To Have a Center
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Foreword

Quite paradoxically, it is sometimes more difficult to find a title than to write a book; one always knows what one wishes to say, but one does not always know what to call it. It is true that the difficulty does not result from the nature of things, for one could follow the example of Rumi and entitle a work *A Book Which Contains What It Contains* (Kitāb fīhi mā fīhi); but we live in a world which is little inclined to accept such a defiance of usage and which obliges us to remain within a relative intelligibility. Thus we will choose the title of the first chapter: "To Have a Center," which introduces in its way the subsequent chapters, treating of anthropology at all its levels and also, further on, of metaphysics and spiritual life.

There is the order of principles, which is immutable, and the order of information — traditional or otherwise — of which one can say that it is inexhaustible: on the one hand, not everything in this book will be new for our usual readers and, on the other hand, they will nonetheless find here precisions and illustrations which may have their usefulness. One never has too many keys in view of the "one thing needful," even if these points of reference be indirect and modest.

We acknowledge that this volume contains subjects which are very unequal: one will find a chapter on the art of translating, another on vestimentary art and another still on a question of astronomy. But in spirituality everything is related: one always has the right to project the light of principles onto subjects of lesser importance, and it is a matter of course that one often is obliged to do so. As the Duke of Orleans said: "All that is national is ours"; which we paraphrase in recalling that all that is normally human, hence virtually spiritual, enters ipso facto into our perspective; and "it takes all kinds to make a world."

After what we have just said, the question may be asked whether the *sophia perennis* is a "humanism"; the answer would in principle be "yes," but in fact it must be "no" since humanism in the conventional sense of the term de facto exalts fallen man and not man as such. The humanism of the
moderns is practically a utilitarianism aimed at fragmentary man; it is the will to make oneself as useful as possible to a humanity as useless as possible. As to integral anthropology, we intend, precisely, to give an account of it in the present book.
To Have a Center

To be normal is to be homogeneous, and to be homogeneous is to have a center. A normal man is one whose tendencies are, if not altogether univocal, at least concordant; that is, sufficiently concordant to serve as a vehicle for that decisive center which we may call the sense of the Absolute or the love of God. The tendency towards the Absolute, for which we are made, is difficult to realize in a heteroclite soul; a soul lacking a center, precisely, and by that fact contrary to its reason for being. Such a soul is a priori a "house divided against itself," thus destined to fall, eschatologically speaking.

The anthropology of India — which is spiritual as well as social — distinguishes on the one hand between homogeneous men whose centers are situated at three different levels,¹ and on the other hand between all homogeneous men and those who, lacking a center, are not homogeneous;² it attributes this lack either to a decay or to a "mixture of castes" — above all of those castes that are furthest removed from each other. But it is of the natural castes, not the social ones, that we propose to speak here: the former do not always coincide with the latter, for the institutional caste contains exceptions, to the extent that it becomes numerically very large and thereby includes all human possibilities. Thus, without wanting to concern ourselves with the castes of India, we shall describe as succinctly as possible the fundamental tendencies of which they are intended to be the vehicle, and which are found wherever there are men, with particular predominances according to the nature of the group.

There is first of all the intellective, speculative, contemplative, sacerdotal type, which tends towards wisdom or holiness; holiness referring more particularly to contemplation, and wisdom to discernment. Next there is the warlike and royal type, which tends towards glory and heroism; even in spirituality — since holiness is for everyone — this type will readily be active, combative and heroic, hence the ideal of the "heroicalness of virtue." The third type is the respectable "average" man:

¹ The brāhmana, the kshatriya, the vaishya.
² The shūdra, the chāndala or panchama.
he is essentially industrious, balanced, persevering; his center is love for work that is useful and well done, and carried out with God in mind; he aspires neither to transcendence nor to glory — although he desires to be both pious and respectable — but like the sacerdotal type, he loves peace and is not interested in adventures; a tendency which predisposes him to a contemplativeness conformable with his occupations;³ Lastly there is the type that has no ideal other than that of pleasure in the more or less coarse sense of the word; this is concupiscent man who, not knowing how to master himself, has to be mastered by others, so that his great virtue will be submission and fidelity.

No doubt, the man who finds his center only outside himself — in pleasures, without which he feels like a void — is not really "normal"; but he is nonetheless salvageable through his submission to someone better than he, and who will serve as his center. This is exactly what happens — but on a higher plane which may concern any man — in the relation between disciple and spiritual master.

But there is still another human type, namely the man who lacks a center, not because he is deprived of it through concupiscence, but because he has two or even three centers at once: this is the type known as the pariah⁴ arising from a "mixture of castes," and who bears in himself the double or triple heredity of divergent types; that of the sacerdotal type, for example, combined with the materialistic and hedonistic type of which we have just spoken. This type, who lacks an axis, is capable "of everything and nothing"; he is a mimic and a born actor, always looking for a substitute for the center, hence for a psychic homogeneity which necessarily eludes him. The pariah has neither center nor continuity; he is a nothingness eager for sensations; his life is a disconnected series of arbitrary experinces. The danger this type represents for society is evident since one never knows what kind of person one is dealing with; no one is willing to trust a leader who is at bottom a mountebank and who by his nature is predisposed to crime. This explains the ostracism of the Hindu

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³ From the standpoint of "caste" this third type is particularly complex and unequal: it contains in fact peasants, artisans and merchants. Thus, apart from all social classifications, it includes tendencies which may be quite unequal.

⁴ A loan word in the European languages, derived from the Tamil paraiyan, "drummer."
system with regard to those who, having arisen from mixtures that are too heterogeneous, are "outcastes." We say that this explains the ostracism, and not that this excuses the abuses, or that the evaluation of individuals is always just; which indeed is impossible, in practice.5

Generally speaking, a man's psychological type is a matter, not of the exclusive presence of a given tendency, but of its predominance; and in this sense — or with this reservation — we may say that the first of the types enumerated is "spiritual"; the second, "noble"; the third, "upright"; the fourth, "concupiscent"; and the fifth, "vain" and "transgressing." Spirituality, nobility, uprightness: these are the fundamental tendencies of men who, according to the Hindu doctrine, are qualified for initiation or "twice born." Concupiscence and vanity: these are the tendencies of those who a priori are not concretely qualified for a spiritual path but who, being men, nevertheless have no choice; which amounts to saying that every man can save himself in principle. As Ghazali has said, one has to drive some men into Paradise with whips. Thus there is hope for the man who has no center, whatever the cause of his privation or infirmity may be; for there is a supra-human Center that is always available to us, and whose trace we bear within ourselves, given that we are made in the image of the Creator. That is why Christ could say that what is impossible for man is possible for God. However decentralized man may be, as soon as he sincerely turns to Heaven his relationship with God confers on him a center; we are always at the center of the world when we address the Eternal. That is the point of view of the three monotheistic religions of Semitic origin, and also that of human distress and of Divine Mercy.6

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It is of primary importance not to confuse the absence of a center —

5 The Hindu system sacrifices the exceptional cases in the interest of the collectivity, for the sake of maintaining both quality and durability.
6 A point of view which is likewise found in Buddhism and in certain sectors of Hinduism, and necessarily so since human misery is one, just as man is one.
which is abnormal — in the hylic* and somatic type, with the same absence — but normal in this case and situated on an altogether different plane — in the feminine sex. For it is only too evident that although as a sexual being woman seeks her center in man, she is nonetheless in full possession of her center in precisely the respect in which hylics or pariahs do not possess it. In other words: if woman as such aspires to a center situated outside herself, namely, in the complementary sex — just as the latter in the same respect seeks his vital space in his sexual complement — she nonetheless enjoys an integral personality as a human being, on condition that she be humanly in conformity with the norm, which implies the capacity to think objectively, above all in cases where virtue requires it. Too often it is thought that woman is capable of objectivity and thus of disinterested logic only at the expense of her femininity, which is radically false; woman has to realize, not specifically masculine traits of course, but the normatively and primordially human qualities, which are obligatory for every human being; and this is independent of feminine psychology as such.

Another point to be considered is the personal center in connection with certain racial factors. If the mixture between races too different from each other is to be avoided, it is precisely because this disparity generally has as a consequence that the individual possesses two centers, which means practically speaking that he has none; in other words, that he has no identity. But there are cases where, on the contrary, the mixture gives rise to a harmonious result, namely when each parent represents a sort of racial supersaturation, such that the racial type is limitative rather than positive;

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* Translator's Note: The author uses the term "hylic," from the triad "hylic," "psychic," "pneumatic," or "materialistic," "passional," "spiritual," (see chapter 2, p. 13).

7 The feminists themselves — of both sexes — are convinced of this, at least implicitly and in practice, otherwise they would not aspire to the virilization of woman.

8 Legitimate feminine psychology results from the principal prototype of woman — from the universal Substance — as well as from the biological, moral and social functions which she personifies; and this implies the right to limitations, to weaknesses, if one wishes, but not to faults. The human being is one thing, and the male is another; and it is a great pity that the two things have often been confused even in languages which — like Greek, Latin and German — make this distinction; a confusion which is due to the fact that the male is more central than the female, thus also more integral, but this reason has only a relative import, because man (homo, not vir) is one.
in this case, the combination with the foreign race appears as a liberation and re-establishes equilibrium; but this solution is as exceptional as are its conditions. Besides, every soul contains two poles, but normally they are complementary and not divergent.

* *

The practical interest of all these considerations lies in the fact that we live in a world which on the one hand tends to deprive men of their center, and on the other hand offers them — in place of the saint and the hero — the cult of the "genius." Now a genius is all too often a man without a center, in whom this lack is replaced by a creative hypertrophy. To be sure, there is a genius proper to normal, hence balanced and virtuous, man; but the world of "culture" and of "art for art's sake" accepts with the same enthusiasm normal and abnormal men, the latter being particularly numerous — to the extent that men of genius can be — in that world of dreams or nightmares that was the 19th century. That geniuses of this kind have often been unfortunate and desperate persons who have ended in disaster, does not deprive them of any prestige in public opinion; quite the contrary, people find them all the more interesting and "authentic," and let themselves be attracted by the seduction, indeed the fascination, which emanates from their siren songs and tragic destinies.

