the sacred “cutting,” separating the light from darkness, the wisdom from ignorance. The supreme Sophia reigns inside this wall of silence, the churches’ name being just an external reflection. If the monks, and not the official clergy, are the main athletes of the spiritual domain (Sherrard 99), the monastic life is also just a robe for something much more profound, the divine and everlasting wisdom.

It is interesting to compare the name of the Near Western and Middle Western churches. In Western Europe, the cathedrals are usually called “The Church of Our Lady,” or in French, *Notre Dame*. Orthodoxy praised the Virgin equally, calling her “the Mother of God,” the Orthodox icons with the Mother of God being famous. There are also churches bearing the name “Mother of God,” yet the most important church is called Hagia Sophia. Obviously, “the Holy Wisdom” is the equivalent of *Notre Dame*, of the Virgin. In the Middle Ages, in Western Europe, the Virgin is a symbol for esoteric spirituality, she is *Madonna Intelligenza*. Much earlier, in the Near West, the divine Sophia became part of the Christian tradition, expression of an esoteric core. Yet only secondary “the Holy Wisdom” is in the Near West an equivalent for the Mother of God; in the first place, it represents Jesus himself, as *Logos* (Meyendorff 259 ff.). “Wisdom has built herself a house, she has erected her seven pillars” (Proverbs 9:1)<sup>20</sup>, in the same way, Constantinople on its seven hills is the “city of wisdom” and the Orthodox Church is the house of God’s Wisdom. The Holy Sophia came down as Jesus, the first earthly “house of wisdom” being the Mother of God, the Virgin, the holy womb of the *Logos*. An old Syriac manuscript presents an icon of the Mother of God carrying Jesus inside an oval form (the Word’s Egg), the Virgin having king Solomon at her right and the Holy Wisdom at her left (Meyendorff 263). Solomon himself is an emblem of Wisdom, being considered the wisest king and the builder of the Temple. And his name is related to Peace.

When Constantine the Great laid the foundations of Hagia Sophia, he also built another church, which became the first cathedral of the “New Rome,”

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<sup>19</sup> Marco Pallis’ critics regarding Guénon’s “Le Roi du Monde” and its lack of historical reality are a result and an example of this tactic of dissimulation. See René Guénon, *Le Dossiers H, L’Age d’Homme*, 1997, p. 145 ff.

<sup>20</sup> Note the Masonic symbolism.

and was called Hagia Eirene, “Holy Peace” (Mathews 21). Sophia, the wisdom, is strongly related to Peace. In different traditions, Sophia and Peace are the ingredients of the Heart, when the spiritual realization or Liberation (Hindu *moksha*) is completed. In Hindu tradition, the greatest spiritual master, Sankarâchârya, wears a name related to “quietness” and “peace” (Sanskrit *santi*).<sup>21</sup> In Chinese tradition, the legendary *Huang-ti*, the Yellow Emperor, is also called “Peace.” In the Judeo-Christian tradition, Melchisedek is “the king of Salem,” i. e., the “king of Peace”; also Solomon means “the peacemaker.”<sup>22</sup>

René Guénon, explaining the Tradition, calls “non-manifestation” what the Hindu tradition refers to as *Turiya*, “the Fourth,” the supreme state of *Ātma* (Mândûkya Up. I.7). For our rational mind it is almost impossible to describe the non-manifestation, the domain of *Brahma nirguna* and of Meister Eckhart’s Godhead. There are, though, some characteristics that can suggest this supreme state, such as: silence, void, non-action (the Chinese *wu-wei*) and complete quietness. Sophia and Peace belong to this state too, and the fact that the first important churches of the Near West were named Hagia Sophia and Hagia Eirene makes us wonder. Yet it is no secret that the Orthodoxy covers a sacred kernel, which is known in the outside world as Hesychasm, a name derived from Greek *hesychia*, “quietness, peace.”

In our modern times, the profane world and what Guénon would have called “the counter-initiation forces” tried to undermine the genuine traditional doctrines by adopting them in a blasphemous way. One after another, Yoga, Zen and Sufism, became popularized in the West, numerous dubious books and articles being written on this subject, these very orthodox spiritual paths being altered and contaminated with modernism and scientism, and presented to the large public as a kind of “psycho-physical experience.” Fortunately, even if there were some attempts, the Hesychasm escaped these attacks, and there are reasons to believe that it still shelters a hidden and unaltered initiatory kernel of the Holy Sophia. Discussing the initiatory possibilities in the West, Guénon says that

On the part of the Orthodox Church, there is the Hesychasm, which apparently has preserved all the characteristics of a real initiation, but, in fact, this one is almost inaccessible, being extremely difficult to find a qualified guide; for that, you have to go to Mount Athos, which is its

<sup>21</sup> His name means “the peacemaker.” See Paul Martin-Dubost, Çankara, Seuil, 1973, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> In fact, in any tradition, the most important role of a ruler was to establish and maintain peace. We may add that, for example, in the mythology of the Norsemen, Frey, the god of peace, came down on earth again and again, impersonating kings of Sweden and Denmark. His son, Frodi, ruled Denmark in the time of Jesus, and he was called “Peace.” See H. A. Guerber, Myths of the Norsemen, Dover Publ., 1992, p. 128.

center, and be admitted to live there for a time, and gain the monks' trust to obtain from one of them the transmission and the technical instructions. (Le Dossiers H, p. 293)

Hesychasm, like any other esoteric path, cannot be restricted by chronology or geography, and it is safe to assume that it appeared at the same time with the Christian tradition, even if the modern scholars consider Hesychasm a mystical movement developed mainly on Mount Athos and promoted in the fourteen-century by St. Gregory Palamas. It is true that St. Gregory Palamas, in his controversy with Barlaam, unveiled the theoretical essence of Hesychasm, yet the effective realization and spiritual initiation remained further hidden and protected.

The Hesychastic doctrine is in full accordance with all the other great world traditions and has as a goal the Supreme Identity, the Liberation, expressed as a direct and immediate vision of the Superluminous Night, that is, of the non-manifestation or of *Brahma nirguna*. The Hesychastic initiate is a seer who follows *jñāna-mārga*, "the way of knowledge," a knowledge identical with the divine vision of the "tenebrous light."<sup>23</sup> And not the physical eye is the instrument of this vision, but the "eye of the heart," like in Sufism. "The Prayer of the Heart" plays a major role in the Hesychasm, indicating the siege of the Holy Sophia and of the divine Eye.<sup>24</sup> Even if the *apophatic* theology, similar to the Hindu doctrine of *neti, neti*, "not this, not this," is more appropriate as a way of spiritual knowledge, and high above the "affirmative theology," the light of the negative theology is ultimately also a discursive reasoning in which the mind develops its thinking, negating all the attributes assigned improperly to God. The only adequate way for directly seeing the Divine Light is above and beyond the mind and individuality, is the Intellectual vision obtained by quieting (*hesychia*) the mind and the soul, and realizing the Superluminous Night within the Heart. This Superintelligible Light, perceived during the enduring Prayer of the Heart, and seen in an unseen way and known in an unknown way, unveils not God but Super-God (*hyper-theos*), identical to Meister Eckhart's Godhead.<sup>25</sup> It is the Light of transfiguration: Jesus' "face shone like the sun and his clothes became as

<sup>23</sup> The root *vid* means at the same time "to see" (Latin *videre*) and "knowledge" (Sanskrit *vidyā*).

<sup>24</sup> There is another reason why king Solomon was so appreciated, besides his connection with Sophia and Peace, and the building of the Temple. "The Lord gave Solomon immense wisdom and understanding, and a heart as vast as the sand of the seashore. The wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt" (1 Kings 5:29). "The Lord said, 'I give you a heart wise and shrewd as none before you has had and none will have after you'" (1 Kings 3:12). Solomon is wise and peaceful because he has a divine and infinite heart in which Sophia and Hesychia found shelter.

<sup>25</sup> See Filocalia, Ed. Institut. Biblic, Bucuresti, 1977, vol. 7, p. 266 ff.

white as the light" (Matthew 17:2); it is, with respect to the teaching of the Psalms, the vision of God, "clothed in majesty and glory, wrapped in a robe of light" (Ps. 104:2); it is the absolute Light, without alteration or shadow of a change (James 1:17).

The Vision of Light within the Heart, in Hesychasm, is identical with the Supreme Identity of Sufism, and St. Gregory Palamas stresses that the vision of the Superintelligible Light implies union with God. The spiritual realization means, in Hesychasm, a "unifying perfection" and the "deific sharing of One" as a spiritual vision with the inner pastoral Eye, that is, with the Eye of the Heart.<sup>26</sup> In Hindu or Islamic tradition, the liberating Knowledge signifies the absolute identity between the knower, the known and the act of knowledge. In the same way, the Hesychast who surpasses individuality, reaching the Superluminous Night and realizing the inconceivable union with God – says St. Gregory Palamas – is himself light and sees the light with light. If the Hesychastic initiate looks at himself (as subject) he sees light; if he looks at the object of his vision, he sees light again; and the means of seeing it, is the light. That is the perfect union and vision (Meyendorff 202).

This sacred kernel, which is still hiding in the Near West, was so essential and fundamental for the Orthodox Christianity, that in the six-century, when Hagia Sophia became the heart of Constantinople, Byzantine iconography insisted on presenting a symbolical scene called "Healing of the Blind." Jesus applies a finger to one eye of a blind man (Mathews 100-4), a gesture that illustrates the opening of the inner Eye. Moreover, the legend says that the first founder of Constantinople was Byzas who asked the Delphic Oracle where to establish a new city, and the Oracle told him: "Opposite the blind" (Sherrard 31). The Delphic Oracle was right again: Constantinople, the spiritual center of the Near West, unifying the Holy Sophia, the Peace and the Prayer of the Heart, became precisely the "opposite of the blind." And even if today the modern civilization has taken over, the Near West hides somewhere, in its depths, the ever-young Sophia.

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<sup>26</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, who had connections with the Hesychasm, wrote a famous book "The Vision of God" in which he says that we perceive God "not with the fleshy eyes, but with the eyes of the mind and understanding" (Nicholas of Cusa, The Vision of God, The Book Tree, 1999, p. 23).



## Initiation and Spiritual Realization

Mircea A. Tamas

René Guénon was asked many times about initiation and spiritual realization, questions that prompted him to write a series of articles, collected later in two essential volumes, **Aperçus sur l'initiation** and **Initiation et réalisation spirituelle**. If Guénon's articles brought many clarifications and important specifications, they created, at the same time, new questions, uncertainties, confusion and even opposition.

After René Guénon explained the difference between sacred and profane, between the western and eastern mentality, between esoterism and exotericism, between initiation and religion, after he highlighted the function and importance of the spiritual influence and of the metaphysical knowledge, after he exposed the counterfeit antitraditional, pseudo-spiritual and pseudo-initiatory societies and currents, a fissure into the modern mentality started to develop and a sincere desire for a true initiation was born in Occident. Yet Guénon, in his articles about initiation, stopped short the enthusiasm of many, stipulating with his uncompromising and categorical style a number of restrictions. There are, Guénon said, three fundamental initiatory conditions, in accordance with the triad potential – virtual – actual: the “qualification,” composed of some inherent possibilities in the individual nature; the “transmission” of a spiritual influence (inside a traditional organization to which the neophyte has to belong), representing the “illumination” that awakens the dormant possibilities; the “inner work” through which, and with the help of some external “supports,” the being passes from degree to degree, along the initiatory hierarchy, reaching at the end Liberation or the Supreme Identity.<sup>1</sup>

The second of these three conditions has been a great grief for those who wanted an initiation. Probably, the individuals who studied Guénon's work (that generated in them the quest for an initiation) considered themselves qualified (complying with the first condition) by their very desire to follow an initiatory path, which, of course, represented a false supposition; regarding the third condition, that one was too vague to worry them. The second condition, though, was received by René Guénon's readers with consternation. As Guénon said many times, the West was completely subjugated by the profane point of view and there were no effective and accessible initiatory organizations left for the possible candidates. Masonry was the sole initiatory organization that survived in the West, but even this one was living difficult times. Therefore, the

<sup>1</sup> René Guénon, **Aperçus sur l'Initiation**, Éd. Traditionnelles, 1992, p. 34.

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westerner that discovered in himself a vocation for Tradition and wanted to pass from theory to effective realization was placed in an impossible situation.

For this reason, all kinds of subterfuges were used to elude the categorical conditions that René Guénon imposed upon initiation. Some tried to demonstrate that the Christian religion is not only exotericism, but also esotericism, the religious rites having initiatory powers (Schuon, Borella, etc.); others tried to change the exception into rule, stating that a “spontaneous initiation” is at hand or an “auto-initiation” is acceptable (Evola). This unrest about initiation persisted in the present days and the confusion with regard to initiation did not diminish, on the contrary. There are opinions suggesting that an initiation through the Internet and letters is possible, or that reading Guenon’s work represents an initiation, or that initiation is something similar to a College course.

The disarray with respect to initiation, fed also by the pseudo-spiritualists and pseudo-traditionalists’ phantasmagorias, is a victory of the adversary, which, as suggested by Ananda Coomaraswamy, found a home into man’s “soul.” Therefore, when we tackle initiation, we should ask, paraphrasing Ramana Maharshi, “who wants to be initiated?” Too many times the desire for initiation is an impulse of an ego without any qualification. In the traditional fairy tales, which hide an initiatory journey, from the beginning the initiatory qualifications are brought up, when the older brothers are rejected and only the youngest (the hero) is accepted for the journey. Such an examination is necessary for any candidate to initiation, and not the individual’s ego will decide in this respect. The initiatory qualification is an important condition, neglected today in Occident, and its non-observance creates an imaginary pseudo-initiatory journey, having sometimes devastating effects. For this reason, normally, the entrance in an initiatory organization is possible only after the neophyte’s qualifications were checked, which stresses the necessity of an attachment to an initiatory organization (the second initiatory condition).

In fact, the attachment to an initiatory organization is not only a necessary condition, but also designates the very initiation, in a strict etymological sense, and this attachment has to be real and effective, since we deal with the transmission of a spiritual influence; as we said, it is not enough that an individual wants to enter in an initiatory organization, much more decisive is for him to obtain acceptance from that organization after his initiatory qualifications were verified, and, of course, the initiatory organization, in order to be authentical, has to be the actual keeper of a spiritual influence.

Yet, even assuming that a neophyte has the needed qualifications and was initiated in a genuine traditional organization, that is, he accomplished successfully the first two conditions, he is far away from being what commonly is called an “initiate.” The initiate is not the same thing as the “adept.” To say it correctly, the initiate is an individual who just embarked on a spiritual path; he is a new-born to whom was transmitted, through the initiatory rites, the spiritual influence kept and guarded by that specific organization, which corresponds to a virtual “realization.” The neophyte is, even in an etymological sense, a “new plant,” but at a germinal stage. If the soil is rich (that is, if, indeed, the initiatory qualifications were correctly identified), it could be expected that the planted seed in this soil (the initiation) will grow and become a glorious tree (the spiritual realization). In various traditions, the comparison with the seed or the grain allows one to understand the initiatory process. Obviously, the seed, to become a mature plant, needs

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favorable conditions (water, light, etc.); similarly, the initiate, to pass from initiation to spiritual realization, must travel a long way, using all the supports he can get.

The journey from initiation to spiritual realization represents the third initiatory condition, stated by René Guénon. Too often, today, the initiation is confused with the spiritual realization and many think that, once initiated, they do not have to spend any other effort, the one who was initiated becoming automatically a perfect and spiritual master. The difference between initiation and spiritual realization is, though, significant. It is known that some initiates, even if they covered some stages of the journey, fell afterwards. Of course, it is easy for the ego to deceive and suggest, with its usual conceit, that the adept status was achieved, thus protecting its domination, while the Self is dormant. Moreover, the ego will inspire the initiatory travelers to boast that they are initiates. No true initiate, who covered indeed a spiritual path, will ever describe himself as a perfect initiate. Therefore, the neophyte that was just initiated in a genuine traditional organization and in whose heart was planted the spiritual influence has no reason to speak highly of his status, but he must understand that he just entered Janus' gate. Even in the case of some famous exceptions, there was a gap of time between "illumination" and "perfection" (understood as ascendant and descendent realization). Saint Paul, after his illumination on the road to Damascus, has disappeared for three years in Arabia and only after that he returned into the world; Ramana Maharishi spent years at Arunachala and only after that he returned to Tirunavamalai.

The development of the present human cycle brought us in *Kali-yuga*, and due to this "fall" we need initiation. In the Golden Age the initiation had no reason to be. Today we live the end of *Kali-yuga*, and for this reason there are so many difficulties – some insuperable – with regard to initiation and spiritual realization. As René Guénon explained, because today the profane point of view invaded the world, the neophyte needs, more than ever, "supports" to help him travel along the initiatory path or just to aid him escape the profane. That is the role of exotericism. There are people who think that today we do not need to participate to the exoteric rites anymore, that the initiation and a pure contemplation are sufficient.<sup>2</sup> This is an illusion, like the others, with regard to initiation. Today, more than ever, exotericism is necessary as one of the supports for spiritual realization. The modern individuals live an important part of their life overwhelmed by profane activities and the so much criticized Templars could be a good example for them.

When the Templars were not on campaign or were established in preceptories in non-combatant areas in the west, therefore, the Rule laid down a manner of conventional life centred upon the canonical hours not dissimilar from the daily round of other monks. Clause 279 sets out this obligation without ambiguity:

Each brother of the Temple should know that he is not committed to anything so much as to serve God, and each one should apply all his study and understanding to this, and especially to hearing His holy office; for none should fail or be lacking in this, as long as he is content in it. For as our Rule says, if we love God, we should willingly hear and listen to His holy words.

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<sup>2</sup> Jonas, *Pour en finir avec René Guénon*, Vers la Tradition, no. 83-4, 2001, p. 242-3.

## Initiation and Spiritual Realization

The day began with attendance at matins which in the summer would have been at about 4:00 a.m., where the brothers heard or recited thirteen paternosters, followed by prime at 6:00 a.m. and the hearing of mass, terce at 8:00 a.m., and sext at 11:30 a.m. A brief sleep was permitted between matins and prime, provided everything had been attended to, at the end of which they would be summoned by the bell which determined the divisions of the day. By late morning each brother should have said sixty paternosters for the benefactors of the house “that is to say thirty for the dead, that God may deliver them from the pains of Purgatory and place them in Paradise, and the other thirty for the living. That God may deliver them from sin and pardon them the sins they have committed, and lead them to a fine end.” Sext was followed by the first meal of the day, usually taken in two sittings, the first for knights, the second for sergeants. Whenever possible, a priest gave the blessing and during the meal a clerk read a holy lesson, while the brothers ate in silence. Afterwards they went to the chapel to give thanks. Nones at 2:30 p.m. and vespers at 6:00 p.m. divided the afternoon, followed by supper, the second meal of the day. The final office was compline, where the assembled brothers drank communally, either water or diluted wine. Sleep followed and silence was observed from compline to matins the following morning<sup>3</sup>.

The Templars had their life filled with exoteric rites (sacerdotal and chivalric) as a support for their initiatory spiritual realization. The modern man needs even more to participate, effectively and sincerely, to the exoteric rites, which will save him from the profane mentality. It is difficult to understand why today, in the West, there is such a gulf between exotericism and esotericism. For example, it is well-known, and we do not have to stress it, the savage opposition between the Church and Masonry. The Greek-Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church have a blind repulsion for anything related to Masonry.



René Guénon, in all his work, considered that, for the West, Masonry stays as a genuine initiatory organization, despite its decadence, which means that Masonry is a true exponent of esotericism and of the initiatory domain. Of course, the problem is not the Masonry itself, but the masons. A victim of the counter-initiatory forces, Masonry decayed inevitably, today, in its lodges, being possible only a virtual realization or a virtual (speculative) initiation. The Masonic initiation has to comply with the three conditions discussed above. Obviously, today, the first condition is almost nonexistent. Reghini said, “not any profane may become a mason, and not any fellowcraft may become a master mason.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, in most of the cases, the individuals accepted in Masonry have a profane and antitraditional mentality, the lodges being changed into a sort of clubs, either having moral and humanitarian objectives, or imitating the Royal Society of London. The passing through the initiatory degrees is often only a formality and occurs in a hurry, those many years needed for an operative mason to be promoted being forgotten. Moreover, there is today an increasing Masonic proselytism aiming at attracting new members, as many as possible, as if the number has any importance. Guénon said: “the

<sup>3</sup> Malcolm Barber, **The New Knighthood**, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994, p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> Arturo Reghini, **Les Nombres Sacrés**, Archè, 1981, p. 172.