Let us take the example of a man who has two heredities and thus two equivalent centers, one intellectual and idealistic and another materialistic and self-indulgent: as an intellectual, this man will forge a philosophy, but it will be determined by his materialism and his love of pleasure; as a materialist, he will enjoy life as a *bon vivant*, but his pleasures will be intellectualized, thus he will enjoy life as an epicurean and an aesthete. And he will be an elusive and inconsequential man, dominated by the pleasure of the moment which he will always justify by his hedonistic philosophy; and this is one of the most dangerous possibilities there is.
Consequently it is not astonishing that a man who is at once a man of genius and lacking a true center should easily be a psychopath — and this precisely on account of his unbridled subjectivism — whether he be a schizoid artist, a paranoiac politician or some other caricature of grandeur. It is all very well to admire the qualities of a brilliant work; its creator may have, alongside his genius, a perfectly odious character; thus the values that are manifested in his creations, or in some of them, pertain only to a single compartment of his split and heteroclite psychism, and not to a homogeneous personality.

As for profane genius as such, aside from the question of knowing whether it is normal or morbid, good or bad, it is important to know that it can be the medium of a cosmic quality, of an archetype of beauty or grandeur, ad in that case it would be unjust to reject its production. Likewise it would be unjust to despise it for the simple reason that it does not pertain to traditional art, just as, inversely, it would be sheer prejudice to admire a work for the sole reason that it is traditional or sacred, since it could be badly executed and manifest unintelligence as well as incapacity. In short, cosmic values, or aesthetic and moral qualities, can manifest themselves incidentally in any human climate, to the extent that it does not set up an obstacle to them.9

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One has to insist, therefore, on this point: what is blameworthy in the exteriorized and worldly genius is not necessarily his production, but the fact that he places his center outside himself, in a work which in a certain manner deprives him of his real core or puts itself in place of it. Such is not the case for genius not determined by humanism: in Dante, for

9 It should be noted that, apart from the superior modes of talent or of genius — modes to which the great musicians and actors belong — there are also cerebral prodigies such as calculators and chess players, or prodigies of imagination and vitality such as the great adventurers; we mention them here on account of their phenomenal character, even though, since they do not produce works, they remain outside our subject.
example, or in Virgil, their work was the providential manifestation of an immensely rich and profound center; of a "genius," precisely, in the ideal, normative and legitimate sense of the term. The criterion of such genius is that the author is as interested in his salvation as in his work, and that the latter bears the trace of the former. No doubt — speaking of literature — this criterion could not appear in each poem nor in each tale, but it applies to every work that demands a lengthy reading and has to compensate for this intrusion by a fragrance that is spiritual and interiorizing. Every writer or artist ought to communicate — in addition to his literal message — elements of truth, of nobility, and of virtue, if not of eschatological ideas; the most stupid and perverse prejudice being "art for art's sake," which cannot be founded on anything whatsoever.

Indisputably, it is humanistic narcissism with its mania for individualistic and unlimited production that is responsible for this ultimately useless profusion of talents and geniuses. The humanistic perspective not only proposes the cult of man, but by that very fact also aims at perfecting man according to an ideal that does not transcend the human plane. Now this moral idealism is fruitless because it depends entirely on a human ideology; such an ideal wants man to be ever productive and dynamic, hence the cult of genius, precisely. The moral ideal of humanism is inefficacious because it is subject to the tastes of the moment, or to fashion, if one wishes; for positive qualities are fully human only in connection with the will to surpass oneself, hence only in relation to what transcends us. Just as man's reason for being does not lie within man as such, so too, man's qualities do not represent an end in themselves; it is not for nothing that deifying gnosis requires the virtues. A quality is fully legitimate only on condition that in the last analysis it be linked to necessary Being, not to mere contingency, that is, to what is merely possible.

The initial contradiction of humanism is that, if one man can prescribe for himself an ideal that pleases him, so too can someone else,

10 The ostentatiously human perfection of classical or academic art has in reality nothing universally convincing about it; this was noticed long ago, but only in order to fall into the contrary excess, namely, the cult of ugliness and of the inhuman, despite a few intermediary oases, certain impressionists, for example. The classicism of a Canova or an Ingres no longer convinces anyone, but that is no reason for acknowledging only Melanesian fetishes.
for the same reason, prescribe for himself another ideal, or indeed nothing at all; and in fact amoral humanism is almost as ancient as moralistic humanism. ¹¹ The moralizing candor of a Kant or a Rousseau is followed by the adventurous amoralism of a Nietzsche; people no longer say "humanism is morality," they now say "I am morality"; even if morality is altogether absent.

Voltaire expressed the wish that every man should be "seated under his fig tree, eating his bread without asking himself what is in it"; ¹² (we quote from memory). He means: sheltered from the tyranny of dogmas and priests; and, good humanist that he is, he completely forgets that the good man he is dreaming of is potentially a savage beast, that man is not necessarily good, and that the only thing which protects man from man — or the good from the bad — is precisely religion, tyrannical or not. And religion does so even if it unleashes in turn some bad men against some good men, which in any case is inevitable and much the lesser evil compared to a world without religious discipline, a world delivered into the hands of man alone, precisely.

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Since our thesis on the human center has led us to mention that ambiguous possibility that is genius, we shall take the liberty of illustrating our preceding considerations by a few concrete examples, without wishing to get involved in "all too human" (allzumenschlich) blind alleys. This is not in keeping with our habit, but our subject more or less obliges us to do so. The reader should not be surprised if, in what follows, he enters as it were into a new world.

Despite the fact that Beethoven was a believer, he was inevitably

¹¹ On the more or less traditionalist side one also speaks of "hominism" — with a reproving intention — no doubt because the term "humanism" still evokes "classical" associations of ideas with which one still feels obliged to make common cause.

¹² That is to say: without concerning himself with the supernatural, the mysteries, in short with things that are humanly unverifiable.
situated on the plane of humanism, hence of "horizontality." And although there was nothing morbid about him, we note the characteristic disproportion between the artistic work and the spiritual personality; characteristic, precisely, for genius arising from the cult of man, thus from the Renaissance and its consequences. There is no denying what is powerful and profound about many of Beethoven's musical motifs, but, all things considered, a music of this sort should not exist; it exteriorizes and thereby exhausts possibilities which ought to remain inward and contribute in their own way to the contemplative scope of the soul.  

In this sense, Beethoven's art is both an indiscretion and a dilapidation, as is the case with most post-Renaissance artistic manifestations; even so, compared to certain other geniuses, Beethoven was a homogeneous man, hence "normal," if we disregard his demiurgic passion for musical exteriorization.

Alongside motifs possessing all the pure beauty of the archetypes, there are necessarily in Beethoven and his successors — for example in Wagner — features denoting the megalomania of the Renaissance and thus of humanistic idealism. While appreciating particular musical motifs, and given polyphonic harmonies which throw them into relief, one cannot help noticing the disproportionate and "ponderous" side of the musical production in question; a melody may be celestial, but a symphony or an opera is excessive. It should be noted, however, that the great deviation of the Cinquecento had much less of an effect on music and poetry than on painting, sculpture and architecture; thus the megalomaniacal character of this or that modern music refers at bottom more directly — from the standpoint of affinity — to the plastic arts of the Renaissance rather than

13 It is quite possible that if Ramakrishna had heard the Ninth Symphony and if he could have grasped its musical language, he would have fallen into samādhi, something which happened to him when he saw a lion for the first time, or when an Indian dancing girl danced before him; but we doubt very much that there are many Ramakrishnas among Beethoven's listeners, so the argument has hardly any practical value as regards the spiritual and social justification of such an exteriorized and communicative music, one which is in fact a "two-edged sword."

14 Whereas in Bach or Mozart musicality still manifests itself with faultless crystallinity, in Beethoven there is something like the rupture of a dam or an explosion; and this climate of cataclysm is precisely what people appreciate.
Having spoken of music, let us pass on to another example of creations of genius, this time of a visual character but equally powerful and quasi-volcanic: namely Rodin, direct heir to the Renaissance despite the lapse of centuries. Although we cannot accept this carnal and tormented by-product of ancient naturalism as a fully legitimate expression of human art, we are compelled to take note of the titanesque dimensions of this art in its most expressive productions. As in the case of the 16th century artists — such as Michelangelo, Donatello, Cellini — the motivating force here is the sensual cult of the human body combined with a neo-pagan perspective,\textsuperscript{16} thus with various abuses of intelligence and also with the Greco-Roman sense of grandeur; but a grandeur of man and not that of God.

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One of the determining causes of the blossoming of genius from the end of the 18th century onwards — but above all in the 19th century — was the impoverishment of the environment: whereas in earlier times, above all in the Middle Ages, the environment was at once religious and chivalrous, thus charged with colors and melodies, if one may say so, the Age of Philosophy and above all the Revolution, took away from the world all supra-natural poetry, all vital upward-extending space; men were more and more condemned to a hopeless horizontality, profanity and

\textsuperscript{15} In Beethoven and other Germans, the titanism of the distant Renaissance combines with the thunder of ancient Germany and this aside from the presence of a quasi-angelic dimension of Christian origin.

\textsuperscript{16} There is a curious analogy between Michelangelo's Last Judgement and Rodin's Gate of Hell: in both cases, the sensual and tormented beauty of the bodies goes hand in hand with an atmosphere of damnation, instead of communicating the serenity of the celestial shores as do the naked and on occasion amorous divinities of India and the Far East. With Bourdelle and Maillol, the ancient naturalism is attenuated. Exact observation in art certainly has its rights, but needs the regulatory and as it were musical element of stylization; art has to remain a writing, but a legible one.
pettiness. It is this which explains in part, or in certain cases, the cries of
protest, of suffering and despair, and also of nostalgia and beauty. If
Beethoven, or any other great creator in the realm of art, had lived in the
epoch of Charlemagne or of St. Louis, their genius might have remained
more inward, they would have found satisfactions and consolations — and
above all, planes of realization — more in conformity with what
constitutes the reason for the existence of human life. In short, they would
have found their center; or they would have perfected the center they
already possessed by rendering it supernatural. Deprived of a real world,
of a world which has a meaning and allows one to engage in liberating
pursuits, many geniuses create for themselves an intense inner world, but
one which is exteriorized on account of the need to manifest themselves; a
world composed of nostalgia and grandeur, but in the final analysis with
no meaning or efficacy other than that of a confession.

Such was also the case with Nietzsche, a volcanic genius if ever
there was one. Here, too, there is passionate exteriorization of an inward
fire, but in a manner that is both deviated and demented; we have in mind
here, not the Nietzschean philosophy, which taken literally is without
interest, but his poetical work, whose most intense expression is in part
his Zarathustra. What this highly uneven book manifests above all is the
violent reaction of an a priori profound soul against a mediocre and
paralyzing cultural environment; Nietzsche's fault was to have only a
sense of grandeur in the absence of all intellectual discernment.
Zarathustra is basically the cry of a grandeur trodden underfoot, whence
comes the heart-rending authenticity — grandeur precisely — of certain
passages; not all of them, to be sure, and above all not those which express
a half-Machiavellian, half-Darwinian philosophy, or minor literary
cleverness. Be that as it may, Nietzsche's misfortune, like that of other men
of genius, such as Napoleon, was to be born after the Renaissance and not
before it; which indicates evidently an aspect of their nature, for there is no
such thing as chance.

This was also Goethe's misfortune, a well-balanced and, from a

17 This philosophy could have been a warning cry against the peril of a leveling and
bastardizing humanitarianism, thus mortal for mankind; in point of fact, it was a combat
against windmills and at the same time a seduction of the most perilous kind.
certain standpoint, too well-balanced genius. By this we mean to say that he was the victim of his epoch owing to the fact that humanism in general and Kantianism in particular had vitiated his tendency towards a vast and finely-shaded wisdom; he thus became, quite paradoxically, the spokesman of a perfectly bourgeois "horizontality." His Faust, which starts off in the Middle Ages and in mystery, comes to an end, so to speak, in the 19th century and in philanthropy, leaving aside the final apotheosis which springs from the poet's Christian subconscousness, without being able to compensate for the Kantian and Spinozan atmosphere of the work. All the same, there is unquestionably great scope in the human substance of Goethe: a scope manifested by the lofty and generous quality of his mind; and also, in a more intimate fashion, in those poems where he makes himself the "medium" of the popular soul, in short of medieval Germany; in so doing, he continues the spring-like and delicate lyricism of Walter von der Vogelweide, as if time had come to a stop.

A particularly problematical type of talent led astray from its true vocation is the novelist: whereas in the Middle Ages novels still drew their inspiration from myths, legends, and religious and chivalrous ideals, they became from a certain period onwards more and more profane, even garrulous and insignificant: their authors, instead of living their own lives, lived successively the lives of their imaginary personages. A Balzac, a Dickens, a Tolstoy, a Dostoevsky lived on the fringe of themselves, they

18 The poet believes in the saving grace of an omnipresent divine Love, granted to whoever "strives unceasingly towards the good" ("Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, den können wir erlösen"); an eschatological optimism that combines in a strange fashion with eighteenth century deism on the one hand, and with esoteric knowledge of hermetic and kabbalistic origin on the other hand; the incoherence is flagrant.
19 We find the same traits in Schiller, with a slightly different accentuation; it is inadmissible that people should heap sarcastics on the moving idealism of this poet — as is fashionable nowadays in Germanic countries — for there was in him a truly authentic moral elevation and sense of grandeur, as is demonstrated especially by his ballads.
20 Cervantes is in certain respects an exception — and certainly not the only one — in that his work serves as the vehicle for elements of philosophy and of symbolism, making one think of Shakespeare. As a literary genre, the theater is much less problematical than the novel, if only on account of its more disciplined and less time-consuming character. Calderon's plays prolong — to some degree — the "mysteries" of the Middle Ages and exercise a didactic and spiritual function, in the manner of the tragedies of antiquity, which were intended to provoke a catharsis.
gave their blood to phantoms, and they incited their readers to do the same: to waste their lives by burying themselves in the lives of others, with the aggravating circumstance that these others were neither heroes nor saints and, besides, never existed. These remarks can be applied to the whole of that universe of dreams which is called "culture": flooded by literary opium, siren songs, vampirizing and — to say the least — useless production, people live on the fringe of the natural world and its exigencies, and consequently on the fringe — or at the antipodes — of the "one thing needful." The 19th century — with its garrulous and irresponsible novelists, its "poètes maudits," its creators of pernicious operas, its unhappy artists, in short, with all of its superfluous idolatries and all of its blind alleys leading to despair — was bound to crash against a wall, the fruit of its own absurdity; thus the First World War;\(^\text{21}\) was for the "belle époque" what the sinking of the Titanic was for the elegant and decadent society that happened to be on board, or what Reading Gaol was for Oscar Wilde, analogically speaking.

* * *

Like other writers or artists, Wilde offers isolated values — we are thinking here of his tales;\(^\text{22}\) — which one would like to see in another general context but of which it may be said, at least, that beauty always communicates a celestial dew-drop, if only for an instant. Divining in him a mystical dimension — his cult of beauty was only its gilded shadow — one pities the author and one would like to save him from his morbid and futile side;\(^\text{23}\) one may in any case suppose that his conversion in extremis

\(^{21}\) Of which the Second World War was only a belated continuation and conclusion.

\(^{22}\) The best tales belong to poetry rather than to novels; they are in a way prose poems, inspired by popular tales containing an initiatory intention. We may note that Anderson does not have Wilde's capacity, but has the merit of having the soul of a child.

\(^{23}\) Or save him from himself, since he personifies the tragic trajectory — or the total cycle — of quasi-divinized pleasure; of ultra-refined and intellectualized hedonism wishing to live itself out, down to its ineluctable ontological consequences. As soon as enjoyment is taken for an end in itself, and in the absence of a vertical and spiritual dimension which, by
— after so many cruel trials — was an encounter with Mercy. We can have the same sentiment in several analogous cases, where regret and hope prevail over a feeling of uneasiness, or even irritation.

Among the classic cases of self-destructive individualism we may mention the poet Lenau — half German, half Hungarian — who personifies the drama of a pessimistic narcissism sinking into melancholy and insanity. Such destinies are almost inconceivable in a religious and traditional climate; as inconceivable as the general phenomenon of a culture claiming to be an end in itself. No doubt, sadness has its beauty; it evokes a nostalgia which takes us beyond ourselves by purifying us, and consequently it evokes distant shores far from the disappointing narrowness of our earthly dreams; as the lyricism of the *Vita Nuova* shows. Sadness has a right to be related to the song of Orpheus, but not to that of the sirens.  

There are also unhappy painters, such as Van Gogh and Gauguin, who are bearers of certain incontestable values — otherwise there would be no point in speaking about them. Here too, the qualities are partial in the sense that the lack of discernment and spirituality makes itself felt — at least in certain faces — despite the prestige of the style. But what counts here is not so much the value of this or that pictorial style, as the drama — typical for the modern West — of normally intelligent men who sell their souls to a creative activity which no one asks of them and of which no one has any need, they themselves no more than others; who make a religion of their profane and individualistic art and who, so to supernaturalizing it, would lend it the permanence of the archetypes, it presses on fatally towards the suicide it bears within itself. In saying in his "Ballad" that "each man kills the thing he loves," the poet expresses the intrinsic tragedy, not of love, but of pleasure become idol.

24 Thus Saint Francis of Sales who was certainly not lacking in sensibility, could say that "a sad saint is a sorry sort of saint"; he has in mind here a melancholy which erodes the theological virtues, precisely. — Krishna's flute is the very image of ascending, not descending, nostalgia; sweetness of salvation, not of perdition.

25 One should not forget — but the modernists will never admit it — that the choice of the subject matter is a part of art, and that the subject, far from being the "anecdote" of the work, as some people stupidly imagine, is on the contrary its reason for being. As a matter of fact, the subjects of portraitists are all too often lacking in interest and consequently have nothing to communicate; the landscapists are fortunate in that they avoid this pitfall.
speak, die martyrs for a cause not worth the trouble.

We meet in all arts with a type of genius which, like a display of fireworks, burns itself out in a single significant work, or in two or three works born of a single burst of inspiration. This is the case with Bizet, a medium — if one may say so — of the Hispano-Provençal soul, or more particularly of the passionate and at the same time tragic romanticism of bull fighting; with accentuations which, in the last analysis, go back to heroic chivalry and to the lyricism of the troubadours; of this, however, the great majority of his listeners are scarcely aware.

To come back to literature and to its least attractive aspects: an Ibsen and a Strindberg are the very types of talent wishing to make itself the spokesman of a thesis that is excessive, revolutionary, subversive, and in the highest degree individualistic and anarchic; in the 19th century, to be original at this price was like a title of nobility; and "after me the deluge." This kind of talent — or of genius, as the case may be — makes one think of children who play with fire, or of Goethe's sorcerer's apprentice: these people play with everything, with religion, with the social order, with mental equilibrium, provided they can safeguard their originality; an originality which, retrospectively, shows itself to be a perfect banality, because there is nothing more banal than fashion, no matter how clamorous.

A general remark is called for here, independent of the immediately preceding considerations: our intention is not — and cannot be — to present a survey of art and literature, so there is no point in asking why we do not mention this or that particularly conspicuous genius. A Victor Hugo, for example; if we have not spoken of this bombastic and long-winded spokesman of French romanticism, it is because neither his personality nor his destiny could motivate a substantial commentary on our part; and the same remark applies to every other typologically equivalent celebrity. We shall not say anything very notable therefore in pointing out that the author of the Orientales — like so many other creators of art — lives only through his productions, and that he puffs himself up and finally becomes hardened in the passionate projection of himself; all this as he encloses his readers in an intense and despairing horizontality and inculcates in them a false idea of human grandeur, or of
grandeur as such. As a natural consequence, humanism — in becoming humanitarianism — likewise implies a false idea of human misery, whose whole eschatological dimension people are careful not to perceive; an idea which moreover readily opens onto demagogy. And one knows from experience that megalomaniacal idealism and moral pettiness get along well together among those who are the standard-bearers of integral humanism, especially on the political plane.