## Initiation and Spiritual Realization

real remedy for the present decadence of Masonry, and the only one, no doubt, would be (...) to change the masons' mentality or at least of some of them, who are capable to understand their own initiation.”<sup>5</sup>

For Masonry, the quality of its members is a capital thing, since the passing from initiation to spiritual realization is accomplished not with the guidance of a spiritual master, but during an initiatory collective work. In an article, written at the end of his life, in 1949,<sup>6</sup> Guénon, underlining that Masonry is a genuine initiatory organization, explained that in the case of the Masonic initiation, besides the personal effort, which is indispensable, takes place an initiatory collective work, the spiritual influence or the spiritual “presence” operating through the masons of the lodge. For this “presence” to operate efficiently, it is necessary to have a qualified “frame” or “collective body,” otherwise, as the spiritual center hid underground, so would the spiritual “presence,” and only something virtual would remain.

Only the present degeneracy of the world allowed such a multiplication of the masons. It is, of course, a sign of the times, when we are approaching the pure quantity. But even if this number will be significantly less and, miraculously, the candidates would be accepted only based on their initiatory qualifications, the modern world with its profane perspective would remain a great danger and a serious obstacle. Therefore, Masonry has to consider the exoteric domain and the masons must participate to the exoteric rites, as the operative masons and the Templars participated in the past. The *Old Charges* clearly stipulated that an operative mason had to go to church and follow the religious rites.

It is distressing to see the Greek-Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church using their energies to fight and condemn the Masonry; yet it is even more distressing to see the masons disregarding the exoteric rites, when they should be an example for the common people. Today, more than ever, the Church, despite its regrettable compromises, is a sacred land and a healthy support for the personal initiatory effort of any genuine mason. Also, the pilgrimages, which in the past were part of the Royal Art, should represent one of the objectives of any mason. But how many occidental masons accomplish today such a pilgrimage? How many masons understand the fundamental importance of the spiritual “supports” for their initiatory journey, opened by the Masonic initiation?

What we are saying here does not intend to direct the mason (or any other initiate) toward an illusory eso-exotericism. René Guénon explained as clearly as possible the difference between exotericism and esotericism; he also showed the correlation between these two domains, the exotericism being the skin and the esotericism the kernel. It would be a mistake, therefore, to think that, today, an initiation could disregard the exoteric rites or that the exotericism is sufficient for a perfect spiritual realization.

The symbolism of the “golden chain” (*Aurea catena Homeri*), mentioned by Homer (*Iliad* VIII, 18-26), is well-known, and so is the symbolism of the “chain of light,” mentioned by Dionysius the Areopagite (*The Divine Names* III.1).<sup>7</sup> If we consider, from

<sup>5</sup> René Guénon, *Études sur la Franc-Maçonnerie et le Compagnonnage*, Ét. Trad., 1980, I, p. 246.

<sup>6</sup> *Travail initiatique collectif et «presence» spirituelle*, in *Initiation et réalisation spirituelle*, Éd. Traditionnelles, 1980.

<sup>7</sup> See also *The Everlasting Sacred Kernel*, Rose-Cross Books, 2002, pp. 13-4.

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one point of view, this chain as being the spiritual influence of a non-human origin, which operates both through the exoteric rites and the esoteric ones, we will be able to understand the difference between the natures of the exoteric domain and of the esoteric one, considering that, for the former, the communication with the super-individual states of the being occurs by pulling the golden chain and assimilating its vibrations, while for the latter the initiate climbs the golden chain, higher and higher, taking effectively in possession link after link. Both, the exoteric and the esoteric rites, carry spiritual influences (and not only psychical ones), but as we see, the difference between these two types is fundamental. On the other hand, the exoteric rites allow us to be attached to the golden chain and to participate to its vibrations, which already is a significant gain. It is true that the esotericism is not limited by any exotericism, and the Masonry is considered to have a universal character, but, in a natural way, the esoteric domain has to be covered and protected by an exoteric skin, which represents a starting point.<sup>8</sup> From this “starting point,” located symbolically on the circumference of a circle, the neophyte “enters” the lodge, “travels” along a radius, reaching the center of the circle, and from there rises along the vertical axis: these are precisely the three steps of the Masonic initiation (corresponding to the three degrees, entered apprentice, fellowcraft, master mason) called in the Masonic ritual *Initiation – Passing – Raising*.

What we said here about Masonry could be applied to any other Western initiatory organization, yet, besides Masonry, if there still are such organizations in the West they are well hidden and almost out of reach (regardless if they belong to a Hermetic, Chivalric or Hesychastic way). For this reason, we should say that the Occidental initiation is not dead, but hidden and waiting, similar to the initiatory symbols of Masonry, perpetuated through the centuries, their significance and operative power being there even if invisible for the majority of the masons.

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<sup>8</sup> Even if Masonry has this universal nature, it does not mean that a mason could shift from a traditional form to another during his initiatory journey.



## René Guénon and initiation

Mircea A. Tamas

René Guénon was reticent to write about initiation, not only because he did not perform the function of a spiritual master, and did not accept disciples, but also because it is almost impossible to write in general terms about spiritual realization, when this one is very real and “positive,” containing a great number of specific initiatory ways, in accordance with the human diversity.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Guénon considered, at one moment, that it was important to write a series of articles having spiritual realization and initiation as subjects; our present article is dedicated to these written teachings. Of course, anybody can challenge the validity of what René Guénon transmitted, and there were such antagonists. Yet we have not seen up to the present even one of these opponents provide a different teaching about initiation, or a coherent one, or a better and essentially richer one. That is because what René Guénon transmitted are not his individual inventions, but traditional and ineffable data that he reformulated in an understandable language.

The Islamic tradition affirms that the number of initiatory ways (*turuq*), which aim towards the spiritual center, is indefinite, each human being following a suitable liberating way called *tarîqah*<sup>2</sup>. The center is unique, but the points on the circumference are multiple, and therefore the ways connecting these points to the center are multiple, adapting themselves to the diversity of individual conditions (Guénon, **Initiation**, p. 136). In Islam there is this saying: “each shaikh has its own tarîqah,” which makes the multiplicity of the Islamic ways (*turuq*) correspond to the multiplicity of yogas from the Hindu tradition (Sri Aurobindo spoke of “his yoga,” even though Yoga is one-and-only, and only the methods are different). Using Ibn ‘Arabî’s expressions, we may say that the circumference of the circle is the skin of the fruit (*el-qishr*), that is, *shariyah*, the religious law or exotericism, addressed to all, comparable (and only from a specific point of view) to the Christian baptism with water (*via lata*, “the wide way,” *piri-yana* of the Hindu tradition); while the center of the circle is the kernel (*el-lobb*), Rabelais’ marrow (*la substantifique moelle*), the essence, esotericism, *haqîqah* (the truth, the essential reality), reserved for an elite, and comparable to the Christian baptism with fire or Holy Spirit for

<sup>1</sup> Guénon wrote in a letter to Vasile Lovinescu (August 1934, in French): “Quant à indiquer à quiconque une voie de « réalisation », c'est là une chose que je dois m'interdire rigoureusement; je ne puis accepter de « diriger » personne ni même de donner de simples conseils particuliers, cela étant entièrement en dehors du rôle auquel je dois me tenir. ... Je ne pourrais mettre personne en relation directe avec des organisations initiatiques, ni en ayant point reçu la charge; j'avoue d'ailleurs que je suis fort loin de souhaiter que cela m'arrive jamais, pour de multiples raisons...”

<sup>2</sup> René Guénon, *Aperçus sur l’ésotérisme islamique et le Taoïsme*, Gallimard, 1973, p. 32.

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the chosen ones, the spiritual men (*via arcta*, “the narrow way,” *dēva-yana*). *Shariyah* is the “body” (*el-jism*), and *haqīqah* is the marrow (*el-mukh*), the former protecting and hiding the latter like a hide or a cloak, and reflecting it outwards (Guénon, **L’ésot. islam.**, p. 29).

The passage from skin to kernel occurs following a radius of the circle, that is, a “way,” a *tarīqah*, a narrow way like the sword’s blade, and there are few daring enough to embark on this road; “For many are invited, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22:14). The word *initiatio* derives from *in-ire*, “to enter” a gate or a way (Guénon, **Symboles**, p. 149), hence initiation means to penetrate the skin and enter within the fruit,<sup>3</sup> to embark on a spiritual way, to enter the gate of gods, to “begin” a spiritual journey aiming at the Truth, that is, the Center, where the initiate will surpass the particular ways, reaching beyond any differentiation. In the center, the neophyte suffers a “conversion” or an “intellectual metamorphosis” (as Coomaraswamy wrote, see Guénon, **Initiation**, p. 101).<sup>4</sup> In consequence, the initiatory process is, essentially, a purely inner process; on the other hand, spiritual realization imposes a specific way on the initiate, that is, an adequately traditional form and in accordance with his or her nature and possibilities. For this reason an exoteric “conversion” could (and should) sometimes occur, through which the being passes to a more adequate traditional form (especially if the former one does not possess an initiatory possibility anymore). Yet any “conversion” due to some sort of proselytism would be a mistake and a misunderstanding of the intimate concordance, which has to be between the individual nature and the traditional form; without this concordance the “converted” one could wander to sectarianism and other deviations, even to a lack of sincerity.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, there has to be a strict distinction between the conversion due to esoteric and initiatory reasons (imposed by *Kali-yuga*’s conditions and disarray), and the one as a result of contingent and exoteric motives.

The initiate, the one who “enters” a way or “begins” a spiritual voyage, has his status transformed in the center, from a “chosen” one to a perfect and accomplished Chosen, that is, *El-Mustafā* of the Islamic tradition; though, he is from the beginning the “chosen” one, possessing some “initiatory qualifications” previously proved in order to be accepted as an initiate. The initiatory qualifications are part of his own possibilities and refer to the individual domain (the mortal ego), since from the point of view of the “personality” (the immortal Self), all beings are “qualified.” Amid the qualifications we should mention first the intellectual possibility that makes the intervention of the spiritual influence possible, and then the “aspiration” or “intention” (spiritual desire or vocation), a tendency toward Truth, toward the Center, without which we cannot talk about initiation; there are also the qualifications regarding the whole individuality, they are all defining the “chosen” one (Guénon, **Aperç. sur l’Init.**, p. 283).

<sup>3</sup> To penetrate inside the fruit, there must first be a skin as a starting point; in other words, to aspire to initiation, an attachment to a traditional form is first needed (Guénon, **Initiation**, p. 73).

<sup>4</sup> We have in mind here the original sense of the Greek word *metanoia* (the change of *nous*), this inner transformation or conversion (lat. *cum-vertere*) implies a “reassembling” of the being’s energies in the center, a passage “from the human reasoning to divine comprehension,” when the being rediscovers its Self.

<sup>5</sup> That is why, the “conversion” to Orthodoxy or to Islam should not be just a fashion or even a “try” (let’s see what it is all about).

## René Guénon and initiation

It is true that in a society in which many individuals fill functions and positions that are in disaccord with their individual nature and in which the traditional sciences do not exist anymore, the finding of those qualified for initiation is much more difficult, almost impossible, the initiatory organizations admitting, in consequence, by mistake, profane elements, which desecrate and produce decadence in those organizations (as has occurred in Masonry<sup>6</sup>). The initiatory qualifications constitute the first condition of the initiation; the second one, very important for the present situation of humankind, is the attachment to an authentic and regular initiatory organization.

There are ignorant people who imagine that they can “initiate” themselves, by simply reading some books or imitating some rites, or who think that they can be “initiated” through the Internet (“on line”). The word *initium* means, as we showed, “entrance,” “beginning,” that is, “a second birth,” yet how could somebody give birth to himself? (Guénon, *Aperç. sur l'Init.*, p. 31). There are, it is true, exceptions, human beings who are born seers from the beginning and who are exempted from the difficult effort or the initiatory work under the *guru*'s supervision, but even these, in our dark age, must be initiated in a specific traditional form to actualize their supernal possibilities; Ramana Maharshi is the most known example, yet we should not forget that Jesus also accepted the need to obey the regular rules, being baptized by Saint John the Baptist.<sup>7</sup> Actually, everybody has to respect the laws that govern the world and to obey the temporal conditions of the world, and as children are born from corporeal parents,<sup>8</sup> so initiation and the entrance into an initiatory organization is a necessary condition. On the contrary, at the beginning of the cycle the initiation was not required, since primordial man spontaneously obtained the perfection of his (her) individuality (Guénon, *Initiation*, pp. 46 sq., Guénon, *Aperç. sur l'Init.*, p. 32).

Yet entrance into an initiatory organization cannot replace active and personal effort, the inner effort of the chosen one, without which spiritual realization would not be possible, but would remain only in the “initial” phase. There are, consequently, three fundamental initiatory conditions, in accordance with the triad potential – virtual – actual: the “qualification,” composed of some inherent possibilities in the individual nature; the “transmission” of a spiritual influence (inside a traditional organization to which the neophyte has to belong), representing the “illumination” that awakens the dormant possibilities; the “inner work” through which, and with the help of some external “supports,” the being passes from degree to degree, along the initiatory hierarchy, reaching at the end Liberation or the Supreme Identity (Guénon, *Aperç. sur l'Init.*, p. 34).

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<sup>6</sup> The “Morgan case” is a good example.

<sup>7</sup> In the Islamic tradition, there are the *Afrâds* (“the solitaires”) who follow an initiatory realization outside the regular ways (see, for example, Charles-André Gilis, *Introduction à l'enseignement et au mystère de René Guénon*, Les Éditions de l’Oeuvre, 1985, p. 25).

<sup>8</sup> That is, human beings are born today through an intermediary and not spontaneously from subtle seeds (seeds sheltered in the World’s Egg from the beginning, as possibilities of manifestation), as they could very well do (and that is how it probably occurred at the beginning of the cycle, since otherwise nothing could have started). We know the old dilemma: which came first, the chicken or the egg? The discussion of this dilemma can be found in Macrobius’ *Saturnalia* VII, 16. In fact, from a *principal* point of view, the rooster was at the beginning; from a worldly point of view, it was the egg.

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In fact, the attachment to an initiatory organization is not only a necessary condition, but defines precisely the initiation, in its strict etymological sense, and this attachment must be real and effective, since a spiritual influence (a divine blessing) has to be transmitted. As we said, it is not enough that an individual desires to enter an initiatory organization; he also has to be accepted, due to his initiatory qualifications, as “chosen,” and, in addition, the initiatory organization must be authentic and effectively possess a spiritual influence. The spiritual influence is transmitted within an initiatory organization through rites, yet we ought to underline that, on the one hand, the initiatory rites (in fact, all rites in general) have their own efficacy (if they are distorted, for example, no effective result is obtained anymore), and on the other hand, the rites can be operated only by qualified personnel (for example, in the religious domain, only by those who have been consecrated as priests, the consecration being the modality through which the spiritual influence is transmitted<sup>9</sup>).

The word “rite” derives from Sanskrit *rita*, meaning “in accordance to order.” In a traditional society, the sacred represented the normal situation and all the daily activities were in accordance to order, that is, were pursued in a ritual mode, yet we have to keep in mind that the rites also respect a hierarchy with regard to their domain of operation. The initiatory rites aim at an elite, characterized by special qualifications, while the exoteric rites are public, intended for a community, without discrimination (the spiritual influence using the “psyche” to descend upon that community); the exoteric rites are destined exclusively to the individual domain, the Christian religion, for example, having as its unique goal salvation, that is, the Eden-like state, a state which represents the quintessence of the individual order. Any rite is an assembly of symbols, both the rite and the symbol being of non-human origin: the gestures, the words uttered in a specific mode, the graphical figures, the objects, the place, all the rite’s elements are symbolic, rites therefore being “working” symbols (Guénon, *Aperç. sur l'Init.*, p 118).

Since both language and human reason are by definition discursive, the “ritual” transmission of the initiatory teachings can be done only through symbolism, the only adequate “language” for the intellectual intuition and super-rational (with roots beyond the beginning of the world and time); the symbols, due to their universal characteristic are the only ones capable of “translating” the inexpressible into an “intuitive” mode, the true foundation of the symbolism being the correspondence existing between all the levels of Reality (for this reason the whole of Nature is nothing else than a symbol, namely, a support helping us to reach the knowledge of the supernatural and metaphysical realities: that is precisely the essential function of the symbolism and the profound reason why the traditional sciences exist). The myth is a special type of symbol, and represents symbolical tales, these myths being integrated in rites, as has happened in Masonry. The myth, like the fairy tale, is far from being a product of individual fantasy; it has a non-human origin, and only cyclic decadence has caused its real significance and

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<sup>9</sup> It seems obvious (even if some people do not want to recognize or do not care) that if the chain of consecration is interrupted, the spiritual influence is lost. In consequence, the priests who do not have a regular consecration, which should be unbrokenly linked to Christ and his Apostles, are without real sacred power and will deceive their community. We should add that “consecration” does not mean some profane, formal gesture, as we can see today when profane individuals are allowed to perform marriages.

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its function to be forgotten.<sup>10</sup> In the Western Middle Ages, various symbolic tales accompanied the pilgrims, helping them on their spiritual voyage; the fairy tales are vestiges of such initiatory symbols. The Greek word *mythos* derives from the radical *mu*, which indicates silence (Latin *mutus*); indeed, the myth, similar to other symbols, is an initiatory teaching instrument, teaching that operates first of all through silence; the myth transmits the incommunicable essence, translating the silence into human language as an allegory (Guénon, *Aperç. sur l'Init.*, pp. 122 ff.).

One of the serious errors of the modern world is the desecration of the myths and fairy tales. Today all types of “tales” and “legends” are elaborated by individual fantasy and imagination, which makes them just some parodies, often noxious and generating mental disarray. Yet there is little else we can expect in a profane world, that is, in a world totally opposed to any authentic rite (and genuine “order”), where the mystic is considered an ecstatic religious character, the fairy tale is a human invention for children, and the rites are replaced by ceremonies and glamorous festivities of individual origins, destined to substitute for the essence of the traditional life.

It is not useless to remind ourselves that the word “tradition” means “transmission,” a transmission of sacred elements; consequently, the initiatory organizations are the most justified to be called traditional, when we think of the quality of the influences transmitted within their bosom. These influences were obtained through a regular way, through a regular transmission, from a secondary spiritual center linked, in its turn, to the supreme center, the keeper of the primordial Tradition. The entrance into an initiatory organization, through the transmission of spiritual influences, represents the attachment to the tradition of a spiritual center, in the most profound possible mode; this constitutes the virtual initiation, while the inner work that follows represents the effective initiation (when the possibilities marked by the virtual initiation are developed in “act”).

The initiation means the transmission not only of a spiritual influence, but also of an initiatory teaching, the latter being an outer “support” for the inner work, helping and guiding the neophyte as much as possible. Initiatory instruction can only prepare the human being in view of assimilating genuine initiatory knowledge as a result of personal work. It can indicate the way to follow, and create a mental and intellectual attitude needed to achieve the effective and not just theoretical comprehension. It can assist and guide the neophyte, controlling his work, yet not even the most perfect spiritual master can realize the inner work in his place, because nobody from outside can communicate what he himself must obtain, namely, the initiatory secret.

“Gods love secret things,” *Aitareya Upanishad* says. The initiatory secret is the inexpressible and incommunicable Truth,<sup>11</sup> and for this reason it is impossible for it to be betrayed, being inaccessible to the profane world, its comprehension being realized only through initiation. Initiatory instruction uses symbols and rites as the only possible instruments to express the inexpressible, yet only the inner work permits the uncovering of the Truth. On the other hand, the initiatory organizations are tightly closed and

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<sup>10</sup> In the Occident, the Greeks were those who started to desecrate their myths, in the same way they desecrated art and changed the sacred “love for wisdom,” *philo-sophia*, into profane philosophy.

<sup>11</sup> We understand very well that for some common people, too disappointed by politics, words like “truth” do not mean much. Yet, from a traditional perspective the Truth means everything.

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secretive in order to protect themselves against external pernicious infiltrations and especially against counter-initiatory forces; also, they try to prevent the danger that would be generated if some “secrets” were exposed outwardly and used by unqualified people. More than that, the “discipline of secretiveness” is an exercise, a method of training, reflecting the “discipline of silence” (as in the case of the Pythagoreans); in India, the *sannyasins* hidden in the caves of the mountains, following Yoga, favoured silence. The early Christianity contained *disciplina arcani* or *disciplina secreti*; the word “discipline” primary meant “instruction,” and so appeared the word “disciple.” The obligation to keep silent, not to talk at all, or to keep some teachings secret, refers exactly to the act of disciplining the disciples; the one embarked upon the initiatory journey needed all available energies in order to succeed in his inner transformation, and silence was a very efficient way to make sure that his powers were not wasted outwardly (Guénon, *Aperç. sur l'Init.*, pp. 90 ff.). More than that, the silence was a sort of “preview” of the non-manifestation, of the super-luminous darkness.<sup>12</sup>

The first steps of the inner work, though, require initiatory instruction and the presence of a spiritual master and guide. Sri Aurobindo wrote: “In the process of the descent [of the divine influence] and of the [inner] work, it is extremely important to count not only on yourself, but to accept the guidance of a guru and to let him judge your work and make decisions. Since it often occurs that the inferior forces will be stimulated and excited by the descent, and will try to intervene and hijack it in their favour.”<sup>13</sup> Submission to a spiritual master is the mirror of genuine “humility,” humility (the only one truly valid) with regard to the Principle, this status of vassalage, of servitude (“God’s servant”), representing the inner opening of the being for Divinity and for divine grace, which does not mean that submission implies passivity in the inner work.