All the same, this fragile and almost dreamlike world of totally profane genius and "culture" lasted just barely two centuries; born more or less in the middle of the 18th century, it died about the middle of the 20th century, after exhausting itself like a display of fireworks in the course of the 1st century; this century that believed itself to be eternal. The protagonists died along with their audience, and the audience along with its protagonists.

No doubt it will be contended that the flux of culture continues, since there are always new writers and new artists, whatever may be their value or lack of value; this is true, but it is no longer the same culture; living as it does on forgetfulness, it is no longer the culture which, on the contrary, lived on remembrance.

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A particularly problematical sector of culture with a humanist background is philosophical production, where naive pretension and impious ambition become involved in the affairs of universal Truth, which is an extremely serious matter; on this plane, the desire for originality is one of the least pardonable sins. However: apart from the fact that one should not confuse cleverness with intelligence, there is intelligence everywhere, and it is a truism to assert that the least of philosophers can sometimes say things which make sense. Irrespective of this aspect of the question, it is paradoxical, to say the least, that those who are readily qualified as being "thinkers" are not always those who know how to think
— far from it — and that there are men who feel they have a vocation to think precisely because they are unable to evaluate all that this function implies.

As for doctrines — and this is an entirely different standpoint — one has to recognize that profane philosophy benefits sometimes, and even fairly often in certain respects, from extenuating circumstances, given the fact that the inadequacies of contemporary theology and confessional dissensions provoke with good reason doubts and reactions; thus philosophers are more or less the victims, at least to the extent that they are sincere. For the truths of the *philosophia perennis*, largely disregarded by average theologians, require something in the human spirit to take their place; this explains, not the whole phenomenon of modern thought of course, but its most respectable and excusable aspects.²⁶

But there is also, over and above the vain fluctuations of specifically profane thought, the spiritualist renewal of a Maine de Biran — whose merits we cannot overlook — not to mention the prolongations of ancient theosophy in the case of Saint Martin and Baader, and partially in Schelling.

Coming back now to the flood of philosophical literature — and it is indeed to this flood that the Hegelian dialectic could be applied — the most serious reproach we can make concerning the general run of these "thinkers" is their lack of intuition of the real and consequently their lack of sense of proportion; or the short-sightedness and lack of respect with which they handle the weightiest questions human intelligence can conceive, and to which centuries or millennia of spiritual consciousness have provided the answer.

Perhaps it is worthwhile mentioning in this context a phenomenon as uncalled for as it is irritating, and that is the philosopher, or the so-called philosopher, who imagines he can support his aberrant theses by means of novels and plays, which amounts to inventing aberrant stories in order to prove that two and two make five; and this is indeed characteristic of a

²⁶ Leaving aside the cases of culpable negligence — in the case of liberal theologians for example — not everyone feels obliged to plunge into the ins and outs of Scholasticism, all the more so since it is not accepted by the Eastern Orthodox Church which is, after all, strictly traditional, nor by the Protestants, who intend limiting themselves to Scripture.
mentality which does not see the absurdity of intelligence denying intelligence. It is as if one were to paraphrase Descartes' _cogito ergo sum_ upside down, emitting, practically speaking, the thesis that "I am; therefore I do not think."

Normally, the vocation of a thinker is synonymous with the sense of responsibility. The art of thinking is not the same thing as the joy of living; he who wishes to know how to think, must know how to die.*

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There is a side of "bourgeois culture" which unveils all its pettiness, and that is its aspect of conventional routine, its lack of imagination, in short its unconsciousness and its vanity. Not for an instant is it asked, "What is the good of all this?"; there is not one author who asks whether it is worthwhile writing a new story after so many other stories; it would seem as though they wrote them simply because others have done so, and because they do not see why one should not do so and why one should not gain the glory that others have gained.;²⁷ It is a _perpetuum mobile_ nothing can stop, except a catastrophe or, less tragically, the progressive disappearance of readers; there is no celebrity without an audience, as we have said earlier.²⁸ And this is what has happened in some measure: past authors whose prestige seemed assured are no longer read; the general public has other needs, other resources and other distractions, however low they may be. More and more, culture becomes the absence of culture: the mania for cutting oneself off from one's roots and for forgetting where one comes from.

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²⁷ Translator's Note: Elsewhere, the author has written: "to be objective is to die a little."
²⁷ "To be famous and to be loved," as Balzac said.
²⁸ It was all very well for Leacuon Bloy to cling to the lifelines of religion, his imagination was nonetheless confined to the closed universe of literature, and it was a waste of time for him to fulminate against his colleagues and his accomplices. In too many cases, religious belief has strangely little power over the imagination, and this is still another effect of immanent humanism.
One of the subjective reasons for what we may call "cultural routine" is that man does not like to lose himself alone, consequently he likes to find accomplices for a common perdition; it is this which is the cause of a profane culture, consciously or unconsciously, but not innocently, because man bears deep within himself the instinct of his reason for being and of his vocation. The Oriental civilizations have often been reproached for their cultural sterility, that is to say the fact that they do not comprise a continuous stream of literary, artistic and philosophical production; we believe that by now there is no need for taking the trouble to explain the reasons for this fact.

Even more detestable than unimaginative conventionalism is the mania for change with the repeated acts of unfaithfulness it implies: namely the need to "burn what one has adored" and, on occasion, to "adore what one has burned." 29 Classicism, romanticism, realism, naturalism, symbolism, psychological novels, social novels, and so on; and what is most strange in all this is that at each new stage one ceases to understand what previously one had understood perfectly well; or one pretends not to understand it any longer, for fear of being left behind. One is indeed obliged to remember Racine and Corneille — above all Molière who, as everyone knows, is always funny — or Pascal, 30 in the context of "culture" precisely; one is also obliged to accept La Fontaine and Perrault on account of children. But few indeed are those who still know and appreciate a Louise Labé, whose sonnets are second neither to those of Petrarch, Michelangelo or Shakespeare; otherwise a poet as refined as Rilke would not have taken the trouble to translate them and in so doing turn them into new masterpieces.

No doubt, a man can grow weary of something he has busied himself with too much, or with which he has busied himself too superficially; but it does not follow from this that he has a right to despise it, especially if there is nothing in it which warrants either weariness or contempt. Weariness itself can be the sign of a warped mentality, and the tendency to

29 This is exactly what the Renaissance did in "burning" the symbolistic Middle Ages and in "adoring" naturalistic antiquity.
30 To also mention a philosopher, the "most valid" one that France has known since the Middle Ages.
arbitrary mockery certainly is; because if we have had enough of something, rightly or wrongly, all we have to do is to busy ourselves with something else; there is no reason why we should speak disparagingly of it; he who has studied Aristotle too much can "go and play the violin." But it is a fact — as Schiller has said — that "the world likes to blacken whatever shines, and drag the sublime in the dust…"

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Whereas the traditional literatures and arts manifest all their modes and all their diversity in a simultaneous manner — with, however, differences of accentuation according to the epochs — the West, starting with the Renaissance, manifests its cultural modes in a successive manner, following a route bristling with anathematizations and glorifications. The reason for this is in the last analysis a profound ethnic heterogeneity: that is to say, a certain incompatibility, among Europeans, between the Aryan and Semitic spirits on the one hand, and between the Roman and Germanic mentalities on the other; it is a situation in a certain sense equivalent to what the Hindus call a "mixture of castes," with the difference that the constituent elements are not hierarchized, but simply disparate; the West being in addition more individualistic than the East.

A characteristic trait of Western culture from the late Middle Ages onwards is, moreover, a certain feminization: outwardly, the masculine costume manifests in fact, at least in the upper classes and above all among the princes, an excessive need to please women, which is a tell-tale sign; whereas in the culture in general, we can observe an increase in the imaginative and motive sensibility, in short an expressivity which strictly speaking goes too far and renders souls worldly instead of interiorizing them. The distant cause of this trait could be in part the respect which, according to Tacitus, the Germans had for woman — a respect we are far from blaming — but this quite normal and praiseworthy feature would have been without any problematical consequences if there had not been another much more determinative factor, namely the Christian scission of
society into clerics and laymen; because of this, lay society grew into a separate humanity which came more and more to believe that it had a right to worldliness, where woman — whether she liked it or not — evidently played a leading role. \footnote{31} We mention this aspect of Western culture because it explains a certain exteriorized and hypersensitive style of genius. And let us not forget to add that all this pertains to the mystery of Eve, and not to that of Mary which pertains to ascending Māyā.

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One has to take a stand against the prejudice that every man of genius, even the most eminent intellectual, is necessarily intelligent, and that it is enough for an Einstein to be intelligent in mathematics for him to be equally intelligent in other domains — in politics for example — which in fact was certainly not the case. There are men who are geniuses in a single domain and who are all the less gifted in other respects; examples of fragmentary, unilateral, asymmetric, disproportional genius are provided above all by those writers or artists — and they are numerous — who compensate for their creative sublimity by a trivial or even odious character. In a normal world, one would readily do without their creations and the hidden poison they contain and transmit in most cases; not in all cases though, since there is the possibility of intermittent "mediumship,”

\footnote{31} A sign of this lay autocracy and the worldliness resulting from it is, as regards vestimentary manifestations, the lowcut neckline of women, already criticized by Dante and paradoxical not only from the standpoint of Christian asceticism, but also from the standpoint of Semitic legalism which makes no distinction between clerics and laymen since it attributes a sacred character to society as a whole. It is not the phenomenon of denudation which is astonishing here — for it exists legitimately in Hinduism and elsewhere — but the fact that this phenomenon occurs in Christian surroundings; the same remark holds good for the prominence of the male organs in certain costumes of the late Middle Ages. It could also be said that the frivolous character of lay customs — notably the balls — is like the counterpart of the exaggerated rigorism of the convents, and that this far too ostentatious disparity points to a disequilibrium which is the fomenter of all sorts of subsequent oscillations. In India, the maharajah covered with pearls and the yogi covered with ashes are certainly dissimilar, but both are "divine images."
as we have explained above.

Among many men of varying genius we can see a "brilliant intelligence" having no connection either with metaphysical ruth or with eschatological reality. Now the definition of integral or essential, and thus efficacious, intelligence is the adequation to the real, both "horizontal" and "vertical," terrestrial and celestial. A consciousness having neither the sense of priorities nor that of proportions is not really intelligence; it is at the very most a reflection of intelligence in the mirror of the mind, and we are quite willing to have it called "intelligence" in an entirely relative and provisional sense; human discernment may be exercised in a very limited theater, but the mental activity involved is still discernment. Conversely, it can happen that a spiritually — thus fundamentally — intelligent man lacks intelligence on the plane of earthly things or some of them; but that is because, rightly or wrongly, he cannot bring himself to take an interest in them.\textsuperscript{32}

To come back to the poets: it is impossible to deny that the plays of Montherlant are quite intelligent in their way, but the fact that the author — who possessed an excessively uneven and contradictory character;\textsuperscript{33} scarcely manifests any discernment outside dramatic art, illustrates well enough the relativity and the precariousness of what we may call "worldly intelligence." One should not forget in this context the role of passions: pride limits intelligence, which amounts to saying that in the last analysis it slays it: it destroys its essential functions, while allowing the surface mechanism;\textsuperscript{34} to remain incidentally, as if in mockery.

In this order of ideas — and leaving aside the question of pride —

\textsuperscript{32} It is no exaggeration on our part to say that for some people, the most intelligent men are the Nobel prize winners in physics; given such blunders, it is quite excusable to say things which run the risk of being truisms.

\textsuperscript{33} That is to say that the plebeian side of his personality was opposed to the aristocratic side, just as in Heine the cynical was opposed to the lyrical; in both cases, the trouble is not in the bipolarity but in the antagonism between the two poles.

\textsuperscript{34} The meaning of human life is sanctification, without which man would not be man. "Life is no longer worthy of me," said — or thought he could say — an individualist who refused to accept a trial; whereas every man ought to say from the outset "I am not worthy of life," while accepting the trial in order to become worthy of it. Because, for man to be worthy of life is to be worthy of God; without forgetting that Domine non sum dignus, which expresses another relationship.
we might also express ourselves as follows: in a certain sense it was very intelligent on the part of the Greeks and their emulators to have represented the human body in all exactitude and all its contingency; but more fundamentally, it was quite unintelligent on their part to have taken this trouble and to have neglected other modes of adequation, those precisely which were developed by the Hindus and the Buddhists. Intelligence as such is above all the sense of priorities and proportions, as we have pointed out above; it implies a priori a sense of the Absolute and of the hierarchy of corresponding values.

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Thus, neither efficacy in a particular domain nor the phenomenon of genius is necessarily to be identified with intelligence as such. Another error of evaluation to be refuted is the mania for seeing genius where there is none; this is to confuse genius with extravagance, snobbery, cynicism, and impertinence, and to seek an object of adoration because one no longer has God. Or again, it is to adore oneself in an artificial and illusory projection; or it is quite simply to admire vice and darkness.

Nothing is easier than to be original thanks to a false absolute, all the more so when this absolute is negative, for to destroy is easier than to construct. Humanism is the reign of horizontality, either naive or perfidious; and since it is also — and by that very fact — the negation of the Absolute, it is a door open to a multitude of sham absolutes, which in addition are often negative, subversive, and destructive. It is not too difficult to be original with such intentions and such means; all one needs is a little imagination. It should be noted that subversion includes not only philosophical and moral schemes designed to undermine the normal order of things, but also — in literature and on a seemingly harmless plane — all that can satisfy an unhealthy curiosity: namely all the narrations that are fantastic, grotesque, lugubrious, "dark," thus satanic in their way, and well-fitted to predispose men to all excesses and all perversions; this is the sinister side of romanticism. Without fearing in the least to be "childlike"
or caring in the least to be "adult," we readily dispense with these somber lunacies, and are fully satisfied with Snow White and Sleeping Beauty.

Literary "realism" is truly subversive because it aims at reducing reality to the vilest contingencies of nature or chance, instead of leading it back to its archetypes and consequently to the divine intentions, in short, to the essential which any normal man should perceive without difficulty, and which any man perceives notably in love, or in connection with such phenomena as provoke admiration. This is, moreover, the mission of art: to remove the shells in order to reveal the kernels; to distill the materials until the essences are extracted. Nobility is nothing else but a natural disposition for this alchemy, and this on all planes.

As for subversion: on the plane of ideologies, there are not only those which are frankly pernicious, thus negative despite their masks, there are also those which are formally positive — more or less — but limitative and poisonous and ultimately destructive in their way, such as nationalism and other narcissistic fanaticisms; the majority — if not all — being as ephemeral as they are myopic. And the worst among these false idealisms are, in certain respects, those which annex and adulterate religion.

But let us come back to the question of originality which we broached above. In order to define true originality, we shall make the following statement: art in the broadest sense is the crystallization of archetypal values, and not a literal copy of the phenomena of nature or of the soul; and that is why the terms "reality" and "realism" have another meaning in art than in the sciences; the latter record phenomena without disdaining accidental and insignificant contingencies, whereas art, on the contrary, operates by abstraction in order to extract gold from "raw material." Positive originality cannot arise from our desires; it proceeds from a combination of our traditional environment and our legitimate personality, a combination pregnant with archetypes susceptible of manifesting themselves in it, and disposed to doing so. In a word, art is the quest for — and the revelation of — the center, within us as well as around us.
At the antipodes of the false genius exalted by people is situated the true genius of which people are unaware: among famous men, Lincoln is one such example, he who owes a large part of his popularity to the fact that people took him — and still take him — for the incarnation of the average American; as average as possible, which he absolutely was not, and could not have been, precisely because he was a man of genius; a man whose intelligence, capacity and nobility of character went far beyond the level of the average.\textsuperscript{35}

Another case — and a rather strange one — of a genius in complete possession of his center is Gandhi; a strange case, we say, because he seems to be a borderline case from the standpoint of sanctity. Technically speaking, Gandhi can no doubt be included in the category of saints; traditionally speaking, the question remains open. "Against" him, there are his somewhat too liberal, even Tolstoian ides, although — despite certain reservations — he rejected neither the Vedas nor the castes; "in his favor," one can insist on his practice of \textit{japa-yoga}, which from the traditional standpoint is a good argument, but does not mean sanctity as such. We record the phenomenon without wishing to settle the question in a peremptory manner; what matters is that we have here a possibility characteristic of the cyclical period in which we live: a period of ambiguities, paradoxes and also of exceptions. Given the fact that Gandhi did not found anything and that he had no disciples in the strict sense of the term, the problem of the degree of his spirituality;\textsuperscript{36} can remain

\textsuperscript{35} It was during Lincoln's administration that the formula "In God we trust" was first introduced in coinage, and it was Lincoln who made Thanksgiving Day a national holiday. We should like to mention in this context the greatness of soul of another statesman, Chiang Kai-shek: at the end of the Second World War he made a declaration enjoining his compatriots not to hate the Japanese people, which was an extraordinary gesture of lucidity and courage; not in itself, because there is no people worthy of hatred, but considering human nature and the circumstances.

\textsuperscript{36} But we must insist emphatically on the factor that we have just pointed out, namely that Gandhi did not exercise the function of a spiritual master; our "tolerance" thus cannot be taken as opening the door to any technical irregularity.
unanswered.

The question of normal genius, unconditioned by any cultural abuse, allows us to pass to the following considerations, which have their importance in this context. The racist argument that the whites, and among them the Europeans, have more genius than other races, obviously loses much of its value — to say the least — in the light of what we have said about humanism and its consequences; because it is all too evident that neither a hypertrophy nor a deviation constitutes an intrinsic superiority. Still, when considering genius under its natural and legitimate aspect, one has a right to ask whether this phenomenon is also met with among peoples without writing, given the fact that they do not seem to have any such examples to offer; we reply without hesitation that genius lies within human nature and that it must be possible for it to occur wherever there are men. Obviously, the manifestation of genius depends on such cultural materials as are at the disposal of a racial or ethnic group; since these materials are relatively poor among the peoples in question, the manifestations of genius must be all the more intangible and exposed to oblivion, except for legends and proverbial expressions.\(^{37}\)

Non-literate ethnic groups have at their disposal three ways of manifesting genius, in keeping with their way of life: firstly the martial and royal genius; secondly, the oratorical and epic genius;\(^{38}\) and thirdly, the contemplative genius, but this one rarely leaves any traces, whereas the two preceding types leave them more easily, the second one especially. If

\(^{37}\) "Not every man is the son of Gaika," the Zulus say, evoking the memory of a particularly gifted and glorious chief, but who has disappeared in the mists of time.
\(^{38}\) There have been true Demosthenes among the orators of the Red Indians. Some of their discourses, either complete or in fragments, have been preserved in writing; they strike one by the straightforward, generous and moving grandeur of their language. We may mention here, by way of examples, three men of genius belonging to the red race: first, Hinmaton-Yalatkit ("Chief Joseph"), chief of the Sahaptin (Nez Percés), who in the opinion of American army officers was a prodigious strategist; then the Shawnee chief Tecumseh, who lived some decades earlier — at the beginning of the 19th century — and whose qualities as a statesman and magnanimous hero are almost proverbial in the New World; and finally Tammany or Tamanend, a sachem of the Leni-Lenape (Delawares) — in the 17th century — who enjoyed a reputation for wisdom and holiness not only among the Indians, but even among the whites, who went as far as venerating him as the "patron of America" and gave his name to several of their societies.
these ethnic groups have no sense of history, it is for the same reason that they have no writing: their whole conception of life is so to speak rooted in an "eternal present" and in a flux of things wherein the individual counts for nothing; time being a spiral movement around an invisible and immutable Center.