The initiatory work is an active process and truly within, the supreme and authentic goal of the effective initiation being the Supreme Identity, the realization of the Universal Man, the integral of the individual and super-individual states. There is a fundamental qualitative and hierarchic difference between the goal of the Christian religion and that of the initiation: the former aims at salvation, the latter at Liberation. Liberation targets the spiritual domain and the states of the pure intellect; salvation deals with the subtle domain, that is, the individual one. In the best of cases, religion leads the individual to the Earthly Paradise, yet “Paradise is a prison,” because the one who has obtained salvation is still chained by human individuality for an indefinite period, and only the Heavenly Paradise, the goal of effective initiation, allows a real and complete “liberation.”

Of course, we might ask the questions: why do we need an initiation and an inner effort if, in fact, nothing is different from the Principle, and the individual being is the same as the Universal Man? Why do we need an initiatory attachment if, actually, everything is tied to the Principle? There are, always, multiple points of view, yet two are

<sup>12</sup> We are amazed how much talking occurs in our days. The lack of discipline in this sense (a child or a student thinks that he or she should feel insulted if the teacher or parent utters the magic words “shut up”) is exactly the opposite of initiatory discipline. Yet what is worse is that everybody talks but nobody has the time and patience to listen. On the other hand, in any traditional society silence played an important role, both in the exoteric and esoteric domain. René Guénon wrote in 1949 an article called **Silence and solitude**, in which he stressed the importance of silence in connection with the initiatory rites.

<sup>13</sup> Shri Aurobindo, **Le guide de Yoga**, Albin Michel, 1970, p. 168.

### **René Guénon and initiation**

fundamental: the *principal* point of view and the worldly one; the questions refer to the former, the *principal* one; but for the human individual, the latter is the normal one, and therefore inner work is needed to make the individual become effectively conscious (not only theoretically) of the *principal* unity; “liberation” (*moksha*) regards the ego and dissipates the illusion that ego is different from the Self. If for the primordial man initiation made no sense, for the decadent man of *Kali-yuga* it becomes indispensable in the endeavour to remove the thick curtains of ignorance and illusion.



## About Dao

Mircea A. Tamas

The Babylonian cosmogony, recorded in the **Enuma Elish**, starts with: “When in the height heaven was not named,/ And the earth beneath did not yet bear a name,/ And the primeval Apsu, who begat them,/ And chaos, Tiamat, the mother of them both/ Their waters were mingled together.”

Apsu is the Abyss, which is a symbol for the Universal Possibility such as René Guénon defined it. The Universal Possibility, symbolized for our finite mind as an infinite valley or abyss, should be regarded as “the limit of all limits,” “the integral of all integrals,” containing by this supreme integration not only the manifestation but also the non-manifestation, the Being and the Non-Being. The Being is – as Guénon explained from a universal perspective – the principle of the universal manifestation, but it is not the absolute Infinity and does not coincide with the Universal Possibility.

The absolute Being, even though the source of manifestation, does not belong to it, being itself non-manifested. Matgioi wrote, commenting on Lao Zi: “Dao is like the one who provides the design, the materials for a house and the workers to build it, but will not live in it.” Guénon called this domain of the non-manifested possibilities, to which the Being belongs, the Non-Being. Yet the Non-Being is not the nothingness, the emptiness, the non-existence, the impossibility, but corresponds to the Supreme Principle, it is the Infinite Dao.

“Then was not Non-Being nor Being: there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it. What covered in, and where? and what gave shelter? Was water there, unfathomed depth of water? Death was not then, nor was there aught immortal: no sign was there, the day's and night's divider. That One Thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature: apart from it was nothing whatsoever” (**Rig-Veda Samhitā**, 10.129). Then, the Non-Being appeared; then, “the Being, in the earliest age of Gods, from Non-Being sprang” (*asatah sad ajāyata*) (**Rig-Veda Samhitā**, 10.72).

“All things under heaven [the ten thousand beings] sprang from It as the Being (and named); that Being sprang from It as Non-Being (and not named)” (**Lao-zi, Dao De Jing**, XL).

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“Beyond the senses is the mind, beyond the mind is the intellect, higher than the intellect is the Great Âtmâ, higher than the Great Âtmâ is the Unmanifest. Beyond the Unmanifest is Brahma, all-pervading and imperceptible. Having realized Him, the embodied self becomes liberated and attains Immortality” (**Katha Up.** 3, 7-8).

“He desired: many may I be, may I be born! He made *tapas*. Having made *tapas*, He sent forth all this, and what of this more. This having sent forth, into that very thing He then entered. That having entered, both the being and the beyond He became, the definite and the indefinite, the abode and the non-abode, the conscious and the unconscious; both the real (the truth) and the false did the Real (the Truth) become, and whatever else is there. That, they say, is the Real (the Brahma Truth). … In the beginning all this was but the Unmanifested (Brahma). From that emerged the manifested. That Brahma produced Itself by Itself. Therefore It is called the self-producer” (**Taittiriya Up.** 2, 6, 7).

It seems that the Non-Being is above the Being, the former enclosing the latter, yet we may see the Infinite or the Universal Possibility as an assembly of Non-Being and Being. The Being is One; the Non-Being is the metaphysical Zero, and as the Silence envelops the Word, likewise the Non-Being encases the Being; the Word is uttered Silence, the One is the metaphysical Zero affirmed, but, conversely, this Zero is more than non-affirmed One, and so is the Silence – more than the Word non-uttered. If we distinguish the Non-Being and the Being as two separate domains, then they could be considered two facets of the Universal Possibility: the non-manifestation and the manifestation. However, we may consider the Universal Possibility itself as the feminine aspect of the Infinity, in which case we mastermind a supreme pair, Qian and Kun, the active and passive perfections, as Matgioi and Guénon named them.

Far-Eastern tradition tells that the first emperor was Fu Xi, and he is described with horns (like Matsya-Vishnu, Phanes or Moses), a sign of spirituality and royalty. Fu Xi witnessed the divorce of Heaven and Earth, and then he noticed a Dragon emerging from the waters of a river, with its back marked by some curious diagrams, called “the river chart,” composed of round points, black and white, diagrams the emperor used as a model to draw the eight primary *guas*. Fu Xi contemplated the sky, then he looked down to the earth, observing its particularities, considering the appearance of the birds and of the earth’s products, the characteristics of the human body and of all things, and only then did he begin to draw the eight primary trigrams. The trigrams were conceived combining two fundamental traits: a straight continuous line, symbolizing Heaven, Qian, the Active Perfection, Yang, and a straight discontinuous line, symbolizing Earth, Kun, the Passive Perfection, Yin. The eight primary *guas* were arranged in a circle and then, once more, in another circle, concentric with the first one. By rotating the two circles in opposite directions the 64 hexagrams (or double trigrams) were generated.

The 64 hexagrams wove the texture of the oldest sacred scripture, the **Yi Jing**, “The Book of Changes”; of course, emperor Fu Xi, as an individual, was not the author of **Yi Jing**, and we should rather consider Fu Xi representing an “intellectual aggregate” (like Hermes – Matgioi specified) or an Age that inherited the Tradition transmitted on the Dragon’s back. Following the 64 hexagrams, one by one, all changes are generated, preserved and corrupted (in an Aristotelian sense).

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The indefinity, affirmed Matgioi, is suitable to symbolize the idea of infinity, the best representation being the straight line of indefinite length, which explains why Fu Xi chose the straight continuous line as the Principle's token. Nicolaus Cusanus has also symbolized God by an indefinite straight line, into which all the geometrical figures merge and all the contraries are resolved. The indefinite straight line suggests well the idea of non-determination, of non-definition, and it is appropriate to symbolize Active Perfection. With respect to Passive Perfection, affected by our individual rationality anchored into multiplicity, it is proper that it be represented by the discontinuous straight line. The production of the universal manifestation means then to double the line, replacing it with the *digram*, and to triple it, explicating the offspring. The *trigram* obtained, following a universal law, will appear as double, since all that is in Heaven replicates on Earth, and so the *hexagram* was born.

The **Yi Jing**, as a synthesis, accommodates the Far-Eastern traditional doctrines, yet to try to decipher this scripture without any knowledge about Tradition or without the support of a spiritual master is a waste of time; and, even if such support exists, like in Matgioi's case, the comprehension of the Book of Changes would be extremely difficult due to these very changes generated by the "current of forms." The **Yi Jing** is an opportunity for meditation and profound study from all viewpoints, for which reason we can receive enlightenment, better than following profane instruction, even by contemplating the Book's form, a changeable form, in accordance to the development of the cosmic cycles: at the beginning, the Book was a series of trigrams, essential and compressed ("complicated") symbols, the vision of which allowed the realization of everlasting Truth; then, the cosmic decline forced an explication and explicit description of these symbols, thus the succinct forms were born; eventually, the escalation of spiritual decadence imposed more and more elaborated commentaries. This is the natural way from quality to quantity, from essence to substance: Silence – Word – words. This is the way followed also by the Hindu tradition, where the **Upanishads** represent the explicit vision of the kernel that dwells in the **Vēdas**.

The *Logos*, Matgioi stated, is precisely the Dragon of the **Yi Jing**: "hidden dragon, non-action"; "dragon appearing in the field." The Silence is the hidden Dragon, the Word is the visible Dragon, the Judaic Kabbala names the Thinking (*Mahasheba*) "the hidden point," and the Word (*Memra*) is "the tangible point"; from this point, six directions of space radiated – another symbol for Logos and for the Universal Man. These six directions, reorganized from another perspective as six horizontal lines, define the first *gua* or hexagram of the **Yi Jing**, symbolizing the Principle as Active Perfection, *Qian*. We may note that we are able to identify the six lines due to the empty spaces that separate them, empty spaces representing the Void, while the line illustrates the One, the uttered Void. "The Word (*Memra*) has produced all things through its name One" (*Sepher Yetzirah*); the Word is One, and the Dragon is One, and the All is One, yet this truth, evident in the past, was lost during the advancement of the cycle, and therefore the **Yi Jing** had to have commentaries and the commentaries had to have more commentaries. Therefore, in the Islamic tradition, it was necessary to state a doctrine of Unity (*Et-Tawhîd*), in order to explicate what *ab origo* did not need any explication.

## About Dao

The commentary of **Yi Jing** affirms: “The Abyss is the resting abode of the Dragon. Sometimes the Dragon jumps, sometimes it does not.”<sup>1</sup> Here it is the legend of the Dragon, as Matgioi told it: “The terrestrial waters mirrors the clouds flying in the sky. Their nature is similar; only their appearance is different. … If their actions are not united, the celestial waters are powerless with regard to the earth; the terrestrial waters have no power upon the clouds. Thus, the fish in the earthly waters, the bird Hac (the crane) in the celestial waters, they live separately and are imperfect. But if the storm rises the waters or the heat vaporize them; and if the clouds rain toward the earth, then the union of the terrestrial and celestial waters occurs; the bird Hac descends towards the earth, like the clouds; the fish ascends toward heaven, like the water of the river; when they meet, the bird Hac lends its wings to the fish; the fish lends to the bird its body and the scales: in the middle of lightning and thunders, among the stormy waters, emerges the Great Fish with the secrets of the Law written on its back. This is the Dragon.”<sup>2</sup>

In the Hindu tradition, this Dragon is Ananta, the master of the Abyss, the dwelling of the sleeping Vishnu.<sup>3</sup> The Abyss is the Babylonian Apsu, the Daoist Void, the synthesis of the waters, of the clouds and of the river.<sup>4</sup> The Abyss is the resting place of the Dragon, yet from a metaphysical perspective there is no difference between the Abyss and the Dragon. The Abyss is, in a way, the feminine aspect of Infinity, the Passive Perfection, Kun; the Dragon is the masculine aspect, the Active Perfection, Qian.

Nevertheless, to define the Abyss or the Void means systematization, limitation, and determination, but the Principle cannot be limited in any mode; therefore, to translate metaphysical notions into human language the negative way is used (*neti, neti*).<sup>5</sup>

Meister Eckhart said in his sermons: “Beware! God has no name, since nobody can talk about Him, nor can understand Him. If I say, «God is good,» this is not true. I am good, God is not good. I would say even more: I am better than God; because what is good can become better, but God, since He is not good, cannot become better and neither the best,

<sup>1</sup> “The traditional commentary” says: “Sometimes the dragon jumps, sometimes it stays; ascending or descending, its position is not the same. Sometimes it advances, sometimes it retreats; coming closer or going away, the dragon follows the proper right way.” This illustrates also the development of the cosmic cycles, never a linear progression.

<sup>2</sup> The famous Daoist treatise, **Zhuang-zi** begins with “In the Northern Ocean there is a fish, the name of which is Kun, I do not know how many li in size. It changes into a bird with the name of Peng, the back of which is ...”

<sup>3</sup> Lie Zi told about the Abyss and the Dragon: “who knows how many thousands of millions of miles, there is a deep ravine, a valley truly without bottom; and its bottomless underneath is named «The Entry to the Void.» The waters of the eight corners and the nine regions, the stream of the Milky Way, all pour into it, but it neither shrinks nor grows. (...) To the North of the utmost North there is an ocean, the Lake of Heaven. There is a fish there, several thousand miles broad and long in proportion, named *kun*. There is a bird there named *peng*, with wings like clouds hanging from the sky, and a body big in proportion” (*Lie-zi, The Questions of Tang*, 2). The Wallachian traditional data named the Abyss *Vidrosul* (“otterly,” masculine) and the Dragon *Vidra* (“the otter,” feminine), stressing the two aspects of the Infinity.

<sup>4</sup> “The highest excellence is like (that of) water. The excellence of water appears in its benefiting all things (the ten thousand beings), and in its occupying, without striving (to the contrary), the low place which all men dislike. Hence (its way) is near to (that of) the Dao” (**Dao De Jing**, VIII).

<sup>5</sup> Nicolaus Cusanus said that by negating something about God we get closer to the truth than when we affirm something. Meister Eckhart used the negative way: “It is no good, no being, no truth, no One, then what is It? It is the Void (“Nothingness”), it is not this, not this.”

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these terms being far away from God. He is above all. If I say also: God is wise, this is not true, I am wiser than God. If I add: God is a being, this is not true. He is the supreme Being and a superessential Void (Nothingness). Saint Augustine affirms about this: « the best a man can say about God is to be silent because of the wisdom of the divine richness.» Therefore, be silent and don't chat about Him, because you would lie and sin. If you want to be perfect and without sins, don't chat about God. Don't try to understand anything [in a rational way] about God, because God is above [discursive] understanding. A master said: If I had a God that I understand, I would not consider Him God anymore. You must get rid of yourself and melt in Him, and your self with His Self must become so completely a « mine », such that you understand forever, with Him, His primordial being and His unnamed Void.”

“A cicada and a little dove laughed at it, saying, « We make an effort and fly towards an elm or sapan-wood tree; and sometimes before we reach it, we can do no more but drop to the ground. » (...) What should these two small creatures know about the matter? The knowledge of that which is small does not reach to that which is great; (the experience of) a few years does not reach to that of many. How do we know that it is so? The mushroom of a morning does not know (what takes place between) the beginning and end of a month; the short-lived cicada does not know (what takes place between) the spring and autumn. These are instances of a short term of life. Don't ask the ephemeral beings about the great turtle, which lives five centuries, or about the tree that lives eight thousand years” (*Zhuang-zi*, 18, 1); similarly, the finite individual mind cannot understand the Infinity, the individual one cannot comprehend the universal one.

Lao Zi stated: “The Dao is hidden, and has no name; but it is the Dao which is skilful at imparting (to all things what they need) and making them complete” (*Dao De Jing*, XLI).

In the Islamic tradition, Allâh, in His Essence, is without names and qualities; Ibn ‘Arabî affirmed: “Allâh is without resemblance, without pair, has no helper or adjutant, has no associate, no minister, and no adviser. He is not body, nor substance, nor accident, nor composition, He cannot be defined. He is no star, nor darkness that manifests, nor light that shines.”

He is no light. He is no darkness. He “is” not, therefore the idea of nothingness, of void. He is indestructible, non-confinable, immovable, without ties, *non aliud* (as Nicolaus Cusanus would say). He is the Mysterious Anonymous, Ain Soph (*Zohar* III, 26 b).

“Lao Zi said, «The Dao does not exhaust itself in what is greatest, nor is it ever absent from what is least; and therefore it is to be found complete and diffused in all things. How wide is its universal comprehension! How deep [abyss] is its unfathomableness! It contains everything and does not have a bottom»” (*Zhuang-zi*, 13, 9).

From a metaphysical perspective, the Infinity is identical with the Abyss, an Abyss identical with the Void as absolute Plenitude. “Dao is a void, used but never filled. An abyss it is, from which all things come” (Lao Zi, *Dao De Jing*, IV); the “never filled” observation means that the Void is the Infinity and “it is the nature of the Dao, that even though used continuously, it is replenished naturally, never being emptied, and never being over-filled,” the Principle being unchangeable and immutable.

## About Dao

“Chun Mang, on his way to the ocean, met with Yuan Feng on the shore of the eastern sea, and was asked by him where he was going. «I am going,» he replied, «to the ocean»; and the other again asked, «What for?» Chun Mang said, «Such is the nature of the ocean that the waters which flow into it can never fill it, nor those which flow from it exhaust it. I will enjoy myself, rambling by it» (**Zhuang-zi**, 12, 12). Sometimes, this “ocean” is called “the Great Valley” and it represents the image of the Principle, as Léon Wieger stated in his translation.

The Great Valley is another name for the Universal Possibility, its symbolism being present in the Christian and Judaic traditions: “I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land” (**Joel** III, 2); “Let the heathern be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about” (**Joel** III, 12).<sup>6</sup> “The valley spirit never dies. It refers to the dark and mysterious female (mother). The gate of the mysterious female is the root of Heaven and Earth. Continuous, seeming to remain” (**Lao-zi**, **Dao De Jing**, VI). “The valley spirit never dies” is an ancient Chinese dictum; the dark mother is the Universal Possibility (the Abyss) and the valley spirit is the Dragon.

Nevertheless, in the Western world, the Universal Possibility of the Far-Eastern tradition is better known as Void than Valley. Yet for Daoism, the Void is not only the supreme Principle, the Infinity or the Universal Possibility, but it descends on “Jacob’s ladder,” projecting its reflections at different levels, the universal manifestation being, if we can say so, imbued with a void that is its invisible support.

The void could be a symbol of the feminine pole, in correlation with the plenitude as the masculine pole<sup>7</sup>; the void is also a token for the intermediary world (Hindu *antariksha*), “the Atmosphere” (Hindu *Bhuva*); it is the median void, which, in another sense, is the central void inside the heart cavity. For modern man, the void is completely different

<sup>6</sup> In Masonry, the Lodge is an equivalent of the Valley.

<sup>7</sup> In this case, the Mountain is the masculine principle and the Valley the feminine one. “To be «male» (rooster) and appear as «female» (hen) is to act as the world’s ravine [the Abyss]. To act as the world’s ravine, treat virtuosity [De] as constant, and avoid separating is to return to infancy. To be «white» but appear as «black» is to act as the world’s paradigm. To act as the world’s paradigm, treat virtuosity as constant and avoid lapses is to return to the negative ultimate [no-end, no-limit]. To be «glorious» but appear as «disgraced» is to act as the world’s valley [The hexagram no. 3, Zhun, of the *Yi Jing*, having the first trait, the inferior one, a continuous line, signifies – Zheng Zi explained – “the symbolic image of nobility and a voluntarily descent under what is humble”]. To act as the world’s valley, treating virtuosity as constant is sufficient to return to uncarved wood [simplicity]” (**Dao De Jing**, XXVIII). The Valley or the Abyss represents here *coincidentia oppositorum*, the land of perfection, of simplicity, of infancy (attributes characterizing the spiritual realization). We note the triads: ravine – valley – paradigm (Hindu *Dharma*) (the Principle’s triad); cock and hen – white and black – glory and humility (the Yin-Yang’s triad); infancy – infinity – simplicity (the triad of spiritual realization).



guā Zhun (Kan, water, up; Zhen, thunderbolt, down)

## About Dao

from the Daoist void, and is regarded from such a narrow and materialistic perspective that the void is confused with nothingness and non-existence.

The Void, as we stressed, is void only in the sense of being non-manifested, but it presents a formidable symbolic richness of perfect plenitude. The Void is the infinite and abyssal Plenitude, of the Non-Being and the Being in non-duality, it is specifically the ambiance of the sages: “The perfect men of old trod the path of benevolence as a path which they borrowed for the occasion, and dwelt in Righteousness as in a lodging which they used for a night. Thus they rambled in the vacancy of Untroubled Ease [the Void]” (**Zhuang-zi**, 14, 5).



## Solomon and the Royal Art of Love

Mircea A Tamas

There are many links, visible and invisible, between Chivalry and Masonry, and especially between the Templars and the Masons: both observed the Royal Art, both were initiatory organizations, both were beyond the common “vassalage,” free and directly obeying God, both constituted “brotherhoods” without women.<sup>1</sup> In a world where the Holy Grail stories worshiped the *dame* and where the troubadours sang *l'amour courtois*, the Knights of the Temple living without this love for any *dame*, the Masons working without fondness for any lady would seem strange, if we did not know that, for them, *l'amour* was the supreme love and the *dame* was the supreme *Dame, Notre-Dame*, Our Lady. However, to really understand this “love” we must go beyond the religious or exoteric, not to say sentimental, significance, and try to redescover the “initiatory” mentality of these particular “lovers.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There are today studies giving examples of women that worked beside the medieval masons, which is something different; also, we are not saying that women did not have suitable métiers as supports for an initiation. Regarding the womenless brotherhoods, Saint Bernard admonished: “What likeness do you bear to them? Perhaps the fact that you take women not as traveling companions but as mistresses? Companionship does not lay itself open to suspicion in the same way as living together. Who would entertain dark suspicions about those who raised the dead to life? Go and do likewise, and I will suppose that a man and a woman together are merely resting. Otherwise, you are insolently abrogating to yourself the privilege of those whose sanctity you do not possess. To be always in a woman's company without having carnal knowledge of her – is this not a greater miracle than raising the dead? You cannot perform the lesser feat; do you expect me to believe that you can do the greater? Every day your side touches the girl's side at table, your bed touches hers in your room, your eyes meet hers in conversation, your hands meet hers at work – do you expect to be thought chaste? It may be that you are, but I have my suspicions. To me you are an object of scandal. Take away the cause of scandal, and prove the truth of your boast that you are a follower of the Gospel... Let us return to the question of associating and cohabiting with women, for all of them have some experience of this. ‘Now, my good man, who is this woman, and where does she come from? Is she your wife?’ ‘No,’ he says, ‘that is forbidden by my vows.’ ‘Your daughter then?’ ‘No.’ ‘What then? Not a sister or niece, or at least related to you by birth or marriage?’ ‘No, not at all.’ ‘And how will you preserve your chastity with her here? You can't behave like this. Perhaps you don't know that the Church forbids cohabitation of men and women if they are vowed to celibacy. If you do not wish to cause scandal in the Church, send the woman away. Otherwise that one circumstance will give rise to other suspicions, which may not be proved but will no doubt be thought probable’” (*Sermon 65*).

<sup>2</sup> As Saint Bernard was saying, “The bride's form must be understood in a spiritual sense, her beauty as something that is grasped by the intellect; it is eternal because it is an image of eternity. Her gracefulness consists of love, and you have read that ‘love never ends.’ It consists of justice, for ‘her justice endures

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René Guénon, who, prompted by Luigi Valli's work about Dante and the *Fedeli d'Amore*, wrote a series of articles related to *Amor*,<sup>3</sup> stated *très nettement*, from the start, that “the main shortcoming of Mr. Valli ... is not to have the ‘initiatory’ mentality, which is appropriate for treating in depth such a subject”<sup>4</sup>; indeed, when Francesco da Barberino<sup>5</sup> mentioned a mysterious widow, symbolizing *Sapienza*, the Wisdom, we are in the realm of the initiatory love.<sup>6</sup> Barberino said: “Io dico a te e chiaramente che vi fu e vi è una certa vedova che non era vedova. Era toccata eppure intatta. Era vergine e la sua verginità era ignota. Mancò di marito. Aveva marito. Per la sua prudenza eccelleva sulle donne e per la sua eloquenza su tutte le creature terrene.”<sup>7</sup>

Alfonso Ricolfi,<sup>8</sup> in his *Studi sui «Fedeli d'Amore»*, said also: “the gemstone or gem symbolizes the human intelligence at its highest level; at this level, there are two widows and in opposition: one has *Constanza* for maid, and the one, being inconstant, has *Facometipacie* (Do-as-you-please) as servant.” This partition is just one of the multiple facets of the Maiden’s symbolism; Meister Eckhart said: “The Virgin Mary, before becoming Mother of God in her humanity, was Mother of God in her divinity, and the birth in heaven is illustrated by the birth of God as human being,”<sup>9</sup> and he said about Christ, “that his birth of Mary ghostly was more pleasing to him than that his birth of Mary in the flesh.”<sup>10</sup> In the Judaic tradition, the Pharaoh’s daughter presents the same dichotomy and so does Solomon himself, as St. Bernard gracefully<sup>11</sup> explained.

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forever” (Sermon 27). We may note that the Bride (which for Saint Bernard is officially the Church) is not only *Madonna Intelligenza* (the Love) but also *Astrea* (the Justice).

<sup>3</sup> Latin *amor* became Italian *amore*, French *amour*, but remained *amor* in Old Provençal, Portuguese, Spanish and Venetian.

<sup>4</sup> Guénon, *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>5</sup> Francesco da Barberino was contemporary with Dante.

<sup>6</sup> This Dame-Wisdom, sometimes Barberino calls her the Rose: “D’ogni cosa donna è rosa [the Dame is the Rose] (ponendo vertute lei per quella) e luce bella ed è d’ognun salute [and the beautiful light, and she is the salvation of mankind].” And, at the question “who is this Dame?,” he describes *Constanza armata al cuor che ben sai che vuol dire/ porta di donna vedova sua veste* (“armed to the heart that you know what it means/ and she wears widow’s garment”) (Valli 242).

<sup>7</sup> “I say to you clearly that there was and *there is* a certain widow who was *not a widow*. She was touched and yet untouched (intact). She was a virgin yet her virginity was unknown. She lost her husband. She had a husband. She, for her wisdom, was the best of all women, and for her eloquence, the best of all earthly creatures.” Valli comments on these lines: “Do you understand? But when we say that these people spoke in jargon, that *amore* was not *amore*, that they belonged to a sect, that they *mystically* celebrated these *mystical* ladies, that their lady was the lady of the *Song of Songs* (do not you hear the clear echo of the *Wisdom of Solomon*?), those ‘positive’ critics strongly say that these are fantasies, and they are capable to waist their time trying to identify from the *historical point of view* the name and origin (*la paternità*) of this widow Francesco da Barberino loved.”

<sup>8</sup> He followed, completed and sometimes amended Valli’s work in his *Studi sui “Fedeli d'Amore”* (year 1933) (see Pierre Ponsoye, *Intelletto d'Amore*, Ét. Traditionnelles, no. 371, 1962).

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Jean Hani, *La Vierge Noire et le mystère marital*, Guy Trédaniel, 1995, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Spiritual Authority and Temporal Power in the Indian Theory of Government*, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1978, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> That is, “full of grace.”

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It is well known how Solomon was criticized for falling from grace at the end of his life,<sup>12</sup> but we must have in view, first and foremost, the symbolic and sacred significance of Solomon's tale, similar with the meaning of Samson's famous story, and, of course, with that of Adam himself: from a cosmologic viewpoint, the King will decay, eroded, and at the end of the cycle will become the Dragon<sup>13</sup>; consequently, there is a celestial and androgynous Solomon (*moglier e marito of the Fedeli d'Amore*) and an earthly, divided and multiplied one.<sup>14</sup> His alleged wife, the Pharaoh's daughter,<sup>15</sup> is very similar

<sup>12</sup> "And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the Lord, and the wall of Jerusalem round about" (**1 Kings 3:1**); "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father" (**1 Kings 11:1-6**).

<sup>13</sup> See in detail our **The Everlasting Sacred Kernel**, Rose-Cross Books, 2001. "Samson, as an archetypal solar hero, an avatāra, has to play all the scenarios. He has to be the divine king who reigns over a cycle of existence and changes gradually into a dragon. He has to be the dragon at the end of time. He also has to be the hero embarked on the initiatory path" (p. 29).

<sup>14</sup> On a historical level, Solomon's legacy was "division," considering that, after him, the kingdom was disastrously divided in two (Rehoboam – Jeroboam (he was a "widow's son"), see our **Free-Masonry: A Traditional Organization**, p. 167). Maximus the Confessor (who was in his youth an assistant to the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius), and Eriugena after him, commented on St. Paul's words, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (**Galatians 3:28**), stating that the primordial man was androgynous, "neither male nor female," and the Fall produced the division of the sexes (Érigène, **De la division de la Nature, Periphyseon**, Livre I et Livre II, PUF, 1995, pp. 294, 300-1, 452; see also Henry Bett, **Johannes Scotus Eriugena**, Hyperion Press, 1986, pp. 56, 67, 78).

<sup>15</sup> "And his house where he dwelt had another court within the porch, which was of the like work. Solomon made also a house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken to wife, like unto this porch. All these were of costly stones, according to the measures of hewed stones, sawed with saws, within and without, even from the foundation unto the coping, and so on the outside toward the great court. And the foundation was of costly stones, even great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits. And above were costly stones, after the measures of hewed stones, and cedar beams, both for the inner court of the house of the Lord, and for the porch of the house. And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali" (**1 Kings 7:8-14**); even though he built a house for Pharaoh's daughter, "Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come" (**2 Chronicles 8:11**). There is, we see, a connection between the Temple and the house of Pharaoh's daughter. We should not be so much concerned with the objection of the Egyptologists, who assure us that Egyptian royal women were never married to a stranger king; like in all the other cases regarding sacred writings, we should remember that the obvious meaning is the most uninteresting and superficial one (even if it has its own reality).

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in this respect: on the one hand, she is the divine virgin-mother<sup>16</sup>; on the other hand, she is, like Eve or Noah's wife or Delilah, the "strange woman," whose "strangeness" has more than one symbolic aspect, related to the *prakritian* and *asurian* heritage.<sup>17</sup>

From an initiatory perspective, the dual aspect was represented by Solomon's *Amor* for Wisdom, a woman identical to *Madonna Intelligenza*,<sup>18</sup> and his *Mors* for the "strange woman."<sup>19</sup> The Wisdom, she is the Gate of Liberation, the *Ianua Coeli*, and she is ready

<sup>16</sup> "And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive. And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it" (**Exodus** 1:22, 2:1-5). In the Judaic tradition, Moses has three mothers: a corporeal one, an intermediary one who nurses him, and, eventually, the divine virgin, the Pharaoh's daughter. We have here a sacred scenario: for example, in the Greek mythology, Acrisius was afraid that his new-born grandson, Perseus, would kill and replace him; similarly, Laios was scared that his son, Oedipus, would kill him and take his reign. For the same reason, the Pharaoh ordered, when Moses was born, that all the new-born children to be killed [implying that Pharaoh's daughter is the virgin]; the same scenario could be found in the Gospel (the "massacre of the innocents").

<sup>17</sup> In the Romanian traditional vestiges, Satan gives Noah's wife a jar of boiled wine and she, becoming drunk, betrays Noah's secret and confesses that he was building a boat in the woods. In **Qur'an** (66:10), Noah's wife is an example of an unbeliever (her name was Wâila). The Gnostics also developed the theme of Noah's wife; she appears under the name of Norea, the daughter of Adam and Eve. Norea set fire to the Ark, because God (Ialdabaoth for the Sethians, an inferior and arrogant God) did not want to let her survive the flood and because Noah's God is considered the evil God. In other Gnostic texts, this God, who sent the flood, is opposed by Sophia, the Wisdom that saved Noah in the Ark (See our **The Wrath of Gods**, p. 181).

<sup>18</sup> The Wisdom, like *Shekinah*, like Astraea, is herself a "strange woman," because the decadence of the world makes her a stranger: "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (**Prov.** 1:20-33).

<sup>19</sup> The "strange woman" appears nine times in the *Proverbs*. "To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead" (**Prov.** 2:16-18); "My son, attend unto my wisdom [*Amor*], and bow thine ear to my understanding: That thou mayest regard discretion, and that thy lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword. Her feet go down to death [*Mors*]; her steps take hold on hell" (**Prov.** 5:1-5).

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to give the *Eucharist*<sup>20</sup>; the “strange woman,” she is the Jaws of Death, the Dragon’s jaws and the *Ianua Inferni*.<sup>21</sup> Solomon sacrificed himself to illustrate the two Gates, to prove that, as a projection of the Universal Man, he is complete only with the both women, even though the *Bible* says that, because of this, he is *not full(y)*,<sup>22</sup> while Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the Templars’ mentor, illustrated from his vantage point, in almost one hundred sermons about the *Song of Songs*,<sup>23</sup> how Solomon, Love, and Bride should be comprehended at the highest spiritual level, an illustration that we could call it “initiatory,” in concert with what René Guénon wrote to Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: “for me, this person [Saint Bernarnd] is indeed an initiate and not only a simple mystic.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine [our *Italics*] which I have mingled” (**Prov.** 9:1-5) (“But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind,” see **Luke** 14:12-24).

<sup>21</sup> “The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein” (**Prov.** 22:14); “For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit” (**Prov.** 23:27). Saint Bernard alluded to these two “women” in his 85<sup>th</sup> *Sermon*: “For where there is love, there is no toil, but a taste. Perhaps ‘sapientia,’ that is wisdom, is derived from ‘sapor,’ that is taste, because, when it is added to virtue, like some seasoning, it adds taste to something which by itself is tasteless and bitter. I think it would be permissible to define wisdom as a taste for goodness. We lost this taste almost from the creation of our human race. When the old serpent’s poison infected the palate of our heart, because the fleshy sense prevailed, the soul began to lose its taste for goodness, and a depraved taste crept in. ‘A man’s imagination and thoughts are evil from his youth,’ that is, as a result of the folly of the first woman. So it was folly which drove the taste for good from the woman, because the serpent’s malice outwitted the woman’s folly. But the reason which caused the malice to appear for a time victorious is the same reason why it suffers eternal defeat. For see! It is again the heart and body of a woman which wisdom fills and makes fruitful so that, as by a woman we were deformed into folly, so by a woman we may be reformed to wisdom.”

<sup>22</sup> “And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went *not fully* after the Lord, as did David his father. Then did Solomon build a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And likewise did he for all his *strange wives*, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods” (**1 Kings** 11:5-7) [our *Italics*].

<sup>23</sup> He died in 1153, without finishing his commentary on the Solomon’s *Song*.

<sup>24</sup> Letter of November 1936. In his opuscule, *Saint Bernard*, René Guénon presents, because of the special circumstances surrounding the writing of such an essay, a view slightly adapted to the exoteric readers: “Saint Bernard’s doctrine is essentially mystical; by this we mean that he envisages divine things especially from the point of view of love, something which, nonetheless, would be wrong to interpret in a merely affective sense, as the modern psychologists do. Like many great mystics, he was particularly drawn to the *Song of Songs*, on which he commented in many sermons, sermons which were part of a long series that continued throughout almost all of his career: this commentary, which was never completed, describes all the degrees of the divine love [*Amor*], up to the supreme peace which the soul reaches in ecstasy. The ecstatic state, as he understood it, and certainly experienced it, is a sort of death [*Mors*] of the things of this world; along with sensitive images [*les images sensibles*], all natural feeling disappears; everything is pure and spiritual within the soul itself, as in its love. Naturally, this mysticism reflected itself in the dogmatic treatises which Saint Bernard wrote; the title of one of the principal ones, *De diligendo Deo* (“On Loving God”), clearly indicates the place that love held in his thought, but it would be wrong to believe that this was to the detriment of true intellectuality. If the Abbot of Clairvaux

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For example, in the *Sermon 27*, Saint Bernard said: “What does she mean then by saying: ‘I am beautiful like the curtains of Solomon?’<sup>25</sup> I feel that here we have a great and wonderful *mystery* [our *Italics*], provided that we apply the words, not to the Solomon of this Song, but to him who said of himself: ‘What is here is greater than Solomon.’ This Solomon to whom I refer is so great a Solomon that he is called not only Peaceful – which is the meaning of the word Solomon – but Peace itself; for Paul proclaims that ‘He is our Peace.’ I am certain that in this Solomon we can discover something that we may unhesitatingly compare with the beauty of the bride.” Equally, Saint Bernard interpreted the phrase “the king hath brought me into his chambers”<sup>26</sup> as referring to the House of Wisdom, where the chambers compose an initiatory (amorous) hierarchy, aiming at the same time to the Most High and to the Center: “Let the garden, then, represent the plain, unadorned, historical sense of Scripture, the storeroom its moral sense, and the bedroom the mystery of divine contemplation. You remember that I said the bedroom of the King is to be sought in the mystery of divine contemplation”<sup>27</sup>; and then, in the same *Sermon*: “I feel that the King has not one bedroom only, but several. For he has more than one queen; his concubines are many, his maids beyond counting. And each has her own secret rendezvous with the Bridegroom and says: ‘My secret to myself, my secret to myself.’ All do not experience the delight of the Bridegroom’s private visit in the same room; the Father has different arrangements for each,” which shows how far away (and how elevating) is Saint Bernard’s exposition, in comparison to the profane one. With regard to Solomon’s many concubines and his Peace, Dante also declared: “Moreover, the Empyrean Heaven by its peace resembles the Divine Science, which is full of all peace and suffers no diversity of opinion or sophistical reasoning because of the supreme certainty of its subject, which is God. Christ says of this science to his disciples: ‘My peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you,’ giving and leaving to them his teaching, which is this science of which I speak. Solomon, speaking of this science, says: ‘The queens number sixty, and the concubines eighty; and of the young handmaids there is no number: one is my dove and my perfect one.’ He calls all sciences queens and friends and handmaids, but this one he calls perfect because it makes us see truth perfectly, in which our souls find rest.”<sup>28</sup>

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always sought to remain apart from the vain subtleties of the academics, it was because he had no need of the laborious artifices of dialectic; he resolved at a single blow the most arduous questions because his thinking did not proceed by means of a long series of discursive operations; what philosophers strove to reach by a twisty route and by fumbling, he arrived at immediately, through intellectual intuition, without which no real metaphysics is possible and someone can only grasp a shadow of the truth.” We may add that, in this traditional spirit, Coomaraswamy wrote: “But there is every reason to believe that Leonardo, like so many other Renaissance scholars, was versed in the Neo-Platonic esoteric tradition, and that he may have been an initiate, familiar with the ‘mysteries’ of the crafts (Cf. René Guénon, *L’Esotérisme de Dante*, Paris, 1925; J. H. Probst-Biraben, “Léonardo de Vinci, Initié,” *Le Voile d’Isis*, 38, 1933, pp.260-266)” (Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, **The Iconography of Dürer’s “Knots” and Leonardo’s “Concatenation,”** The Art Quarterly, Detroit, VII. 2, Spring 1944, pp.109-28).

<sup>25</sup> **Song of Solomon**, 1:5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:4.

<sup>27</sup> *Sermon 23*.

<sup>28</sup> Dante, **The Convivio**, II, 14.



## The Rock as Center

Mircea A Tamas

Sure thing, the rock or stone was, as we have already mentioned, an important symbol of the center. René Guénon in his **Le Roi du Monde** devoted an entire chapter to it,<sup>1</sup> stressing that the name *Beith-El* (“house of God”) was applied not only to the place, but to the stone itself, and when we talk about the “cult of stones,” which was common to many ancient people, we must understand this cult not addressing the stones, but the Divinity for whom they were residence. Such special stones illustrated the center manifested as temple, even though, in time, they became “idols,” like the stones of the pre-Islamic Arabs.<sup>2</sup>

The rock is present in the Judaic and Christian traditions, alluding to the symbolism of the center: “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation”<sup>3</sup>; “I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock”<sup>4</sup>; “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.”<sup>5</sup> It is only normal to see the symbolism of the rock maintained in the Islamic tradition and the building of the Dome of the Rock should be perceived as a profound act of spiritual recognition of the rock as a center.<sup>6</sup> All the traditional data regarding the rock in the

<sup>1</sup> *L’omphalos et les bétyles*.

<sup>2</sup> For example: Manat was a large stone worshiped in the territory of the Hudhail tribe (between Mecca and Medina), demolished by Saad in the eighth year of Hegira; Allât was a rectangular stone and the “idol” of the tribe of Thakîf, having a temple in Nakhlah (the idol was demolished by Muhammad’s unbending order; its loss was perceived by the tribe in a similarly way as the Trojans perceived the loss of their *palladium*); in some cases, the divinity was identified with a particular part of a natural rock. There were other “idols,” mentioned in the **Qur’ân**, of antediluvian origin, worshiped under the form of a man (Wadd), a woman (Suwâ), a lion (Yaghût), a horse (Yaûk), and an eagle (Nasr); we see the similarity with the Mesopotamian gods, with Ezekiel’s tetramorph, and with the symbols of the four Christian Evangelists, which shows how the people’s mentality, in accord with the situation of the cycle’s evolvement and the spiritual influences’ presence or absence, makes a stone or a rock to become an “idol.” Gaudefroy-Demombynes mentioned that in the pre-Islamic pilgrimage each station (*wuqûf*) was marked by a stone or a mountain (**Le pèlerinage à la Mekke**, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1923, p. IV).