A factor which should not be overlooked when one is astonished at the lack of "culture" among non-literate peoples is that for them the surrounding nature furnishes all the nourishment that the soul requires. These ethnic groups feel no need to superimpose on the riches and beauties of nature riches and beauties springing from the imagination and creativity of men; they feel no need to listen to human language rather than to the language of the Great Spirit. On the one hand, the lack of urban culture can of course be the result of degeneration; but on the other hand, this lack can be explained by a particular perspective and a free choice; both causes can evidently be combined. It should not be overlooked that the Hindu sannyasi, who lives in the forest, does not worry about "culture," any more than does a Christian hermit; this is not an absolute criterion, but it nonetheless has its importance.

39 The remark of a Sioux chief after a visit to a museum of fine arts: "You whites are strange men; you destroy the beauties of nature, then you daub a board with colors and call it a masterpiece."

**Translator's note: Elsewhere the author has written: "In the life of a people there are as it were two halves: one constitutes the play of its earthly existence, the other its relationship with the Absolute. Now what determines the value of a people or of a civilization is not the literal form of its earthly dream — for here everything is only a symbol — but its capacity to 'feel' the Absolute and, in the case of specially privileged souls, to reach the Absolute. So it is completely illusory to set aside this 'absolute' dimension and evaluate a human world according to earthly criteria, as by comparing one civilization materially with another. The gap of some thousands of years separating the stone age of the Red Indians from the material and literary refinements of the white man counts for nothing compared with the contemplative intelligence and the virtues, which alone impart value to man and alone make up his permanent reality, or that something which enables us to evaluate him in a real manner, as it were in the sight of the Creator. To believe that some men are lagging behind us because their earthly dream takes on modes more 'rudimentary' than our own — modes which are often for the same reason more sincere — is far more naive than to believe that the earth is flat or a volcano is a god; the most naive of all attitudes is surely to regard the dream as something absolute and to sacrifice to it all substantial values, forgetting that what is 'serious' only starts beyond its level, or rather that, if there is anything 'serious' in this world, it is so in connection with that which lies beyond it. . .

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And one has to keep clearly in mind the following: the marvels of the basilicas and the cathedrals, of the iconostases and the altar pieces, as well as the splendors of the Tibeto-Mongol and Japanese art or, prior to it, those of Hindu art, not forgetting the summits of the corresponding literatures — all this did not exist in the primitive epochs of these various traditions, epochs which were precisely the "golden ages" of these spiritual universes. Thus it appears that the marvels of traditional culture are like the swan songs of the celestial messages; in other words, to the extent that the message runs the risk of being lost, or is effectively lost, a need is felt — and Heaven itself feels this need — to exteriorize gloriously all that men are no longer capable of perceiving within themselves. Thenceforth it is outward things that have to remind men where their center lies; it is true that this is in principle the role of virgin nature, but in fact its language is only grasped where it assumes traditionally the function of a sanctuary. Thus it appears that the marvels of traditional culture are like the swan songs of the celestial messages; in other words, to the extent that the message runs the risk of being lost, or is effectively lost, a need is felt — and Heaven itself feels this need — to exteriorize gloriously all that men are no longer capable of perceiving within themselves. Thenceforth it is outward things that have to remind men where their center lies; it is true that this is in principle the role of virgin nature, but in fact its language is only grasped where it assumes traditionally the function of a sanctuary. Moreover, the two perspectives — sacred art and virgin nature — are not mutually exclusive, as is shown notably by Zen Buddhism; this proves that neither can altogether replace the other.

All that we have said above concerning non-literate peoples does not mean that they have no culture in the fully legitimate sense. Integrally human culture is linked to participation in the sacred, and this obviously has no necessary connection with literacy or with sedentary civilization. The immense stores of oral tradition and diverse forms of artistic expression testify to a formerly prodigious richness of soul in ancient man, and this was originally linked to sacred wisdom, of which virgin nature, precisely, is the primordial expression — an expression transparent to the

When people talk about 'civilization' they generally attribute a qualitative meaning to the term, but really civilization only represents a value provided it is supra-human in origin and implies for the 'civilized' man a sense of the sacred: only a people who really have this sense and draw their life from it are truly civilized. If it is objected that this reservation does not take account of the whole meaning of the term and that it is possible to conceive of a world that is 'civilized' though having no religion, the answer is that in this case the 'civilization' is devoid of value, or rather — since there is no legitimate choice between the sacred and other things — that it is the most mortal of aberrations. A sense of the sacred is fundamental for every civilization because fundamental for man. . ." (Understanding Islam, pp. 31-33)

40 Among the ancient Aryans, from India to Ireland — except, more or less, the Mediterraneans in historic times — and in our day still among the Shamanist peoples, Asiatic and American.
integral symbolist mentality, although scarcely so to modern "culturism."

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After having spoken at the beginning of this exposition of the hierarchical types of mankind — the "intrinsic" and not simply institutional castes — we next became involved in reflections on an entirely different subject, that of genius, with digressions and illustrations for which we see no reason to apologize. In both cases, that of genius as well as that of the castes, it is always a question of man and his center: either because nature has bestowed on man a given personal center and consequently a particular fundamental tendency and a particular conception of duty and happiness — this is precisely what "caste" is — or because man, whatever his basis or starting point may be, sets off in search of his center and his reason for being.

Whoever says humanism, says individualism, and whoever says individualism, says narcissism, and consequently: breaching of that protective wall which is the human norm; thus rupture of equilibrium between the subjective and the objective, or between vagabond sensibility and pure intelligence. However, it is not easy to have completely unmixed feelings on the subject of profane "cultural" genius: if, on the one hand, one must condemn humanism and the literary and artistic principles derived from it, one cannot, on the other hand, help recognizing the value of this or that archetypal inspiration, and occasionally the personal qualities of a particular author; hence one can hardly escape a certain ambiguity. And the fact that a work, by reason of its cosmic message, can transmit values graspable only by a few — just as wine can at the same time do good to some and harm to others — this fact makes our judgements in many cases, if not objectively less precise, at least subjectively more hesitant; although it is always possible to simplify the problem by specifying in what respect a given work has value.

Be that as it may, what we wish to suggest in most of our
considerations on modern genius is that humanistic culture, insofar as it functions as an ideology and therefore as a religion, consists essentially in being unaware of three things: firstly, of what God is, because it does not accord primacy to Him; secondly, of what man is, because it puts him in the place of God; thirdly, of what the meaning of life is, because this culture limits itself to playing with evanescent things and to plunging into them with criminal unconsciousness. In a word, there is nothing more inhuman than humanism, by the fact that it, so to speak, decapitates man: wishing to make of him an animal which is perfect, it succeeds in turning him into a perfect animal; not all at once — because it has the fragmentary merit of abolishing certain barbaric traits — but in the long run, since it inevitably ends by "re-barbarizing" society, while "dehumanizing" it ipso facto in depth. A fragmentary merit, we say, because softening of manners is good only on condition that it not corrupt man: that it not unleash criminality, and not open the door to all possible perversions. In the 19th century it was still possible to believe in an indefinite moral progress; in the 20th century came the brutal awakening; it was necessary to recognize that one cannot improve man by being content with the surface while destroying the foundations.

Thus, there is no doubt that talent or genius does not constitute a value in itself. One thing is absolutely certain — so much so that one hesitates to mention it — and that is that the best way to have genius is to have it through wisdom and virtue, hence through holiness. Creative genius can certainly be added to this plenitude as a supplementary gift — for others even more than for the one who possesses it — with the mission of transmitting elements of interiorization and thereby of liberation. To be sure, pure spirituality suffices unto itself; but no one will reproach Dante for having known how to write, nor Fra Angelico for having known how to paint.

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To return to the first subject of our exposition: whatever the
fundamental differences may be between the hierarchized human types — from the standpoint of that central core that constitutes the substance of a person — there is what we may call, not without reservations of course, "religious egalitarianism," to which we have alluded before; in the face of God man is always man and nothing else, whether or not he possesses a valid center. And man, being what he is, is always free to choose his center, his identity and his destiny: to build his house either on sand or on a rock.

"Free to choose": but in reality, the man who is conscious of his interest and concerned with his happiness has no choice; the purpose of freedom is to enable us to choose what we are in the depths of our heart. We are intrinsically free to the extent that we have a center which frees us: a center which, far from confining us, dilates us by offering us an inward space without limits and without shadows; and this Center is in the last analysis the only one there is.
When we speak of man, what we have in mind first of all is human nature as such, that is, inasmuch as it is distinguished from animal nature. Specifically human nature is made of centrality and totality, and hence of objectivity; objectivity being the capacity to step outside oneself, while centrality and totality are the capacity to conceive the Absolute. Firstly, objectivity of intelligence: the capacity to see things as they are in themselves; next, objectivity of will, hence free will; and finally, objectivity of sentiment, or of soul if one prefers: the capacity for charity, disinterested love, compassion. "Noblesse oblige": the "human miracle" must have a reason for being that is proportionate to its nature, and it is this that predestines — or "condemns" — man to surpass himself; man is totally himself only by transcending himself. Quite paradoxically, it is only in transcending himself that man reaches his proper level; and no less paradoxically, by refusing to transcend himself he sinks below the animals which — by their form and mode of passive contemplativity — participate adequately and innocently in a celestial archetype; in a certain respect, a noble animal is superior to a vile man.

The individual value of a man may be either physical, psychic, or intellectual, or a combination of these. The most outward values are beauty and bodily health; the first manifests our deiformity, and the second its normal accompaniment. Next there is moral value, which is both beauty of soul as well as a participation in intelligence; and finally there is the value of the spirit. Man is responsible neither for his beauty nor for his ugliness — except to some extent for the manner of his aging — but this does not prevent beauty as such from being a value which can contribute to spiritual alchemy; ugliness may also contribute to it, but in an indirect fashion and a contrario, as a support for the realization of certain truths. As for soundness of character, man is clearly responsible for it; if he possesses it by nature, he must maintain it, for he can lose it; if he does not possess it, he must acquire it.

And man is so made that his intelligence has no effective value
unless it be combined with a virtuous character. Besides, no virtuous man is altogether deprived of intelligence; while the intellectual capacity of an intelligent man has no value except through truth. Intelligence and virtue are in conformity with their reason for being only through their supernatural contents or archetypes; in a word, man is not fully human unless he transcends himself, hence, in the first place, unless he masters himself.