<sup>3</sup> **Psalms** 89:26.

<sup>4</sup> **Matthew** 7:24.

<sup>5</sup> **Matthew** 16:18.

<sup>6</sup> The symbolism of the Rock as center is stressed also by the cave that exists under it, connected to a well; as Burckhardt said, “the cave under the rock is like the heart or innermost conscience of man” (**Art of Islam**, p. 10). The symbolism of the rock is present in the **Qur’ân**: “And when Moses asked for water for

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center of the Dome are sustaining this reality: this is the rock where Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac; this is the rock where Jacob dreamed about the heavenly ladder; this is the “foundation-stone” upon which the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies<sup>7</sup>; this is the place from which Prophet Muhammad ascended to Heaven<sup>8</sup>; this Rock under the Dome was the first praying direction for Muslims before Mecca.<sup>9</sup> What is impossible to understand from an exoteric point of view, appears, from the esoteric perspective, as a shining and immutable truth: the human factor imposed upon the Rock various clothing, as it imposed upon any other images of the center, while, in reality, the essence of it is one and only, reflecting the one and only Tradition and the one and only Principle; therefore a mosque could be transformed in a church, or a church into a mosque; therefore the same rock could be veiled with “myths” belonging to different traditions, serving the same invisible purpose.<sup>10</sup>

From the same esoteric perspective, the Islamic tradition, as the last revealed one, used the best terminology allowing us to express the universal and *principial* truth beyond any distinction and specific form. For this reason, René Guénon, when he described the Unity, could affirm: “This luminous spherical form, indefinite and not closed, with its alternations of concentration and expansion (successive from the viewpoint of manifestation, but in reality simultaneous in the ‘eternal present’) is, in the Islamic esotericism, the form of the *Rūh muhammadiyah*; this is the total form of ‘Universal Man’ that God commanded the angels to adore.”<sup>11</sup> For the same reason, the appellations “Islam” and “Muslim” have a universal essence, as any traditional man realizes their meaning, regardless of the traditional form he belongs to; “Related to this, we should recall that the proper meaning of the word *Islām* is ‘submission to the divine Will’; hence it is said, in certain esoteric teachings, that every being is *muslim*, in the sense that there is clearly none who can elude that Will, and accordingly each necessarily occupies the place allotted to him in the Universe as a whole.”<sup>12</sup> For the same reason, when the great seer Ibn ‘Arabi declared that “the Christians and, generally speaking, all ‘the men of the scriptures’ do not change their religion when they become Muslims,” he referred to the

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his people, We said: Smite with thy staff the rock. And there gushed out therefrom twelve springs (so that) each tribe knew their drinking-place” (2:60).

<sup>7</sup> The “foundation-stone,” *Even ha-Shethiyah*, is “the rock from which the world was woven.”

<sup>8</sup> Burckhardt, *Art of Islam*, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> In the Judaic tradition, the *Mishnah* affirms that the prayer should be made by directing the heart towards the Holy of Holies; sometimes it is said that this Holy of Holies belongs to the Heavenly Temple.

<sup>10</sup> It was admitted that the Rock is a token of the close relation between Jewish, Christian and Muslim traditions, which does not mean that there are not continuous futile polemics trying to prove that the Rock was primarily a Christian symbol, or a Jewish one, or an Islamic one.

<sup>11</sup> René Guénon, *Le symbolisme de la croix*, p. 44. In accord with Guénon’s sayings, Michel Valsan wrote that in the Supreme Center of the Primordial and Universal Tradition reigns the primordial Muhammadian Being, who corresponds to primordial Manu and to Melki-Tsedeq (*L’Islam et la fonction de René Guénon*, Les Editions de l’Oeuvre, 1984, p. 178). Ibn Arabi calls the Supreme Center “the Sublime Assembly” and the Islamic community is its external form, similar to the Judaic tradition where Knesseth-Israel here on earth is the expression of the celestial Knesseth-Israel.

<sup>12</sup> Guénon, *Le symbolisme de la croix*, p. 135.

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doctrine of Unity, and in this sense we have to understand Charles-André Gilis' expression, "the universal spirit of Islam."<sup>13</sup>

"The doctrine of Unity (*Et-Tawhîd*), René Guénon wrote, that is, the affirmation that the Principle of all existence is essentially One, is a fundamental point common to all orthodox traditions," while "only in descending toward multiplicity differences of form appear, the modes of expression themselves then being as numerous as that to which they refer, and susceptible to indefinite variation in adapting themselves to the circumstances of time and place."<sup>14</sup> The Islamic tradition, as the last orthodox tradition descended on earth before the end of times, affirms most openly and clearly that "the doctrine of Unity is unique,"<sup>15</sup> that is, this doctrine is everywhere and all the time the same, unchangeable like the Principle, independent of any multiplicity and of all the changes that influence the contingent applications.<sup>16</sup>

With the decay of the cycle and the increasing distance that separates the world from the Principle (the distance from center to circumference), this truth is forgotten, mainly because human beings live in an extreme multiplicity, and therefore the most recent traditional forms have the duty to affirm as explicitly as possible the Unity.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, even if we consider not various but one tradition, as the Islamic one for example, we will

<sup>13</sup> Charles-André Gilis, **L'Esprit universel de l'Islam**, Al-Bouraq, 1998, p. 205. In the same way, the Jewish prophets envisaged the Temple at the end of times as a Temple for all nations; see, for example: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (**Isaiah 2:2-4**).

<sup>14</sup> René Guénon, **Aperçus sur l'ésotérisme islamique et le Taoïsme**, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> *Et-Tawhîdū wâhidūn*. As Guénon said, in Islam, the statement of Unity is expressed in the most explicit way and so adamant that it seems to absorb all the other statements. "Moreover, this tendency increases as one advance in the development of a cycle of manifestation because this development is itself a descent into multiplicity, and because of the spiritual obscuration that inevitably accompanies it. That is why the most recent traditional forms are those which must express the affirmation of Unity in a manner most visible to the outside; and in fact this affirmation is nowhere expressed so explicitly and with such insistence as in Islam, where, one might say, it even seems to absorb into itself all other affirmations" (**Aperçus sur l'ésotérisme islamique**, p. 39).

<sup>16</sup> Guénon, **Aperçus sur l'ésotérisme islamique**, p. 38. René Guénon was, in his whole work, a "servant" of this Unity (his Islamic name is *Abdel Wahed*, the "servant of the Unique"); he always tried to stress the common origin of the various traditional forms, instead to point out the apparent differences, as many are doing today ("what generates division must be banished and what unites must be preserved," **Franc-Maçonnerie**, II, p. 299). His illustrious predecessor, the greatest spiritual master Ibn 'Arabî, did the same thing: "rather than focusing on the external differences or apparent contradictions among various hadîth ... Ibn 'Arabî typically — one might say 'ecumenically' — concentrates on conveying the spiritual meaning and intentions implicit in each Prophetic saying, pointing to a level of understanding unifying what might otherwise be seen as differing or conflicting expressions. (This approach mirrors his more general attitude to the various Islamic sects and schools of law, and ultimately to the observable diversity of human religions and beliefs)" (**The Meccan Revelations**, I, p. 315, note of James W. Morris); Ibn 'Arabî's perspective also illustrates his profound understanding of the Universal Man, as integrating the non-manifestation and the manifestation, the divine and the human, with their characteristics.

<sup>17</sup> Of course, at the beginning of the present *Manvantara*, there was no need to express the affirmation of Unity. On the other hand, today, the modern man, consumed by the reign of quantity, understands almost nothing of the doctrine of Unity; and even if he accepts the existence of three "monotheist" religions, he cannot understand that it is about the one and same Principle, beyond any duality, or that other traditions, like the Hindu or the Chinese one, are not "polytheist."

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find the human factor and the historic circumstances striving to conceal the essential reality. Apparently, the Caliph Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock trying to attract the pilgrims from Mecca to Jerusalem during the conflict with his adversary Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr, and Jerusalem was closer to Damascus than Mecca<sup>18</sup>; he also wanted to challenge the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>19</sup> In fact, the essential reason was to stress the symbolism of the unique center and to acknowledge that *Al-Haram El-Sharif* was indeed a “holy land” sheltering the center<sup>20</sup>; regardless of any conjectural element, the Dome of the Rock was erected fundamentally to mark the Center and the House of God.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Gaudefroy-Demombynes 27, Burckhardt, **Art of Islam**, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> The Prophet has warned about such rivalry: “And as for those who chose a place of worship out of opposition and disbelief, and in order to cause dissent among the believers, and as an outpost for those who warred against Allāh and His messenger aforetime, they will surely swear: We purposed naught save good. Allah beareth witness that they verily are liars” (**Qur'an** 9:107-108).

<sup>20</sup> Apparently, the fact that St.-Denis became the spiritual center of France, strongly connected to the royal power of the Capetians, and a very important pilgrimage site, was due to the Abbot Suger’s ambition to surpass the other holy sites of the West (like Compostela) (Simson 64, 81, 113); but the influence of St. Bernard on Suger suggests that, in fact, there is no question of rivalry or ambition, but that St.-Denis was indeed a representation of the center.

<sup>21</sup> Since the Arabs, like the Jews, were nomads, the building of permanent sanctuaries required foreign craftsmen (Muslims or not), like in the case of Solomon’s Temple. Burckhardt considered that “the interior of the sanctuary [the Dome of the Rock] feels more Byzantine or Roman than the exterior” and “it is possible, and even likely, that the plan based on a star-shaped polygon is a Byzantine legacy which, in its turn, has a Platonic and Pythagorean antecedent in antiquity” (**Art of Islam**, p. 12). For Burckhardt, “there is no doubt that the builders of the Dome of the Rock saw in it an image of the spiritual center of the world; granted that this center is symbolized, for Muslims, by the Kaaba, nevertheless Jerusalem, and Mount Moriah in particular, has always been considered as an avatar of this same center” (**Art of Islam**, p. 12).



## Noah and the Near-East (I)

Mircea A Tamas

One of the characteristics of the Great Disarray is the division or the sectarianism, which flourished during Saint Paul's time and continued to prosper, more or less visible, under the same or different garments, until nowadays. We saw in the previous works, from a traditional perspective, some aspects of this division and their consequences. The question is: what are the remedies, or, even better, are there still efficient remedies today to heal the scattering and the division?

The question is so fundamental that the only answer we are allowed to give is a parabolic one; in fact, we already know an example represented by the foundation of the Christian tradition, where such a dogmatism and solidification was needed for the Church to stabilize its unity, that it had to expel and eliminate all the dissident Christian currents.

The organization of Christianity as an orthodox tradition is a sacrifice with more than one face. Having a messianic function, Christianity could not remain at the esoteric or prophetic level. It was not enough to prophesize the end of times and ask the nations to repent, as, for example, Isaiah and Jeremiah did; there was the need to save the whole Occident (the Roman Empire). For this reason, Christ came down and became man, suffered crucifixion and rose after three days. In the same way, Christianity "came down" and became an exoteric tradition. In concert with these facts, Saint Paul strove to unite the nations, who worshiped the idols and the pagan gods, and make them vassals of the transcendent Unity – the one-and-only God, the Most High.

If Christianity was the force that saved and regenerated the Occident, it also caused, with its increasing intransigency and rigidity, the flight of valuable spiritual and intellectual elements, as we saw in the article about the Near-West. Moreover, we must not forget that the Christian tradition not only passed from esotericism to exotericism, but also from a monotheist (Judaic) ambience to a polytheist one (the Roman Empire). In other words, as Saint Paul's letters showed, the problem was to annihilate the "pagan" gods and rituals, which brings us to an essential matter, that of the relation between One and multiplicity. Christianity tried to solve it, on the one hand, by discreetly integrating gods and rituals into the transcendental unity of the Christian religion, promoting the numerous angels and the cult of the saints, and on the other hand, by introducing the Divine Names, as Saint Dionysius the Areopagite registered them:

## Noah and the Near-East (I)

The theologians praise God by every name – and as the Nameless One. For they call it nameless when they speak of how the supreme Deity, during a mysterious revelation of the symbolical appearance of God, rebuked the man who asked, «What is your name?» and led him away from any knowledge of the divine name by countering, «Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?» This surely is the wonderful «name which is above every name» and is therefore without a name. It is surely the name established «above every name that is named either in this age or in that which is to come.» And yet on the other hand they give it many names, such as «I am who I am,» «Life,» «Light,» «God,» «Truth.» (**The Divine Names**, I, 6)

Christian tradition built an Ark (the Church)<sup>1</sup> which was prepared to save the many, not only the few, and for this reason it descended into the exoteric domain. To make the Ark float without danger an one-and-only captain was needed, an one-and-only law, the same rules for everybody; any revolt or sectarianism would have endangered navigation and forced, as reaction, the expulsion of the sectarians from the ship; on the other hand, due to its messianic characteristic, nobody was refused on it, and there was not only wrath against the decayed world but also salvation.

We note also the difference with regard to Noah's mission. For the Christians, Noah is indissolubly related to the flood and appears, being “a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time,” God's favorite, a chosen one who “walked with God”; “But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord” (**Genesis** 6:8-9), and not His Wrath. The Orthodox Church considers that Noah invented the *semantrō*.<sup>2</sup> God – it is said – did not order Noah to build only the Ark but also the sacred plank, that replaced the bells and, knocking it, everyday Noah gathered the masons to work, and admonished and warned the population about the flood. The Orthodox monasteries even today use the *semantrō*, as do the churches, especially for Easter, yet almost nobody thinks of Noah's times.

Saint Paul's letters, permanently read in the church, are similar to the sacred plank, *semantrō*, and to the bells, since Saint Paul, like Noah, admonished the decayed people, announcing the Second Coming, *Parousia*, in the same way as Noah announced the flood. And yet there is a difference between the Noachite mission and the Christian one, a distinction stressed by the Judaic Kabbalah with respect to the difference between Noah and Moses. Saint Paul wrote:

According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (**1 Thessalonians** 4:15-17)

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<sup>1</sup> The boat is one of the Church's symbols.

<sup>2</sup> In Arabic, this sacred plank, this “special monastery bell” is called *nâkûs*, and in Greek, *semantrō*, “seal.”

## Noah and the Near-East (I)

Saint Paul, like Noah, announced the imminent coming of the Judgment and it is possible that some of the first Christians even waited for the Second Coming to occur during their life. Yet, as we explained many times, the only concession that was made to us was that we ignore the time when the end will come. Therefore Saint Paul continued:

Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, «Peace and safety,» destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. (**1 Thessalonians 5:1-5**)<sup>3</sup>

Hence, the Day of Judgment will come when everybody will least expect it.

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God «will give to each person according to what he has done.» To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honour and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (**Romans 2:5-10**)

The Day of Wrath announced by Saint Paul corresponds to the Day of Flood predicted by Noah. Yet this Wrath is not inexorable since “God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (**1 Thessalonians 5:9**) and in this declaration is hiding the difference in comparison to Noah.

In the Judaic Kabbalah,<sup>4</sup> Noah is considered a “righteous man” (and “blameless”), *Zaddik*, a quality suggested also by the fact that he “walked with God.” The “righteous man” refers initially to a spiritual station, but this qualification appears in the exoteric domain too, like in the case of Joseph, or of James, “the brother of Jesus,” who is called James the Just or James “the Righteous One” (the *Zaddik*); this term can be found as well in the Qumran’s documents and the “Gnostic” gospels.<sup>5</sup> *Zaddik* is “the world’s pillar (fundament)” and we

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<sup>3</sup> “Every nation has its term; so whenever their deadline comes, they will not postpone it for an hour, nor will they advance it” (**Qur’ân 7:34**). “They may ask you about the Hour: «When will it arrive?» Say: «Knowledge about it rests only with my Lord; He Alone will disclose its time. Things will seem heavy in Heaven and Earth; it will simply come upon you all of a sudden!»” (**Qur’ân 7:187**).

<sup>4</sup> **Zohar**, I, 59 b (vol. I, p. 193).

<sup>5</sup> In **The Gospel of Thomas**, the disciple asked Jesus: “We know you will leave us. Who is going to be our leader then?” And Jesus answered: “No matter where you reside, you are to go to James the Just, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being” (**The Secret Teachings of Jesus**, Vintage Books, 1986, p. 21). The idea of “spotless” in the sense of spiritual righteousness exists also in the official Gospels: “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (**Matthew 5:20**).

## Noah and the Near-East (I)

remember that Saint Paul considered Peter, John and James, “the brother of Jesus,” as the three pillars of the Church.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The “pillar” has a rich symbolic meaning, related to the *Axis Mundi* and the spiritual center. The “pillars of Hercules” are well-known (**Sacred Kernel**, p. 37), as well as the two pillars on Enoch. In this latter case, it is said that the pillars were made of different materials to resist, the one water, the other fire; one was placed in Syria, the other one in Ethiopia, with Syria and Ethiopia being symbolical names with respect to the spiritual center. The “pillars of Enoch” symbolize two spiritual and initiatory centers to which were given the treasure of primordial knowledge to be kept along the centuries (see René Guénon’s notes in **Quelques pages oubliées**, *Études Traditionnelles*, no. 427, 1971, p. 211).



## Noah and the Near-East (II)

Mircea A Tamas

The Judaic Kabbalah stressed more than once the harmony between heaven and earth, which in Christianity is said as “on earth as it is in heaven” (**Matthew** 6:10). For example, *Knesseth-Israel* from below corresponds to *Malkuth*, “Kingdom,” and to Shekinah as divine presence in the world; but there is also a *Knesseth-Israel* from above, celestial, and every (sacred) activity the Community of Israel does on earth imitates the divine archetypes: “When we are told that the whole land of Israel came and folded itself under Abram, this refers to another holy supernal land which God has and which is also called «the land of Israel.» ... and it is called «the land of the living» (**Zohar** III, 84 a).<sup>1</sup> The Community of Israel only superficially means the Jewish people, in the same way as Islam bears a universal spiritual significance, beyond the particular Arabic point of view. This Community represents especially “the traditional society” as “explication” of a spiritual center, and is therefore a sort of earthly paradise, image of the Heavenly Paradise. In a perfect case, the Kabbalistic disciple hides in this *Knesseth-Israel*, which he essentially represents, and follows Shekinah’s way to unite with the Community of Israel from above, with God, being also the intermediary through whom the whole community will rise to the Most High, and the community being the intermediary through which the whole world will do the same. *Sephira Malkuth* designates *Knesseth-Israel*, yet, as we said, not as Jewish people in a common sense, but as an “organism” (in the same way the *sephirothic* Tree is an “organism”), as world, as kingdom, as spiritual center and also as king, that is, as illuminated man, who, in some specific epochs, can fall from sacred to profane. In the middle of this *Malkuth* (a “kingdom” that can be in man’s heart) resides the divine presence, Shekinah, the perfect mediator nearby the king (**Zohar** II, 51 a),<sup>2</sup> very similar to the Babylonian goddess Ishtar.

Generation of the universal manifestation necessarily means the beginning of cosmic divorce, and the Judaic Kabbalah calls this “Shekinah’s exile,” the divine presence leaving the Holy One, blessed be He (*Kaddosh-Baruch-Hu*), and going away, farther and farther; the theme of the exile obsesses the Judaic tradition. We could say that the whole modern world is in exile, in diaspora, from this point of view, the Jews’ exile being somehow the visible model of worldly diaspora. In fact, a double exile takes place: on the one hand, Shekinah’s exile with respect to the Holy One, blessed be He, and on the other

<sup>1</sup> Vol. 5, p. 97. We saw that Guénon considered the name “Israel” as representing the assembly of the initiates.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. 3, p. 156.

## Noah and the Near-East (II)

hand, Israel's exile with regard to Shekinah, which becomes the hidden sun, where this exile represents "the misery" (*daleth*) when the candle of Ishtar's worshiper becomes extinct; the man falls then into ignorance and profanity, since the exile refers not only to the Community of Israel but also to each individual. The straightening means evidently the beginning of a new cycle, after all the scattered ones in diaspora are reunited, after "my scattered family will come back together" (as a Babylonian hymn to Ishtar tells), when Shekinah will unite with *Kaddosh-Baruch-Hu*. The union is first of all, of course, an initiatory one, of spiritual essence, symbolizing the union of the Self with Brahma (in the Hindu tradition), the Supreme Identity when *jīvātmā* breaks the worldly chains and reveals his splendour as *Ātmā*, identical to Brahma.

We witness an attempt to reconcile two points of view, one transcendental, the other one immanent. In all the genuine traditions, the Principle is at the same time the Most High (transcendent) and the Heart or the Center (immanent). A traditional society of "righteous men" respects and imitates the things from the High, and at the same time it is in harmony with the spiritual kernel (center) from where it receives its reality and the kernel is *Zaddik*, "the pillar of the world."

In Noah's times, there were no more "righteous men" in the exoteric domain, and Shekinah was in exile. In other words, the harmonious communication between heaven and earth broke, and the esoteric domain became dry; the spiritual influence withdrew from the world, due to the lack of "righteous men." To regenerate and straighten the world "ten righteous men" were needed, yet at the time of the flood only Noah (and his sons) was found blameless, and only with him did God make a Covenant having as an earthly token the ark, and as a celestial token the rainbow (*Zohar*, I, 67 b).<sup>3</sup> It is interesting that Noah's embarking on the Ark (of the Covenant) is considered a union similar to the union in the highest, being therefore a symbol of a supernal archetype; as the river derived from the supernal waters watered the paradisiacal Garden, fertilizing it, and then the river parted into four to produce the world (*Genesis* 2:10), in the same way the union of Noah with the Ark will produce future generations that will multiply upon the earth (*Zohar*, I, 59 b).<sup>4</sup>

As Guénon explained (**Symbols**, pp. 173, 175), the ark from below is analogous to the rainbow from above modeling a complete cycle. The rainbow represents the superior Waters, the ark the inferior Waters and they come together, united in order to regenerate the world and produce a new cosmic cycle. The Judaic Kabbalah says that the greatest sin of the flood generation was that Noah's contemporaries did not let the union between the superior and inferior Waters occur, that is, due to the corruption, crimes and injustice reigning among the people, heaven and earth became completely separated. That is why they were punished with water. The waters of the flood were burning like fire, emerging boiling from the abyss: they corresponded to the inferior Waters<sup>5</sup>; at the same time,

<sup>3</sup> Vol. I, pp. 223, 241. The Ark of the Covenant is equivalent to the Garden of Eden, that is, with the spiritual center; on the other hand, the Ark is the World Egg that contains the seeds of the future cycle. The union of Noah with the Ark suggests the union with the Principle from an immanent point of view, as a response to the Covenant with the transcendental God (Noah has already walked with this God).

<sup>4</sup> Vol. I, p. 193.

<sup>5</sup> We note that in Greek mythology Minos was killed in a barrel with boiling water: the connection between Minos and the cosmic cycles is known. Regarding the combination fire-water, besides the

## Noah and the Near-East (II)

heaven opened and humankind was flooded with the waters from above: they corresponded to the superior Waters.<sup>6</sup> In this mode the two types of waters came together to punish mankind in proportion to its sin (**Zohar**, I, 62 a, 68 b).<sup>7</sup> The end of the world means the reassembling of the World Egg as it has been at the beginning, it means the reunification or the superior and inferior Waters as they been before Genesis.

We reach now a capital problem. From a cosmologic point of view and from the doctrine of cosmic cycles perspective, the flood is something normal and logical. When a world has exhausted its possibilities, it has to die and a new one will be born. From an initiatory point of view, salvation (regeneration) of the world is logical and so Noah appears as an ambiguous character.<sup>8</sup>

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alchemical symbolism, we should observe that it illustrates *coincidentia oppositorum*, which will be present at the end of times, when the end and the beginning are one; we noted already that “the pillars of Enoch” represent the water and the fire.

<sup>6</sup> The Greek flood is described as a combination of the waters from above (controlled by Zeus) and from below (controlled by Poseidon).

<sup>7</sup> Vol. I, pp. 202, 228. “Noah’s folk denied it long before them; they rejected Our servant and said: «He is crazy!» and he was rebuffed... So We opened Heaven’s gates for water to pour down. We drilled the earth full of springs and the waters met at a command which had been decreed” (**Qur’ân** 54:9-12).

<sup>8</sup> For example, Judaic esoterism considers that Noah brought sin into the world: “Noah himself drew death into the world, through his own sin, of which is written, «And he drank of the wine and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent» (**Zohar**, I, 63 b, vol. I, p. 207); on the other hand, we saw what Guénon said about Noah and the initiatory symbolism of the wine. For Saint John Chrysostom, Noah’s drunkenness is a debauchery, yet if it is an initiatory “drunkenness” then Noah’s uncovering is equivalent to a revelation and that is why Ham was punished (in the same way as in **Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz**, those who saw Venus naked were punished). With regard to this Biblical episode, we should note that here is suggested the difference between the exoteric and the esoteric. “Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father’s nakedness and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father’s nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father’s nakedness. When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, «Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.» He also said, «Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave.»” (**Genesis** 9: 22-27). Philo explained the episode: “In the first place, because he [Ham] did not report the involuntary evil of his father to one brother only, but to both of them; and no doubt if he had any more he would have told it to them all, as he did in fact to every one he could; and he did so with ridicule in his very words, making a jest of what ought not to have been treated with laughter and derision” (QG II, 71, **The Works of Philo**, Hendrickson Publishers, 1997, p. 837). Philo also suggested that the three brothers, Shem, Japheth and Ham, correspond to good, indifferent and bad, which we may interpret in various ways. First, it is possible to compare this triad to the three *gunas* of the Hindu tradition and to Lao Zi’s sayings: “When the best pupil hears about Dao he practises it assiduously; when the average pupil hears about Dao, he seems now to keep it and now to lose it. When the worst pupil hears about Dao, he laughs out loud. If he did not laugh, Dao would be unworthy of being Dao” ( **XLI). Ham, who did laugh, is the worst pupil and relates to *tamas* (the *guna* directed downwards); Shem corresponds to *sattva* (the *guna* directed upwards). On the other hand, we may say that Ham represents exoterism, while his brothers illustrate esoterism; or, in more details, Ham should be related to the “outside darkness,” Japheth to exoterism and Shem to esoterism. From a Christian point of view, Shem would indicate the Jews and Japheth the Greeks (or the Gentiles). Eventually, we note that Flavius Josephus and some other traditions considered that Ham was perpetuating the teachings of the Giants and of the fallen angels, after the flood (in the **Bible**, Nimrod is Ham’s grandson), which shows Ham as the ancestor of the present counter-initiation.**

## Noah and the Near-East (II)

A perfect spiritual realization supposes not only an ascendant initiatory way, but also a descendant one, the two phases being comparable (as Guénon affirmed) to the two halves of a circle<sup>9</sup>; the descendant half is related to the *avatâra*'s function (*avataraṇa* means in Sanskrit “to descend”), a function, which, compared to Christ, Noah did not have. In the Islamic tradition there is a difference between *walî* and *nabî*: the former is an initiate for himself, the latter for the others (Guénon, **Initiation**, pp. 256-262); *walî*, said Guénon, lacks something, and such a “lack” we find in Noah’s case: it is about Mercy.<sup>10</sup> Only when a straightening is no longer possible, the kernel of Tradition and the spiritual seeds gather in the Ark to get ready for a new cycle and the old world is completely destroyed. Yet the initiates have the obligation of striving for a regeneration and revivification of the world in which they operate and that is what happened in the cases of Christianity and Islam. If Noah had operated as a *nabî* maybe the flood would have been avoided. The change of the cycles comes only when all other means are exhausted; therefore the initiates’ intervention is compulsory.

When the individuals are “righteous,” Shekinah, the divine presence, is among them; but when the world is decayed and full of sins, the people throw Shekinah into exile: this was the flood generation, Noah’s people (**Zohar**, I, 61 a).<sup>11</sup> When there is one “righteous man” in this world, Shekinah joins him and does not leave him; and Noah was allowed to embark on the Ark only because he was “righteous,” since nobody else but the righteous (*Zaddik*) can unite with the Ark (**Zohar**, I, 66 b).<sup>12</sup> When the righteous men multiply the earth is fruitful.<sup>13</sup> When the sinners multiply the waters dry (the earth becomes a desert and the heart solidifies). God, even if He destroyed the sinners in the time of Noah, He wanted to spare the world, yet couldn’t find a redeemer to save the world from His Wrath.<sup>14</sup> The world’s salvation required the existence of “ten righteous men,” and besides Noah nobody was “righteous.”<sup>15</sup> With regard to Noah, all his efforts were required to save himself and repopulate the world (**Zohar**, I, 67 a, b)<sup>16</sup>; that is all Noah was capable of, and if from a cosmogonic point of view his role is beneficent, from an initiatory point of view he appears with a “lack.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Even if we obtain the same diagram as the one composed by the ark and the rainbow, here the two semicircles are “vertical” not “horizontal”; there is though a close connection between the two diagrams.

<sup>10</sup> Allâh’s greatest name, synthesizer, is *Er-Rahmân*, “the Merciful”; in the same way “the Prayer of the Heart” in Hesychasm is nothing else than divine Mercy.

<sup>11</sup> Vol. I, p. 198.

<sup>12</sup> Vol. I, p. 219.

<sup>13</sup> See also **Qur’ân** 7:57-58.

<sup>14</sup> Since, in fact, Mercy not Wrath is the essential characteristic of God.

<sup>15</sup> In the Sodom episode, Abraham asked God: “«May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten [righteous men] can be found there?» God answered, «For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it» (**Genesis** 18:32).

<sup>16</sup> Vol. I, pp. 222-223. “When the sinners were destroyed in the time of Noah, God was anxious for the preservation of the world, but could see no one who might save it from His wrath; for the whole efforts of Noah were required to save himself and to repopulate the world.”

<sup>17</sup> Noah “was righteous only by comparison with his contemporaries” (**Zohar** I, 67 a).

## Noah and the Near-East (II)

That is the difference between Noah and Moses. The latter, even if he admonished the population, gave the Law and saved them. Compared to Moses, Noah did not intervene to save his contemporaries; he let them perish. Moses, on the other hand, offered his life in change for salvation of his people; Noah saved himself and left the world in God's hands. Moses planted Shekinah in the middle of Israel, risking his life for it. Even if Noah was a "righteous man," he was not holy enough to make God consider him qualified to save the world. Noah should have mercy for others, since when the sinners multiply, the "righteous man" suffers first for their sins. On the other hand, Noah "walked with God," and he was saved in the Ark, having the mission of repopulating the world; moreover, he daily admonished and warned the people and asked them to repent because the flood was coming, and the Wrath of God was awakened, and it is written that the one who admonishes the sinner "saves himself and is not involved in the punishment which befalls them" (**Zohar**, I, 67 b-68 a).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Vol. I, pp. 223-225.



Mircea A. Tamas

## ORIENS AND OCCIDENS (I)

**THERE IS A SERIES OF** questions not usually asked about the Great Disarray. First of all, why do we have this modern world? Modern civilization is an anomaly, an unnatural society (opposite to the meaning of “natural” as defined by the Daoist seers), so why should it exist and develop? Secondly, closely related to the first question, what generated such an anomaly? Also, why, when we say “modern society” do we think instantaneously of the Occident? What occurred in the West to produce such a profane and Anti-Grail perspective? We may ask as well, how much the West is the Occident and the East the Orient? Moreover, how much the Orient is still the Orient? Eventually, we are entitled to know the answer to the question: what the Wrath of the Gods really means?

Regularly, these questions are not part of daily human thinking. The state of facts is taken for granted. Yet if we want to have a clear perspective of the present world and the place of Tradition in it, we must complete such an inquiry. René Guénon used to say that there are not unsolvable problems, only problems wrongly put. Therefore, we are not going to follow a profane path looking for profane solutions.

René Guénon divided the world, more or less symbolically, into “Orient” and “Occident,” the “Orient” containing three major traditions: the Far-Eastern, the Hindu and the Islamic tradition. This partition, even if it coincides to some extent with the present geographical situation, was viewed mainly from a traditional perspective, since Guénon specified that Islam comprises countries that are geographically as much “Occidental” as Europe is (Guénon, **Introduction**, p. 54). Moreover, René Guénon explained later: “the true Orient, the only one that deserves to be named so, is and will be the traditional Orient, even when its exponents are reduced to a minority. ... It is about this Orient that we are talking, in the same way as the Occident represents for us the Occidental mentality, that is, the modern and antitraditional mentality, no matter where it is geographically situated, since we envisage primarily the opposition of these two points of view and not just simply the two geographical terms” (Guénon, **Orient et Occident**, p. 230).

There are many reasons why we have to accept this partition. Some were already suggested in other works. But we want to point out a symbolic motive, connected to Christianity, and coming from Western heritage itself. Christian symbolism calls Jesus Christ *Oriens*, not *Occidens*. The word *Occidens* is derived from the Latin *occido*, which

## Oriens and Occidens (I)

means “to fall, to collapse.” Regardless of its immediate significance in our current language, in relation to the rising sun, more than ever *Oriens* symbolizes the residence of Tradition and *Occidens* the profane, modern and antitraditional mentality, illustrating the collapse of the traditional perspective; moreover, we might say that the world’s final collapse will occur when, beside the Occident, the Orient will also be engulfed by *Occidens*. And we stress that, in accordance with Guénon’s teachings, there is no profane domain, but only a profane point of view; therefore, when we refer to *Occidens*, we have in mind the modern and antitraditional mentality, and not in particular the geographical cardinal point.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, if Jesus Christ is *Oriens*, logically Anti-Christ is *Anti-Oriens*, but it does not mean that *Anti-Oriens* is the West. Anti-Christ is beyond (or even better, below) the human world and cannot be particularized by the cardinal points; it does not have a “human” origin, in the same way as counter-initiation is non-human. The term *Anti-Oriens* should not be disregarded though; as the devil was called Non-Brother, in “opposition” to God, the Brother,<sup>2</sup> so Guénon used the expression “counter-initiation” to describe the adverse forces, which should not be confused with “antitradition.”

René Guénon wrote:

The « counter-initiation » appears through degeneracy... which is more profound than that of a deviated tradition or of an incomplete tradition reduced to its inferior part. There is also here something that is more than in the case of those lost traditions that were abandoned by the spiritual influence (in which case their residues can be used by the « counter-initiation » for its own purpose). Logically, this leads us to think that the degeneracy had to go back into the past; and, as obscure as is its origin, we may admit as credible that it is attached to some distortion of an ancient

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<sup>1</sup> We have to keep in mind that in Islamic tradition, for example, there was no discrimination between the East and the West. More than one time it is said: “Unto Allâh belong the East and the West, and whithersoever you turn, there is Allâh’s Countenance. Lo! Allâh is All-Embracing, All-Knowing” (*Qur’ân, Al-Bakara*, 2, 115); and also: “Allâh is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light. Allâh guides unto His light whom He will. And Allâh speaks to mankind in allegories, for Allâh is Knower of all things” (*An-Nâr*, 24, 35); “He said: Lord of the East and the West and all that is between them, if ye did but understand” (*Al-Shu’arâ*, 26, 28); “Lord of the East and the West; there is no Allâh save Him; so choose thou Him alone for thy defender” (*Al-Muzzammil*, 73, 9). Such a perspective exists also in the Western tradition. In Masonry, in the highest degrees of the Scottish Rite, the two-headed eagle is an imperial emblem representing the reign over Orient and Occident. The 30<sup>th</sup> degree is called the “Knight Kadosh or Knight of the White and Black Eagle.” A Greek legend told that Zeus sent two eagles, one from the East, the other one from the West, and they met in the center, at the white stone of Delphi, marking the “navel of the world.” We can assume that the eagles are white and black, as the two ones eating a hare in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* (104-139). Another legend said that two eagles watched on the roof of the palace in Pella the birth of Alexander the Great, a sign predicting that the new-born will become the emperor of Orient and Occident; the Arabic tradition named Alexander *El-Iskandar dhâl-qarnein*, which means “with two horns,” and was interpreted as a double power, of Occident and Orient (Guénon, *Symboles*, p. 205).

<sup>2</sup> In fact, there is no symmetry between these two terms.

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civilization that disappeared in a cataclysm of the present Manvantara. (Guénon, *Le règne*, pp. 351-2)

In this quotation, Guénon alluded to Atlantis, “the lost continent,”<sup>3</sup> and the biblical flood illustrates exactly the cataclysm that put an end to the reign of the giants: “The Nephilim were on the earth in those days – and also afterward – when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown” (*Genesis* 6:4).<sup>4</sup>

Yet Hesiod highlighted a special episode, about the “race of silver” that “could not keep from sinning and from wronging one another, nor would they serve the immortals, nor sacrifice on the holy altars of the blessed ones. Then Zeus, the son of Cronos, was angry and put them away, because they would not give honour to the blessed gods who live on Olympus” (**Works and Days**, 130-140). The “race of silver” was far before Atlantis and we should conclude that, in fact, the decadence started at the same time with the first rotation of *Dharma Chakra*, even if in the “Golden Age” the intellectuality was so pure that this decline was almost imperceptible.<sup>5</sup>

With regard to the doctrine of the cosmic cycles, we may say that the “Golden Age” lasted four unites of time, the “Age of Silver” three, the “Age of Bronze” two and the “Iron Age” will last one. On the other hand, the whole cycle can be considered as containing five Great Years, in which case the “Golden Age” lasted two Great Years, the “Age of Silver” one and a half Years, the “Age of Bronze” one Year and the “Iron Age” would survive half a Year.<sup>6</sup> Reviewing the traditional data, we may assume that the ending of the “Golden Age,” at the same time as the end of the second Great Year, was marked by a double cataclysm, natural and social, the latter being the revolt of the *kshatriyas*, the warrior caste. Indeed, *Treta-yuga*, the “Age of Silver” was considered under the royal (warrior) caste’s control. Yet, in concordance with the law of correspondence, *Treta-yuga* itself had a “golden” beginning and it is admissible to say that this Age also (like all the other cycles) had a “divine” and a “human” period. To this “human” period, Hesiod alluded. In the Hindu tradition, Parashu Râma, the sixth *avatâra* of Vishnu, punished the revolted *kshatriyas* and ended this Age, marking the debut of *Dwapara-yuga*, the “Age of Bronze.” The fourth Great Year is considered the “Atlantis Year,” and half of it is situated still in the “Age of Silver,” suggesting, as Plato affirmed, a “golden” or “divine” period, which could correspond to Parashu Râma’s intervention, while the second half is in the “Age of Bronze,” a “human” period to which *Genesis* alluded and which mentioned the giants. In any case, this last “human” period might be the source of the actual counter-initiation.

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<sup>3</sup> With regard to the entire Manvantara, Atlantis corresponds to the “red race” and the Western cardinal point, which enhances our definition of *Occidens*.

<sup>4</sup> Some traditions considered Ham of perpetuating the teachings of the rebellious Giants and of the fallen angels, after the flood.

<sup>5</sup> The counter-initiation has a “non-human” origin. We may say that, at the very moment when the wheel of the manifestation started to move, the counter-initiation became active; moreover, at the same time, the Saviour was born.

<sup>6</sup> These five Years correspond to the five “suns” of the Aztecs.

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Considering the doctrine of the cosmic cycles, and the whole present human cycle (*Manvantara*), the Hindu tradition – as René Guénon affirmed – is the direct successor of the primordial Tradition, the Hyperborean (Nordic, polar) current; the Atlantean tradition is a secondary (Occidental, equinoctial) one. The former kept alive the initiatory center; the latter manifested the counter-initiation.

Compared to the “Age of Silver,” and considering its place inside the Manvantara, the “Age of Bronze” was logically a “lower” Age and closer to the end of the cycle, which implies a relatively greater disarray and less chances for the future epochs to benefit by a complete restoration of the normal hierarchy. However, as we have stressed many times, the science of symbols is not systematic, but coherent, and is not methodical and simplistic, but integrative and complex, which means we have to keep the spirit of discrimination (*furgân* in the Islamic tradition, *viveka* in the Hindu tradition) fully awake. Even if Atlantis was a “lower” Age and the deviations that took place during its “human” period favored the manifestation of the counter-initiation, the same Atlantis represented in comparison to *Kali-yuga*, a better, even ideal Age, constituting a mythical past.<sup>7</sup> More than that: beside the seeds of counter-initiation transmitted to the new world, a genuine tradition was also communicated to posterity. Therefore, we prefer to say that “the degeneracy … attached to some distortion of an ancient civilization that disappeared in a cataclysm of the present Manvantara” refers to *Occidens* firstly, since what eventually produced the present anomaly, that is, modern society, was a combination of more than one factor, among which the “Atlantean” influence played an important role.

We have to remember that the Occident was also the habitation of many traditional societies, as, for example, those of the Incas, Toltecs and Aztecs, and, of course, the one represented by the “Indians” of North America. The “Indians” are officially called “native people” today, but they can also be designated as “traditional people,” even if there is nothing much left of their spiritual heritage after the “white man” obliterated or desecrated it.<sup>8</sup> And there is no doubt that the “traditional people” of North

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<sup>7</sup> In ancient Greece, bronze was used for purification; the ancient Egyptians had, at the entrance of their temples, rotating bronze wheels, with purificatory effects (Jane Ellen Harrison, **Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion**, Princeton Univ. Press, 1991, p. 591); Solomon’s Temple did not contain iron but bronze. Also we should mention the Western location of the “Island of the Blessed,” as a vestige of Atlantis (see Julius Evola, **Revolt Against the Modern World**, Inner Traditions International, 1995, p. 199).