In what follows, we shall have to expound facts which are doubtless all too evident, but our subject obliges us to do so, for we cannot pass over in silence any aspect of man, even the most outward. Thus our exposition, at least in part, will by the nature of things, have something of the character of an enumeration rather than that of a speculation, and in any case, truisms have a certain role in introducing a subject. Therefore, if our exposition seems somewhat heteroclite, the reason for this lies in our subject itself, in the complexity of the human phenomenon; and we hope to be conscientious without having to be too pedantic.

If on the one hand every man possesses a body, a soul and a spirit, on the other hand men are differentiated by sex and age. Sex — whether masculine or feminine — must be considered from the following three standpoints: first, sexuality properly so called, which is the plane of physiological, psychological, functional and social inequality — but also of complementarity; then, the standpoint of their common humanity — each sex being human and nothing else — and this is the plane of equality and friendship; in this connection, a woman may be superior to a man, precisely with respect to her humanity and not merely her femininity; nonetheless, feminine nature excludes, not the summits of spirituality, but rather certain functions that are in fact more or less social. The third standpoint to be considered is that of spiritual import: on this so to speak "tantric" plane, each sex assumes an almost divine role for the other; this is the domain of love, not only on the natural level, but also, and even more so, on the supernatural and "alchemical" level.

Having spoken of sex, we must say something about age, even though in this sector the common experience of men furnishes all the necessary lights. For the sake of completeness, however, we shall recall that childhood is the period of formation and learning; maturity, the period
of actual and effective realization; late middle-age, the period of consolidation, reparation, and the directing of others; and old age, the period of detachment and transcendence: morning, day, afternoon and night; or spring, summer, autumn and winter. It could also be said that childhood is the paradise of innocence, youth the time of passions, maturity the time of work, and old age that of sadness. For it is far from being the case that old age is always the haven of wisdom; it is so in spiritually superior men, or more generally, in surroundings still imprinted with real piety, but not in a humanistic, "horizontal" and more or less atheistic world, where the tendency of the aged is to try to seem young at all costs and to forget ostentatiously the "one thing needful." This is an anomaly scarcely found among traditional peoples — nor for that matter among barbaric peoples, who in more than one respect are more normal than the ultra-civilized.

From the physiological point of view, age coincides with a degeneration; from the spiritual point of view the opposite takes place: age is an ascent towards another world.

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On another differentiating plane, but this time purely psychological, is situated what the Hindus term "color" (varna), namely caste. What is involved are the four fundamental tendencies of mankind,41 and their corresponding aptitudes; tendencies and aptitudes of an essentially unequal value, as is shown precisely by the Hindu system of castes, or as is shown by analogous systems in other civilizations, that of ancient Egypt for example, or that of the Far East. Nor should it be overlooked that the social hierarchy in Europe — the nobility, the clergy and the bourgeoisie or third estate — unquestionably constituted castes, the nobility in particular; executioners, acrobats, prostitutes and others were considered pariahs, rightly or wrongly as the case may be. But it is not of

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41 Not the "human race," as is often said; this expression is altogether improper, for a species is not a race.
institutionalized — hence necessarily approximative — castes that we wish to speak here, but of natural castes, those based on the intrinsic nature of individuals; the institutional castes are merely their legal applications, and in fact they are more often symbolical rather than effective as regards the real potentialities of persons, above all in later times; nonetheless they have a certain practical and psychological justification, otherwise they would not exist traditionally.

The essential point here is that mankind is psychologically differentiated by gifts and by ideals: there is the ideal of the sage or the saint, then the ideal of the hero; next the ideal of the respectable and "reasonable" average man, and finally that of the man who seeks no more than the pleasures of the moment, and whose virtue consists in obeying and in being faithful. But, aside from men who are psychologically homogeneous, there is also the man "without a center," who is capable of "all and nothing," and who is readily an imitator and also a destroyer. Let us hasten to add, however, that in this world there are distinctions and shades of difference in everything, and that if we must take note of inferior human possibilities it is not in order to pronounce verdicts upon individuals; for "what is impossible for man, is possible for God."

We mentioned "gifts" above, and this allows us now to consider the phenomenon of talent or genius. First of all, it is all too clear that genius has value only through its content, and is even of no worth in the absence of human values which ought to accompany it; and that consequently, it would be better for a "great man" with a problematical character to have less talent and more virtue. The cause of genius is a hypertrophy or supersaturation due to heredity or, as the transmigrationists would say, to a certain karma, hence to the merits or demerits of a former life, as the case may be. The karma is in any case benefic when it is the vehicle of spiritual values or when it gives rise to them; obviously, the great sages and saints of all traditional climates were men of genius — but they were not merely that, precisely.

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On the plane of neutral factors — such as sex and age — one also has to distinguish human types: firstly racial and subracial, then "astrological," and finally strictly personal.

Since errors and confusions are always encountered on the subject of races, we think it worthwhile to set forth certain elementary particulars on the subject, even though they are of a quite relative interest in themselves; nonetheless these things are part of our subject. There are three great racial types, the white, the yellow, and the black; then the more or less intermediate types, such as the black-white, Malay, American Indian, and Polynesian races, as well as other groups of less importance. The three fundamental races represent — and cannot but represent — quasi-essential modes of mankind, and that is why each of the three racial types is encountered, in an attenuated and adapted manner, of course, within the other two races, with the psychological meaning each type comprises by its very form; this meaning could not be narrow, but on the contrary must be as vast and subtle as possible.

As regards the sub-races — not the intermediary races — we shall confine ourselves to enumerating those of the white race, namely, the "Nordics," the "Mediterraneans" and their brahmanical cognates in India, the "Dinarics" and their Armenoid or Assyroid cognates, the "Alpines" — one speaks improperly of a "Slavic" type — and the "Orientals"; and finally, the "Dravidians" of India and the northern Far East — also termed "Paleo-Asiatics" — to which are attached, perhaps, the Veddoid Australians, who are not of Melanesian stock. The reason for the existence of all the races and sub-races lies in the typological economy of humanity, otherwise they would not exist; man is differentiated by definition.\footnote{Improperly termed "Hamitic" on account of the linguistic family of this name. In fact, certain tribes called "Hamitic" belong to the white race, others belong to the black race, the majority being more or less intermediary.}

\footnote{To be concrete, we would say that Lincoln is a perfect example of the Dinaric type; and Washington, of the Nordic type. Napoleon furnishes us with the classical image of the Mediterranean type; Beethoven of the type termed Alpine. As for the Oriental type — this adjective having here a particular meaning — it is that of an 'Abd al-Qadr or of a Ramakrishna; the superior Dravidian type being represented by a Ramana Maharshi. Let us specify that the type termed "Oriental," of brown color, is found among all the eastern peoples of the white race, and even in Europe alongside the Mediterranean type; it is in the
What is important to recall here is that there is no Aryan, Semitic, Hamitic, or Uralo-Altaic race, nor a Germanic, Celtic, Latin, Slavic or Greek race; even though there may be racial predominances in these linguistic groups, and even though each language corresponds to a greater or lesser extent to what may be called a "psychological race."

To return to the European sub-races — Nordic, Mediterranean and others — nowhere do they coincide with peoples; all the European peoples include all the racial types enumerated above, with more or less strong predominances according to region. And let us not forget to mention that to each racial or sub-racial type there corresponds a psychological type: the Nordic is distinguished by features different from those of the Mediterranean for example. But we may confine ourselves, on this plane, to the two following observations: firstly, there is no race or people possessing qualities only or defects only, and secondly, the individual is not necessarily limited by the average characteristics of the collectivity; as a human being he keeps, in principle, all his liberty.

Here a remark is called for regarding individuals qualified as "typical" of a given racial group. The word "typical" has two altogether different meanings: on the one hand, it designates types which, in a given group, are particularly numerous — without necessarily representing the majority — while nevertheless exhibiting great differences among themselves; on the other hand, the same word designates types which may be small in number, but which are met with only within that group and nowhere else, even though there may always be exceptions to this rule. But it is an abuse to term the majority "typical" while refusing this epithet to the two categories just mentioned, for that would be a purely quantitative rather than qualitative point of view, and such an evaluation is contrary to the nature of things. From such a point of view, one could never consider as representative a type that incarnates in the highest degree a racial, ethnic and spiritual ideal; an archetype so to speak.

As for the question of physiognomy, there are not only types peculiar to the races, there are also what may be termed "astrological" types, which are found everywhere and which can coincide with given

majority in Arabia, in the Iranian countries and in North India.
racial types; so much so that one cannot in every case determine whether a
given type is of a racial or astrological origin. One may well note, for
example, that the Nordics are tall and dolichocephalic, yet there are
necessarily pure Nordics who are small and brachycephalic, for the simple
reason that the same typological possibilities are manifested in all the
racial frameworks, independently of races and regional elaboration. This
is precisely what certain racists are unaware of, or wish to be unaware of: according to them, all the great works of humanity are due to the Nordic race which, it would seem, is present everywhere; if they observe, in China for example, tall individuals with long faces, they claim that Vikings — or the ancestors of the Vikings — passed through there, and they explain all the achievements of Chinese civilization, above all the creation and expansion of the empire, by the presence of Nordic blood. They are unaware of the fact that in each race repetition of certain types is due, not to mixtures, but to the homogeneity of mankind and to the ubiquity of the same typological possibilities, not to mention the role of astrological types, the universality of the temperaments, and other factors both diversifying and repetitive.

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Astrology teaches us that the sun, the moon and the planets determine to a certain extent physical and psychic types in various ways, according to the signs of the zodiac in which they are situated. It is thus that one may distinguish solar, lunar, Mercurian, Venusian, Martian, Jupiterian, and Saturnian types, all of which comprise, as we have said, divergent modes, not to mention a host of intermediary or mixed types. Let us limit ourselves here to pointing out that the solar type has

44 Such as Chamberlain, Gobineau, Gunther and others. It is not the Scandinavians or the Germans who invented Nordic or Nordist racism; no race or people is responsible for it.
45 Don Quixote and Sancho Panzo are both — or could be — Mediterraneans; they represent a human opposition which, precisely because it is human, is found in all races. It would be ridiculous to claim that the "knight of the woeful countenance" is Dinaric because he is tall and bony, and that his squire is an Alpine because he is short and stocky.
something active and radiant; the lunar, something round, passive and childlike; the Mercurian is light and elegant; the Venusian is gentle and charming; the Martian, square and aggressive; the Jupiterian, full and large, sometimes jovial; and the Saturnian, ascetic and morose.