<sup>8</sup> There are some elements that must be clarified related to this subject. First of all, from a traditional point of view, the so much eulogized era of “geographical discoveries” ventured by the Europeans was just another sign of the Western world moving away from the sacred. The word “discoveries” is an abuse and suggests a narrow-minded perspective. We should note that it was only after the end of the Christian traditional society (symbolically and historically marked by the destruction of the Templars), that these so-called “discoveries” took place. The “discovery” of America was a “discovery” only for the Europeans involved in this sort of voyages (which excluded the Near-West), and certainly not for the “traditional people” living there, this word “discovery” being, indeed, a measure of ignorance and nothing else. Yet more distressing is the fact that what promoted such enterprises was a worldly mentality, since a traditional one would never have focused on such a project built on curiosity, greed, and individualism. Even if dressed in Catholic clothes, what was exported from Europe to the other continents was modern mentality. In the history of humanity we can find examples of people invading foreign territories and obliterating other civilizations. Each time it was a critical point of the cycle, when a change was needed. In the case of the Europeans, their expansion was part of the desecration of the world, aiming the supremacy of *Occidens*. The consequences are well-known: the Spaniards destroyed the traditional

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America were the keepers of a genuine traditional life and spirituality.<sup>9</sup> This is not the moment to develop this aspect but it would be interesting and instructive to compare the traditional data and rites of these “savages” to the outrageous behaviour of the Europeans who tried to “civilize” them. In any case, we see that already the modern mentality was in place in Europe and ready to be exported.<sup>10</sup>

Guénon employed the term “savage” because it was in use in his time.<sup>11</sup> But we have to be careful. When he said that these “primitives” were “degenerates,” his concern was mainly to refute the erroneous modern mentality about evolution. The word “generate” came from Latin *genus*, meaning “birth, generation, race”; “degenerate” is derived from Latin *degenerare*, *de* – “down,” and *genus*. For Guénon, these people were not “degenerates” in a pejorative and modern sense of the word, but he was opposing the idea of “generation,” that is, of evolution; which does not mean he considered them modern or antiraditional. Also we have to accept that indeed the “traditional people” were more or less vestiges of lost civilizations, only so we can explain some of the Aztecs rites for example, since “in the case of degeneration [decline], evidently the superior part of the doctrine, that is, its metaphysical and «spiritual» part, will disappear

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societies of Incas and Aztecs, the French and the English ruined the “traditional people” of North America. Later the French tried to do the same thing to the Islamic tradition in North of Africa (see, among others, Titus Burkhardt, **Fez, City of Islam**, The Islamic Texts Society, 1992, and Michel Chodkiewicz, **The Spiritual Writings of Amir ‘Abd al-Kader**, State Univ. of New York Press, 1995), as the English invaded India, the abode of the Hindu tradition, which Guénon considered as a direct heir of the primordial Tradition.

<sup>9</sup> There are today many written proofs. We would like to mention Frank Waters, **Book of the Hopi**, Ballantine Books, 1963, and Black Elk, **The Sacred Pipe** (recorded and edited by Joseph Epes Brown), Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1989 (the latter was translated in French by Frithjof Schuon – who wrote also an *Introduction* – and published as Hehaka Sapa, **Les Rites Secrets des Indiens Sioux**, Payot, 1953).

<sup>10</sup> Regarding the epithet “savage,” which we used on purpose, there is another example of distorted mentality. Not long ago, modern man used to name all the people encountered during their “geographical discoveries” “primitives” or even “savages.” Recently, mainly for political reasons and due to a dubious sentimentalism, the epithet was changed to “native.” In fact, all three appellatives are wrong. These people were not “savages” but “traditional.” They are not “native,” in the same way the Europeans are not “native” with respect to Europe, since most probably they are heirs of lost civilizations that existed in different locations. And for sure, these populations are not “primitive.” The “primitive” epithet was very convenient since it reinforced the modern (and definitely wrong) idea of indefinite progress and evolution. Guénon wrote: “We don’t have to look elsewhere to find the reason why the «scientists» so relentlessly discredited any other [non-“materialistic”] conception, labeling it as «superstition» due to the «primitives’ imagination, who, for them, were nothing else than savages or people with an infantile mentality, as stated by the «evolutionists» theories” (Guénon, **Le règne**, p. 239). René Guénon touched on this subject more than once. He wrote: “The sociologists pretend to assimilate [the ancient mentality] to that of the savages, whom they call «primitives,» when on the contrary we regard them as degenerates. If the savages had been always in this inferior state that we witness, it would be impossible to explain the multitude of customs they possess (without comprehended them anymore), which cannot be but vestiges of lost civilizations, civilizations that were, in very ancient times (even prehistorically times), civilizations of the people to whom these savages belonged, being their descendants and last debris” (**Introduction**, p. 280; see also Guénon, **Le règne**, p. 242, and **Orient et Occident**, pp. 29-30).

<sup>11</sup> He said in 1940: “It was a succession of fashions for almost a century to compare the «primitive people» to children, and then to savages” (**Comptes rendus**, p. 40).

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more or less completely" (Guénon, **Le règne**, p. 242)<sup>12</sup>; as well, in North America, the multitude of "tribes" or "nations," which fought each other continuously, illustrated the division and scattering, a weakness used by the Europeans to annihilate them.<sup>13</sup>

However, we have to dissipate another misunderstanding. As for the American "traditional people" Europeans were the source of their destruction (even if at the beginning they accepted the "white man" in a mythical way), so was considered Europe by the European emigrants themselves. The future "Americans" were equipped with a "paradisiacal" dream and considered "the New World" as a regained paradise, in opposition with the old Europe, envisaged as the nest of all evil.<sup>14</sup> With regard to the European culture, John Cotton declared: "The more cultivated and intelligent you are, the more ready you are to work for Satan."<sup>15</sup> In fact, this anti-European attitude did not bring the European emigrants closer to the traditional mentality of the "native" people, on the contrary; for this reason Guénon called America "the Far-West" (which means "the Extreme-Occident" but not only geographically speaking).

Since we mentioned the Communist regime, we should say that there was not much difference between this and the Capitalist system, with regard to their antitraditional mentality. The separation of West and East, that is, Western capitalism and Eastern communism, was just a ridiculous copy of the real partition; actually, both systems were based on the same modern, profane and antitraditional rules. There are some who considered Russia a traditional country, since the Hesychasm imported from

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<sup>12</sup> These considerations were already published by Guénon in his article «**Animisme**» et «**Chamanisme**» (*Études Traditionnelles*, no. 210, 1937, p. 227). In the same issue, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy published «**Folklore**» et «**art populaire**» in which he, quoting and following Guénon's definition of "folklore," explained very neatly that "folklore" represents in fact traditional vestiges of lost civilizations containing esoteric doctrinal data. As in the case of "primitive" people, these vestiges degenerated from an ancient source; the fairy-tales and legends guarded sacred symbols and initiatory data, but they are not active anymore and cannot transmit an initiation or an efficient spiritual influence. Also, we have to make a distinction between René Guénon and his function and one of his closest collaborators, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, who focused on the symbolism of the "folklore" and the vestiges of the "primitive" people.

<sup>13</sup> Michel Michel wrote, commemorating Guénon: "Sharing the prejudices of his time, this historicism brings Guénon to underestimate the interest for the «savage» societies as present forms of authentic traditional societies; for their model, he looked too exclusively to the great empires of Orient" (*Sciences et Tradition*, in **René Guénon**, L'Herne, 1985, p. 58). We should not treat Guénon though as a scholar or erudite traditionalist, someone of Mircea Eliade's kind. Frithjof Schuon was very interested in the spirituality of the "traditional people" of North America and René Guénon was well informed about his interest (Schuon published a series of articles about "the Tradition of the American Indians" in *Études Traditionnelles*, year 1949), yet Guénon never considered the possibility of these "traditional people" to regenerating and straightening Western mentality, and he was right.

<sup>14</sup> About the paradisiacal utopia in relation to "the New World" see Mircea Eliade, **La nostalgie des origines**, Gallimard, 1978, pp. 169 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Yet the communists in Russia declared the same thing; Zinoviev said: "In every intellectual I see an enemy of the Soviet power" (see Evola, **Revolt**, p. 347). In a similar way, the Communist utopia promoted an ideal paradisiacal life, in fact a monkey-like replica of the genuine Paradise, launching slogans about "light" and "the highest acmes of welfare," changing hypotheses like the evolution theory, the linear progress and materialism into dogmas.

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the Byzantine Empire became its spiritual core.<sup>16</sup> Yet Russia is an antitraditional country, no doubt about it, and its indistinct religious sentimentalism has nothing to do with spirituality. We may note also that geographically Russia extended to the Orient, but remains in its mentality a domain of *Occidens*.<sup>17</sup>

It is not our task to give too many historical details, yet we still have to delve into another historical aspect. We said that the “Atlantean” influence was an important but not exclusive element that caused modern mentality in the end. Another factor was the Greco-Roman heritage. René Guénon wrote: “We are not looking to define right now the distinct characteristics of the European mentality; we just indicate that more than one influence participated to its formation: the one that played a preponderant role was incontestably the Greek influence, or, even better, the Greco-Roman influence” (*Introduction*, p. 11).<sup>18</sup>

Claudio Mutti analyzed in his article, **René Guénon et le «préjugé» classique**, what Guénon meant by “Greek influence,” concluding that we have to make a distinction between “classical” Greece (which was the origin of the modern mentality) and an “archaic” Greece (called by us “mythical”). As Mutti noticed, Guénon himself alluded to this distinction in some of his reviews: “We agree [with the author] when he protests against the practice of considering that the entire Greek civilization belongs only to the «classical» period; moreover, we think that the previous epochs, if they could be better known, would be of much more interest than this one, since there is a difference similar to the distinction between the Middle Ages and modern times” (*Comptes rendus*, p. 9); also: “... The «classical» period marks a degeneration or a deviation with regard to the previous epochs” (*Comptes rendus*, p. 39).

The “mythical” period belongs to the second half of the “Age of Bronze” (the first half of the last Great Year), following the disappearance of the Atlantean civilization; it could be assumed that at that time the Hyperborean expansion started toward the south, and also the migration of the Atlantean currents (which escaped the cataclysm) along a West-East axis.<sup>19</sup> It also could be assumed that, as the Word multiplied into many words, so the Hyperborean race split into more and more branches, like a tree; and it seems that

<sup>16</sup> Russian Orthodox Christianity was promoted mainly in France and the work **Récits d'un pèlerin russe** (Seuil, 1978) became famous, likewise Dostoevsky's **The Brothers Karamazov**.

<sup>17</sup> There was though in Russia an important Hesychastic current, which has been more or less suffocated by the Communist regime. It would be interesting to pursue how the “Atlantean” and Western influences found fertile soil in Russia, which became a butcher for so many people from the Near-West to the Far-East. It would be also interesting to understand why China, the abode of such a traditional mentality, accepted Communism (Matgioi, for example, considered that Communism brought China back to Daoist unity, but we may say that it was a way to escape the domination of the Western countries); however, today, the Far-East is in many modes part of *Occidens*.

<sup>18</sup> Guénon added: “The Greek influence is almost exclusively with respect to philosophy and science. The Roman influence is more social than intellectual, since ... the Romans, with respect to the intellectual side, borrowed almost everything from the Greeks. ... We have to note also the importance, especially from a religious point of view, of the Judaic influence” (*Introduction*, p. 11).

<sup>19</sup> Concerning the evolution of the human races, beside the decisive data transmitted by René Guénon, one could consult, with caution, Gaston Georgel, **Les Quatre Âges de l'Humanité** and Evola, **Revolt Against the Modern World** (the chapter *The Northern-Atlantic Cycle*, pp. 195 ff.)

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the pure sacerdotal branch arrived eventually in the present India, while the *kshatriya* and *vaishya* branches went to Europe. We stress that such a hypothesis cannot be viewed in a simplistic mode; when we affirm that *brahmana* went to the Orient, we suggest a more *principial* perspective, in the same way as the three regents of Agartha, Brahātmā, Mahātmā and Mahāṅga (Guénon, **Roi**, p. 31) are *principial* functions, each one comprising spiritual authority and temporal power; hence, we should not think of the actual caste system, but only analogically with it.

On the other hand, the “Atlantean” influence was mainly carried by currents moving to the West, Near-West and Near-East; and it brought not only the vestiges of its spirituality, but also those of revolt.<sup>20</sup> Greek mythology kept many traces of this influence, like for example in the myth of Atlas and his daughters the Pleiades.<sup>21</sup>

“Classical” Greece admitted receiving the influence of Egypt, Phoenicia, Chaldea, Persia and even India (Guénon, **Introduction**, p. 16).<sup>22</sup> Yet more than that, the myth regarding the Hyperborean Apollo and the Thracian influence with respect to Greek *Mysteries*, as well as the Trojan (Thracian) influence upon the Romans, should be added to the Oriental influences. There is no doubt that the “classical” Greco-Roman mentality was ready to assimilate intellectual data in a specific way, and, despite the *Mysteries*, the main tendency (due to the Greeks and Romans inborn nature) was toward rational thinking and experimental sciences (Guénon, **Introduction**, p. 23).

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<sup>20</sup> About the Atlantean influence see René Guénon, **Place de la tradition atlantéene dans le Manvantara**, in **Formes traditionnelles**, pp. 46 ff. Guénon specified that it is very difficult to determine how the junction between the Atlantean and Hyperborean currents was done; he considered that the Egyptians transmitted the Atlantean influence to the Judaic tradition, and that the Celts and Chaldeans are a result of this junction. We may add that, as the ancient Greeks themselves confessed, the Egyptians transmitted an Atlantean influence also to the Greeks.

<sup>21</sup> We may note that Maia, Hermes’ mother, was one of the Pleiades (that could be the reason why Hermetism was confined to the cosmologic level).

<sup>22</sup> The Phoenicians’ influence deserves attention. This people were called “the Canaanites” in the Gospels and we remember Jesus’ reticence in dealing with them. Also, Ham (symbolizing the counter-initiation) was, in the **Bible**, the father of Canaan, and Noah cursed it: “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will be to his brothers.” The name “phoenician” is considered to have been given by the Greeks, and alludes to “purple” (and maybe to the “red race”). They should be considered, beside and probably before the Greeks and the Romans, the model of the modern world. The Phoenicians were extremely skillful merchants, navigators, and masons (we should think of Solomon’s Temple) and the historians regard their cities as models of democracy. The Phoenician ships reached Europe and North Africa founding cities and spreading, at the same time as their merchandise, their subtle (Atlantean) influence. The Greeks and the Romans owe the alphabet to the Phoenicians. And the fact that the modern historians consider the Phoenicians as “the great pioneers of civilization” is not a good sign from our traditional point of view. We should also mention that, as the Phoenicians and the Greeks were famous founders of many colonies, so were the Atlantean people, long before them. In fact, the Atlantean expansion towards the West and East started before the disappearance of Atlantis, through their colonies; the Phoenicians and the Greeks followed this model closely.

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There are many other aspects, which should be elaborated in order to understand what made modern mentality what it is; yet, what we have said is enough to answer the questions we asked at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>23</sup>

*to be continued*

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<sup>23</sup> There is, though, an aspect which must be cited, even if just marginally. Modern society developed as a successor of Greco-Roman mentality, yet the most efficient successors were not the “Latin” nations, but the “German” ones. The descendants of the Germanic tribes (the Goths, the Alemanni, the Anglo-Saxons, the Suebi, the Lombardi, the Franks, the Burgundii, the Vandals) developed – as everybody can see – the most industrial and materialistic societies (see the Scandinavian countries, England, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, north of Italy, partially France, Austria and Switzerland, North America) composing what is erroneous called “the civilized world.” When we said that the Hyperborean migration split, we had in mind not a pure conventional or geographical secession, but mainly a *dharmaic* one; that is, the “classical” Greco-Romans were different from the Oriental people, not only because of their mentality, but because of their own nature (which is, in fact, the basis of their mentality; *swadharma* is indeed the true reason for the caste system). Therefore, the Germanic “nature” permitted such an impressive development of materialistic and experimental perspectives; and for the same reason it is absurd to try to export this “way of life” to people with a complete different “nature”; the only result which can be reached is an aberration, an abnormality.



Mircea A. Tamas

## ORIENS AND OCCIDENS (II)

However, before concluding, we should heed an element which was already mentioned: the counter-initiation. As we saw, René Guénon suggested that “the *counter-initiation* appears through a degeneracy... the degeneracy had to go back into the past; and, as obscure as its origin is, we may admit as credible that it is attached to some distortion of an ancient civilization that disappeared in a cataclysm of the present Manvantara”; and, in the same way as the Atlantean current and others spread, so the counter-initiatory elements invaded the world, trying to break the “cutting” of the sacred places, to take advantage of any fissure in the protective wall.

At any level, the greater danger did not come from a known enemy, but from the false friend, the inner adversary. In the case of spiritual realization, the worst enemies are not the outer but the inner ones; therefore, Muhammad, the Prophet, made a distinction between “the greater holy war” (*el-jihâdul-akbar*), an inner war, and “the lesser holy war,” the external one. In other words, counter-initiatory centers could have invisible “locations” in the very Orient, more dangerous because nobody noticed them. René Guénon wrote:

“Counter-initiation,” we must say, cannot be considered a purely human invention, which would be no different from “pseudo-initiation.” In fact, it is more than that, and to be so effectively, it must, in a specific mode, and with regard to its origin, derive from the unique source to which every initiation is attached, and, generally speaking, everything that manifests in our world a “non-human” element. (Guénon, *Le règne*, p. 351)

Guénon also specified in a letter that “counter-initiation always tries to establish its centers in those locations where the possibilities of an opposite order [that is, initiatory centers] exist, thus striving to combat the development of these possibilities.”<sup>1</sup> We have to accept, beside spiritual centers with beneficial influences, the existence of satanic centers that spread evil into our world; the latter are called “the Seven Towers of Satan.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Guénon added that “in the case of ancient spiritual centers,” counter-initiation would like to establish centers close to them, “to take advantage of what these places could still have as special [vestiges], which could help the transmission of psychical influences.”

<sup>2</sup> See *The Everlasting Sacred Kernel*, p. 36.

## Oriens and Occidens (part II)

The Devil couldn't restrain itself from imitating and profaning the number seven and the symbolism of the tower. In 1927, William B. Seabrook published a curious book<sup>1</sup> in which he described his journey among the Arabs and Muslims, and he has a special chapter about the "Towers of Shaitan" (p. 316). Seabrook made comments on a legend, widely known in the Middle-East, about the existence of the fabulous "Seven Towers" or "Power Houses" of the Devil (p. 289), a chain of towers stretching across Asia, from Northern Manchuria, through Tibet, west through Persia, and ending in Kurdistan. In each of these towers, a priest of Satan, by "broadcasting" occult vibrations, controls the evil in the world (p. 290). Seabrook confessed that he did not believe this legend for a moment, which seemed as mythical as the Chinese "subterranean kingdom" or the caves of Sinbad, yet arriving among the Yezidees, north of Baghdad, he saw one of the Towers (p. 316). René Guénon examined Seabrook's information in a note of *Études Traditionnelles*, confirming the existence of the "Seven Towers." He also, in some private letters, considered the towers to be in a direct relation with counter-initiation<sup>2</sup>; yet Guénon underlined as well that such towers, more or less important, can be found in the West too, and explained that the agents of counter-initiation use the Western pseudo-initiation. This last statement has to be understood not only as a corporeal link between these two, but also as a subtle and invisible channel, which means that we have to be careful when guessing where these "counter-initiation" centers are located.

**Bhagavata Purana**'s text we quoted at the beginning of this study, "When reign deceit, falseness, inertia, sleep, wickedness, consternation, dismay, confusion, fright, sadness, that is called Kali-yuga, which is the dark age," considered the world as a whole and not only the Occident. What scenario can we envisage? The evident one is the invasion of Western modernism, which occurs right now. As a friend was telling us, "the West is now in the East with us"; sentimental teachings, modern scientist views, blind devotion, sectarian patriotism and religious violence and extremism, in the detriment of the Intellectual Tradition are the characteristics of the modern Orient. Yet, we should not be surprised. *Kali-yuga* means a dark age also for the Orient and not only because of the West, but because of its own decadence.<sup>3</sup> And there is no doubt that one day this humanity has to go, not only a part of it, but all.

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<sup>1</sup> William B. Seabrook, *Adventures in Arabia*, Paragon House, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Guénon stated, for example, that Agha Khan and his group were a "cover" for one of the "Seven Towers of the Devil." He suggested too that there could be a connection between the localization of these "towers" and the oil sources.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the destructive role of the West with respect to Eastern Tradition, it is curious that the Christian traditional society, which started its agony at the same time as the trial of the Templars, was subjected to the invasion of the Mongols from the East, that had, no doubt about it, a destructive role (similar to the function of the "Barbarian" invasions that prepared the birth of Christianity as a traditional society). This destructive role of the Mongols – Guénon admitted in a letter – could be a manifestation of Rigor (the hand of divine Justice), which raises the question that maybe the Christian society itself was degenerating as a traditional society and thus subtly causing a reaction manifested by these invasions. We always have to keep in mind this fundamental law called by Matgioi, following the Far-Eastern tradition, the law of "concordant actions and reactions." (Matgioi, *La Voie Rationnelle*, Éd. Trad., 1984); which means that we cannot accept the reaction without looking also for the action. For this reason, even if the tendency of "westernizing" the East is obvious, it could not occur if the Eastern mentality (a part, at least) had not become open and attracted to the modern influences, as a consequence of the *Kali-yuga*.

## Oriens and Occidens (part II)

When Guénon wrote about the Anti-Christ, he stressed that this one is an impostor whose reign is “the great parody” imitating and mocking everything indeed traditional and spiritual (Guénon, *Le règne*, p. 362). René Guénon also affirmed that the counter-initiation is able to penetrate the traditional organizations, but only those, which both in the West and the East are decayed, or in the course of decaying.<sup>1</sup>

Today we witness the decadence of the whole world; but we have to understand one important thing: when we say that now the West is also in the East, considering the world as an immense *Occidens*, we do not imply that *Oriens* is no more. As Guénon explained, our world will never become purely “quantitative” or “inert,” since pure quantity and inertia belong to *materia prima*, which is the support of manifestation, but not the manifestation itself. Without a trace of “quality” the world could not exist. Similarly, the world cannot exist only as a profane world; in fact, that is why Guénon was saying that there is no profane domain, only a profane perspective. The world has reality only because of its sacred kernel, which is *Oriens*. More or less hidden, this *Oriens* is today the immutable keeper of Tradition, gathering at the same time the elements which will become the germs of the future cycle.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, if there still are genuine initiatory ways, they can be found only inside the Oriental traditions (within very closed organizations which counter-initiation could not penetrate), while Occident can offer, in the best of cases, just a sort of virtual initiation through some very limited initiatory organizations; we should not consider here the Hesychastic way as an Occidental spiritual possibility, but as an Oriental one (since its core is part of *Oriens* and the modern influence cannot touch it).

Let us quote again, *in extenso* this time, what Guénon wrote:

Regarding the Orient, we agree that the ravages of modernism extended considerably, at least externally; the regions which resisted longer against modernism seem now to be changing in an accelerated mode, and India itself is a striking example.<sup>3</sup> However, nothing has yet reached the heart of Tradition [*Oriens*], which is the only important thing in our view; it is enough that the traditional point of view, with all that it implies, is completely preserved in the Orient in an inaccessible retreat [the same *Oriens*], far from the modern world’s agitation. Also, we must not forget that everything modern, even in the Orient, is nothing else but the mark of the Occidental mentality’s trespassing [*Occidens*]; the veritable Orient [that is, *Oriens*], the only one that deserves this name, is and will be forever the traditional Orient, even when their exponents are reduced to a minority. It is this Orient we have in mind, in the same way as when we talk about the Occident, we have in view the

<sup>1</sup> Only when a traditional organization has “fissures” in its protective “wall” or “cutting,” can the adversary penetrate. The same thing is valid for an entire traditional society.

<sup>2</sup> We have to understand that even if the whole present cycle has to die, the new cycle will be based on the old one’s sacred kernel. The synthesis of spirituality will be saved by our humanity (that is, a chosen part) and this will become the kernel of the new cycle, in accordance to the continuity of the universal helix.

<sup>3</sup> We may note, in comparison to Islamic extremism (a sign of the modern times), that in India there developed weird nationalism (we know scholars who are convinced that everything in the world, religions, social customs, etc., have an “Indian” origin, a very modern view indeed, similar, for example, to the Western idea of a French “center of the world,” which materialized in the days of Mitterrand).

## Oriens and Occidens (part II)

Occidental mentality, that is, the modern and antitraditional mentality; it can be found everywhere, since we envisage first of all the opposition of these two points of view and not simply the two geographical terms. (**Orient et Occident**, p. 229-230)<sup>1</sup>

Julius Evola, in his article **René Guénon, Orient and Occident** (1954), tried, like many others, to argue that what Guénon was saying about a “traditional civilization” still existing in Orient is not valid anymore<sup>2</sup>. Evola affirmed:

If we are turning to Orient, [Guénon’s] considerations have to be updated; many things have changed since the first edition of his book [**La Crise du Monde Moderne**]. It becomes more evident every day that Orient itself, considered the exponent of the traditional civilization, is on the verge of a crisis. China is not a part [of this civilization] anymore. In India, the nationalistic and modernist tendencies become stronger. The Arabic countries and even Tibet are in disarray. Therefore, a large part of Guénon’s Orient seems to become a thing of the past, and those elements of Orient where the traditional spirit survived due to an uninterrupted continuity, and which could perform the function we discussed [that of saving the Occident], can be found only in some small closed groups.

As Guénon himself said (see the last quotation), the modern mentality invaded the East too, and continues to do so. This invasion took (and takes) control over “the many” that are open to accept such influences and over the extremists that think they are rejecting them; but the traditional *oriental* core with its initiatory ways remains untouched and that is all that counts, since not quantity but quality is the nature of the sacred kernel. Evola was a Westerner by his nature; therefore he praised the royal initiation more than the sacerdotal one, action more than contemplation, and was fond of Buddhism. And his *swadharma* did not let him correct the errors. For the same reason he tried to revise Guénon’s perspective about Orient and Occident, and (in the same article we mentioned) he invented a curious picture of the present Manvantara. Evola affirmed that it is possible to see the Occident solving its crisis and passing to a new cycle (and to a “Golden Age”), while the Orient will fall in its own “Iron Age,” reaching the position in which the Occident is today. First of all, we see here again a “magical” (a word abused by Evola) perspective: a *Deus ex machina* will save the Occident... which is impossible; the Occident does not have the necessary tools and means to recover by itself. Second, the laws of the cosmic cycles are not negotiable and, we like it or not, these laws will follow their course. Third, the present crisis is a general one comprising the entire world, but even if the Orient is engulfed by it, there still is the *oriental* sacred kernel with its more or less outwardly traditional envelopes.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Guénon added these lines as an *Addendum* to the new edition of his book.

<sup>2</sup> Julius Evola, **Orient et Occident**, Archè, 1982, pp. 40 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Seven years later, in 1961, Evola used almost the same words in the first chapter of his book **Cavalcare la tigre** (“Riding the tiger”), stressing again that the East becomes more and more “modern”; a traditional mentality in the East subsisted – Evola suggested – not because there is no decline there, but because the process is not so advanced as in the West (Julius Evola, **Chevaucher le tigre**, Guy Trédaniel, 1996, p. 21). And again Evola fantasized that the West will surpass by itself the crisis and will become a guide and a

## Oriens and Occidens (part II)

In 1955, Martin Lings, in his “translator’s note” (the second edition of Guénon’s **East and West**<sup>1</sup>) wrote:

Judging by outward appearances, one might say that by a sudden headlong collapse the East has reached that state of mental chaos, which was only reached in Europe after the degeneration of several centuries. Western influence shows itself in various ways: a large part of the ruling classes in the East appear to accept wholeheartedly the antitraditional outlook and to be obsessed with the idea of making themselves as Western as possible. For such people traditional belief is merely a sign of ignorance; and having rejected such belief, while still retaining the instinct for strong attachments, which they have no doubt inherited from generations of ancestors who followed faithfully the ways of their tradition, they attach themselves to modern ideas and habits with a fervour which often exceeds that of the Westerners themselves.

Yet Lings concluded, quoting the same text of Guénon we presented above:

As the author [Guénon] says in his post script, “it is enough that the traditional outlook, with all that it implies, should be wholly preserved in some Eastern retreats which are inaccessible to the outward agitations of our age.” Such retreats would inevitably be Eastern today, even if they happened to be situated in the West since the tradition in question would be one of the Eastern ones rather than the no longer complete Western one; but these particulars would matter little to anyone who sincerely desired the truth, since such an individual would necessarily be above sentimental attachment to the forms of any one tradition.

More recently, in 1987, Elie Lemoine, reviewing Charles-André Gilis’ book, **Introduction à l’enseignement et au mystère de René Guénon**, expressed the opinion

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leader, while the East will decay completely, replacing the present West. Titus Burckhardt wrote a review about **Cavalcare la tigre**, pointing out some of Evola’s errors. He stated at the end: “Considering all the prophecies, the sacred deposit of the integral Tradition will subsist to the end of the cycle; this means that it will be always somewhere an open door. For the people capable to surpass the exterior surface and driven by a sincere will, neither the decadence of the surrounding world, nor their belonging to a specific nation or milieu, constitute absolute obstacles” (Titus Burckhardt, “**Chevaucher le tigre**”, *Études Traditionnelles*, no. 372-373, 1962, p. 187).

Regarding this theme, we should mention here the Romanian logician Anton Dumitriu, who was in contact with René Guénon through Michel Văsăan and Vasile Lovinescu. In 1943, Dumitriu wrote a book called **Orient and Occident**, visibly influenced by Guénon. In 1987, he revised it and his attitude with respect to Tradition became a strongly profane one. He considered that Guénon was carried away by enthusiasm [!] and distorted the ratio Orient-Occident; that even the Hindu contemporaries (like Vivekananda [!]) have not been so tough on Occident. Even if Dumitriu used in his book many of Guénon’s ideas [without quoting him!], his conclusion is that the Occident has its own tradition, which is the “scientific spirit” and the [profane] science, and this “traditional spirit” will organize the world. Obviously, for this individual (who seemed so promising at the beginning), the influence of Hesychasm and of René Guénon’s work did not operate the necessary change; and we also know what happened to Matgiroi, which makes us understand why Guénon was so tough with regard to initiation and spiritual realization.

<sup>1</sup> Sophia Perennis, Perennial Wisdom Series.

## Oriens and Occidens (part II)

that today we cannot talk anymore about an “immutable Orient” (as Gilis does), since this “immutable Orient” has disappeared and the entire world is facing decadence<sup>1</sup>. And he ended the article pointing out the case of Islam: this part of the Orient decayed very fast so that “there are not too many real initiates left in the exterior world.” Let us say it again: the “immutable Orient” (an equivalent of *Oriens*) cannot disappear. It is known that Satan’s greatest ruse is to make the world think that it doesn’t exist. Yet another ruse is also very efficiently used: the one which makes the people believe that there is no more Tradition, sacred and initiation in this world. In fact, if the world still has a degree of reality that is because the divine presence is among us. A profane domain does not have reality; there is only a profane viewpoint. And even if this world will decay completely and disappear, the sacred kernel, this “immutable Orient,” will live forever<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Lemoine’s article was reprinted in Elie Lemoine, **Theologia sine metaphysica nihil**, Éd. Traditionnelles, 1991, see p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the dispute Lemoine-Gilis, we must say that Lemoine, a Catholic, “had to” criticize Gilis because he could not accept his Islamic perspective that challenged the Catholic position. Charles-André Gilis responded to these critics in the new edition of his **Introduction à l’enseignement et au mystère de René Guénon** (Édition Traditionnelles, 2001, pp. 137 ff.), quoting Guénon’s text from **Orient et Occident** that we presented above. He also used Michel Valsan’s words: “Moreover, the alteration caused by the modern mentality is a lot less deep than the Westerners believe, even the ones with a traditional mentality, who let themselves be too easily impressed by the superficial degradations of the social style. In North Africa itself, where the Western presence has been long and direct, and where the traditional degeneration should therefore be the most accentuated, we know, from our own experience – and this not only in the world, naturally restricted, of the contemplative order – of a humanity which continues its millennial life of spiritual fidelity” (Michel Valsan, **L’œuvre de Guénon en Orient**, Études Traditionnelles, no. 411, 1969, p. 33, article translated in English in *Oriens*, September 2004). However, today, the danger of a “fire without light” is acknowledged and has to be taken seriously: “In the absence of traditional civilization like the modern contemporary world, in the West and now also in the East, religion, at the collective and the individual level, is assimilated and propagated in a profane and fragmented manner such that the element of light is withheld and what reaches the recipient is only heat, mere sentimental warmth. … It is also not difficult to observe the superficiality and lack of doctrinal and metaphysical perspective that generally marks the popular and as such vulgar religious discourse. All too often, while presenting the intellectual and esoteric aspects contained in various religious forms into contemporary idiom, their profound depth is flattened out, their rigour diluted and their potential for liberation of human soul killed” (see Mansoor Ahmad, **A Fire without Light**, *Oriens*, September 2004).

## SYMBOLISM

by Mircea A. Tamas

SOMETIMES ago, on a beautiful, fresh morning, I was riding my bicycle in a park, close to my home. I was thinking of everything and nothing. Suddenly, like a bolt, a picture came into my mind and made me freeze; I realized, at that very moment, the secret meaning of my harmless physical exercise: a modern paraphrase of the traditional symbol of the Chariot of Light.<sup>1</sup> The bicycle, a modern, profane vehicle, was revealing a new, deep significance, a sacred one: the front wheel became the symbol of Heaven, the rear wheel the symbol of Earth, and the crossbar was the *Axis Mundi* itself. Riding the bicycle changed into a spiritual journey, along the axis of the universe. A very challenging query was coming to life from the intelligence of my heart: is it possible to still have a sacred kernel hidden in our Western modern existence?

The main difference between our modern civilization and the traditional ones is that now we play at being gods, imposing our individual desires, ideas and originality, unaware that, in fact, we are puppets and God, the supreme Principle, is the Master Puppeteer. The modern world has cut its ties with the Principle; on the contrary, God was close to the members of traditional civilizations, and they knew that individuality was nothing compared to the One-and-only, they were just puppets on a string. In a traditional society, their whole life was a reflection of God. The myths were real, the beliefs were certitudes, and the rites were not superstitions, but spiritual instruments. In a traditional society, every gesture, every activity was a sacred one, imitating what the gods did *in illo tempore*, at the beginning of the world.<sup>2</sup> Eating, working, hunting, dancing, singing, playing, each one represented a sacred rite, an organized activity (Sanskrit *rita* = “order”), following a divine model and having a spiritual meaning. A traditional person knew that mankind, at the moment of birth, was blessed with a holy lore, the Tradition descended from Heaven. For the modern person this descent is just another legend.

Our modern society is terribly “human” and *ipso facto* profane; most of the traditional *karma* (Sanskrit *karma* = “ritual activity”) becomes show business and entertainment, while the supernal kernel is forgotten.<sup>3</sup> Is it possible then, without error, to transmute symbolical, sacred significance (“showing through signs”) to our present world, to charge a bicycle with mythical signs? The answer is definitely affirmative for a very profound reason: the sacred hidden marrow of the World is the projection of the supreme Principle, One without a second, who wants to play and creates the universal Existence as a sport in his image.<sup>4</sup> The spiritual, sacred sparks, coming from the everlasting divine Fire (Hindu Agni as *Ātmā*, kabbalistic *Ein-Sof* as dark flame) to support and give life into the Cosmos, will always be there. It only seems that they are missing because human mentality has changed and turned away from the traditional knowledge of the celestial

<sup>1</sup> See René Guénon, *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée*, Gallimard, 1980, p. 267, and Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Traditional Art and Symbolism*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1977, p. 380.

<sup>2</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour*, Gallimard, 1979, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Physical activity, so appreciated nowadays, has also a sacred origin. See Ghazi bin Muhammed, *The Sacred Origin of Sports and Culture*, Fons Vitae, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> “Brahma's creative activity is not undertaken by way of any need on his part, but simply by way of sport, in the common sense of the word” (Brahma Sūtras II.1.32-3). See Coomaraswamy, *Selected Papers: Metaphysics*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1977, p. 150.

principles.<sup>5</sup> It doesn't matter if the modern and profane people label the sacred heritage of the traditional societies as superstitions, myths or legends. The spiritual kernel, inviolable and unchangeable, is alive. We just have to see it with the Eye of the Heart.

There is yet another question to be answered: is it possible for any kind of object (such as a bicycle) to be considered an expression of the divine archetypes or is it only the human imagination that plays tricks on us? To answer, we introduce the "metaphysics of *ekapâda*." *Ekapâda* means "one-footed" in Sanskrit and represents the *Axis Mundi* as celestial Ray (or as the "seventh Ray") of the spiritual Sun. Before manifesting itself, the supreme Principle (Hindu *Brahma nirguna*, Brahma without qualifications and attributes) is a Dragon without eyes or feet, a "black hole," a turtle retreated inside its shell, the peacock with its tail folded. Producing the universal manifestation (the whole Existence), the Principle opens its eyes and forms one foot, the axis of the universe, with this foot jumps (like Vishnu) three steps, manifesting the "Three Worlds" (corporeal, subtle and angelic). The *Axis Mundi* – the solar Ray, the unique foot – producing the Existence, multiplies itself into "one thousand feet" (Sanskrit *sahashrapâda*),<sup>6</sup> i. e., a multiplicity of solar rays, reflecting the unique Ray. *Ekapâda*, like Brahma, is neutral. *Ekapâda* is father and mother, and son and daughter, and friend and fiend, and dragon and hero, and brother and sister, and husband and wife, and alive and dead, and one and multiple. That is why the "feet," the things existing in the Cosmos, are explanations of *ekapâda* and symbolic assistants in the quest for the supreme Truth. A tree, a bicycle, a house or a vase, are all projections of the only foot and, therefore, represent operative aids during a spiritual task.

Between *ekapâda* and *sahashrapâda* there is a "broker," archetype of the multiplicity, the "two-footed" (*dwapâda*), by definition the World being the domain of duality (in the Cosmos, all the couples coexist: good-bad, warm-cold, etc.). The primordial duality represents the two fundamental principles called Heaven and Earth and is symbolized by the two wheels of the bicycle, principles that are actually One without a second, and two only from a mundane point of view. But the "two feet" could express, from a spiritual point of view, the immortal and the mortal "soul," the sacred kernel and the profane skin. Therefore, in some initiatory rituals the neophyte has one foot uncovered (the axis of the universe, the naked truth) and the other one covered (the world). Titian's famous painting, "Sacred (the nude woman) and profane (the dressed woman) love," perfectly illustrates this meaning.

We see the beauty of the science of symbols: it gives us "a thousand feet," better, "a thousand eyes," a multitude of points of view, all valid, like the indefinite number of solar rays; for that reason, the Hindu doctrines are called *darsanas* – "points of view." *Kabbalah*, the Hebraic tradition, selects three as fundamental meanings of any symbolism: the Cosmos, the Year and the Man (Sepher Yetzirah III.2), and they can be traced in any orthodox doctrine of any traditional society. Moreover, any rite has as kernel this triple significance and it is a good exercise to come back to the bicycle symbolism. First, from a cosmological point of view, the bicycle is the entire Cosmos or universal manifestation, the two poles, Heaven and Earth, and the axis representing the principles sustaining and developing the World; as well, the wheel itself is an image of the Cosmos, the hub being the Principle, and the rim the World, created and supported by

<sup>5</sup> We understand "tradition" and "traditional" defined as "what was transmitted" from the beginning of the World, as an unbroken golden chain anchored to the supreme Principle.

<sup>6</sup> Coom, Metaphysics, p. 391. See also Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, La doctrine du sacrifice, Dervy-Livres, 1978, p. 47.

transfer from One (the center) to many (the spokes). Secondly, the rotation of the wheels simulates the movement of the Cosmos, the whirled development of the worlds starting from the immutable Principle. This rotation is also an emblem of the Year or Time, because the production of the Universe obeys the law of cosmic cycles (that is why after night comes day, and again night, the whole Existence being governed by cycles). Thirdly, the bicycle is Man's vehicle, the rider being the immortal "soul" of any human being. Riding the bicycle means a divine initiation, a spiritual voyage from Earth to Heaven, redemption, and liberation (Sanskrit *moksha*).<sup>7</sup>

Another important fact is that a symbol is universal, and so is not affected by particularities such as geographical location, nationality, religion or culture. For example, meditating in front of a Christmas tree or in front of a standing Ganesha statue makes no difference. The Christmas tree is in Christian tradition a symbol of the *Axis Mundi*. All the ornaments, which are hanging from the boughs, represent the multicolored elements of the Cosmos, comparable with the colors radiated by the secret flame of *Ein-Sof* (Zohar I.15a). The standing Ganesha is usually "one-footed," this foot being the axis of the universe, the unique Ray. His four arms, the trunk and the other foot (lifted) are the manifestation rays, the innumerable spokes that produce the Universe; they are the boughs of the Christmas tree. The main difficulty is not selecting the symbol, but rather our qualification to recognize it. The less profane our mentality is, the deeper our comprehension of the absolute Truth gets. Thus, by choosing a bicycle to sustain our spiritual efforts the effect is not going to be less efficient.

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<sup>7</sup> We must define the meaning of the word "initiation," which was used in many ways. Initiation, etymologically speaking, is a "beginning" and an entrance into a new domain. The profane scholars used the term for all kinds of fields. We have to stress, though, that initiation is primarily about spiritual achievement and not about social rites. For a traditional society, initiation represented a series of sacred rites leading to a spiritual realization. The neophyte, the Man, can be male or female; here Man should be understood as Sanskrit *mānava* "a mental being," image of Hindu *Manu*, the "Lord of the World."

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