But astral determinations are not everything, otherwise one could not explain how in a series of astrologically identical types with the same racial characteristics there are differences whose causes must pertain to an altogether different dimension; which at bottom amounts to asking why one person is not another. First of all there is the natural factor of heredity; next, the Hindus and Buddhists would put forth the argument of karma — actions and experiences situated in a former life — although in certain respects, both these causes coincide. More fundamentally, we would say that All-Possibility must manifest its potentialities on all planes, and that no determinism can limit the play of Māyā. The universe is woven, not only of principles, but also of imponderables; mathematical qualities are joined to musical qualities. Finally, in human typology, one has also to take into account the degrees of spirituality and of non-spirituality, which are superimposed on the outward typological modalities, conferring upon them meanings — and modes of expressivity — of a new and strictly qualitative order.

The physical and psychic type of the individual, as we have said, is determined not only by astrological influences, but also by factors such as heredity and the law of karma; and this amounts to saying that all these factors are combined. The coincidence of the different determining factors is certainly not due to chance: it is explained by the particular possibility that the individual manifests, and which precisely determines this mysterious coincidence; this possibility is the first cause which governs the secondary causes on any given plane.

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To observe that there are different human types and to be aware that
their forms cannot be devoid of meaning, is to acknowledge that there is necessarily a science which studies this sector of anthropology. Fundamentally, this science — physiognomy — interprets three regions of the face: the forehead along with the eyes, then the nose, and then the mouth along with the chin; these elements correspond respectively to the intellective nature, the sensitive or "instinctive" nature, and the volitive nature. Moreover, as every form has a cause and a meaning, all the parts of the body are to some degree or other expressions of our being.46

But the individual is not fatally limited by his form, or his forms; he may be, but he may also not be; the form may be the expression of his substance, but it may also represent his karma — the effect of past actions or attitudes — in which case the individual experiences his form without necessarily being identified with it. The privative form will then manifest the past but not the person; a transitory accident but not the immortal substance; it is then a scar and not an open wound.47 And this concerns the soul as well as the body: there are men who have become saints by becoming the opposite of what they were before; in reality, by finally becoming themselves.

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On the one hand, everything leads one to believe that it is major circumstances which create the individual; on the other hand, it is the individual possibility that determines the circumstances. It is the combination of the possibilities that weave that veil of Māyā which is the world; the world is a homogeneous play of possible phenomena, which therefore are in accord when manifesting a given being; and behind all these masks and coincidences there stands the divine Self.

46 The hands for example, which are the object of a particular science, chirology, from which chiromancy is derived.
47 All the same, if man is not responsible for his form at birth, he is to a certain degree responsible for it starting from his maturity, to the extent, precisely, that character can influence physical form.
Having spoken of physical and psychic types, we are all the more obliged to take account of what we may term "eschatological types," whose order — like that of the castes — is vertical and hierarchical, not horizontal and neutral. Gnosticism — which despite its errors contains many a truth — distinguishes three fundamental types: the pneumatic, whose nature is ascending; the hylic or somatic, whose nature is descending; and the psychic, whose nature is ambiguous. Clearly, this hierarchy is independent of ordinary hierarchies, and consequently it gives rise to cases that at first glance are paradoxical; as a matter of fact, we may meet with quasi-angelic individuals among the least endowed as well as among the most gifted men, and others who personify the opposite. This leads us to the problem of predestination, which is intimately linked to that of initial possibilities and individual substances; of course, the divine foresight also embraces the psychics, whose case seems to be undecided, but who in reality "veil" their substance — and consequently their destiny — by a complex and moving fabric of contradictory and more or less superficial possibilities.

Man, like the Universe, is a fabric of determination and indetermination; the latter stemming from the Infinite, and the former from the Absolute.

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It may be objected that our preceding considerations on the human phenomenon are not an exposition of anthropology properly so called, since we offer no information on the "natural history" of man nor a fortiori on his biological origin, and so on. Now such is not our intention; we do not wish to deal with factors that escape our experience, and we are very far from accepting the "stop-gap" theory of transformist evolutionism. Original man was not a simian being barely capable of speaking and standing upright; he was a quasi-immaterial being enclosed in an aura still celestial, but deposited on earth; an aura similar to the "chariot of fire" of Elijah or the "cloud" that enveloped Christ's ascension. That is to say, our
conception of the origin of mankind is based on the doctrine of the projection of the archetypes ab intra; thus our position is that of classical emanationism — in the Neoplatonic or gnostic sense of the term — which avoids the pitfall of anthropomorphism while agreeing with the theological conception of *creatio ex nihilo*. Evolutionism is the very negation of the archetypes and consequently of the divine Intellect; it is therefore the negation of an entire dimension of the real, namely that of form, of the static, of the immutable; concretely speaking, it is as if one wished to make a fabric of the wefts only, omitting the warps.

Quite obviously, an anthropology is not complete if it does not take into account the spiritual dimension of man, therefore factors such as the eschatological hierarchy of which we have just spoken, or of the analogous social functions. To say *homo sapiens*, is to say *homo religiosus*; there is no man without God.

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We have stated above that man's prerogative is the capacity for objectivity, and that this is the fundamental criterion of human value. Strictly speaking, a man is he who "knows how to think"; whoever does not know how to think, whatever his gifts may be, is not authentically a man; that is, he is not a man in the ideal sense of the term. Too many men display intelligence as long as their thought runs in the grooves of their desires, interests and prejudices; but the moment the truth is contrary to what pleases them, their faculty of thought becomes blurred or vanishes; which is at once inhuman and "all too human." We have written in one of our books that to be objective is to die a little, unless one is a pneumatic, in which case one is dead by nature, and in that extinction finds one's life.

Thus it is important to understand that the natural virtues have no effective value save on condition of being integrated into the supernatural virtues, those precisely which presuppose a kind of death. Natural virtue does not in fact exclude pride, that worst of illogicalities and that
preeminent vice; supernatural virtue alone — rooted in God — excludes that vice which, in the eyes of Heaven, cancels all the virtues. Supernatural virtue — which alone is fully human — coincides therefore with humility; not necessarily with sentimental and individualistic humilitarianism, but with the sincere and well-grounded awareness of our nothingness before God and of our relativity in relation to others. To be concrete, we would say that a humble person is ready to accept even a partially unjust criticism if it comprises a grain of truth, and if it comes from a person who is, if not perfect, at least worthy of respect; a humble person is not interested in having his virtue recognized, he is interested in surpassing himself; hence in pleasing God more than men.

Our definition of *homo sapiens* being deiformity — which makes of him a total being, hence a theophany — it is only logical and legitimate that, for us, the final word on anthropology is conformity to celestial norms and movement towards God; or in other words, our perfection in the likeness of concentric circles and centripetal radii; both of which are disposed in view of the divine Center.
Intelligence and Character

In spirituality more than in any other domain, it is important to understand that a person's character is part of his intelligence: without a good character — a normal and therefore noble character — even a metaphysical intelligence is largely inoperative, for the simple reason that full knowledge of what lies outside us demands a full knowledge of ourselves. A person's character is, on the one hand, what he wills, and on the other hand, what he loves; will and sentiment prolong intelligence; like the intelligence which obviously penetrates them, they are faculties of adequation. To know the Sovereign Good really is, ipso facto, on the one hand to will what brings us closer to it and on the other hand to love what testifies to it; every virtue in the final analysis derives from this will and this love. Intelligence that is not accompanied by virtues gives rise to an as it were planimetric knowledge: it is as if one were to grasp but the circle or the square, and not the sphere or the cube.

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To grasp the sphere or the cube — symbolically speaking — is to have the sense of immanence, and not merely of transcendence; and the condition of this plenitude is to know oneself, that is, to apply discernment to one's own ego, concretely and operatively since knowledge commits both will and sentiment. Sentiment in itself is not sentimentalism; it is not an abuse unless it falsifies a truth; in itself, it is the faculty of loving what is objectively lovable: the true, the holy, the beautiful, the noble; "beauty is the splendor of the true." Plenary knowledge, as we have said, demands self-knowledge: it is to discern the ambiguity, pettiness and fragility of the ego. And it is also, and essentially, to "love the neighbor as oneself"; that is, to see in the "other" a "myself" and in the "myself" an "other."

To have the sense of immanence — parallel to the discernment between the Real and the unreal, or between Reality that is absolute and
that which is relative or contingent, or in consequence between the essential and the secondary, and so on — is to have the intuition of essences, of archetypes, or let us say: of the metaphysical transparency of phenomena; and this intuition is the basis of nobleness of soul. The noble man respects, admires and loves in virtue of an essence that he perceives, whereas the vile man underestimates or scorns in virtue of an accident; the sense of the sacred is opposed to the instinct to belittle; the Bible speaks of "mockers." The sense of the sacred is the essence of all legitimate respect; we insist on legitimacy, for it is a question of respecting, not just anything, but what is worthy of respect; "there is no right superior to that of the truth."

To be intelligent, as everyone knows, is first of all to be able to distinguish between the essential and the secondary, to grasp the relationship between cause and effect, to adapt to either permanent or changing conditions; but let us repeat — and this is far from being commonly acknowledged — that it is also to have the presentiment of the essences in things, or to catch sight of the archetypes in phenomena. Intelligence may be either discriminative or contemplative, unless they are both in balance.

To have the presentiment of the essences in things: this is the basis of the Hindu darshan, of the visual assimilation of celestial qualities; the ideal being the coincidence between an object that manifests beauty or spirituality and a subject gifted with nobleness and depth, hence gratitude. And this is also the quasi-alchemical meaning of sacred art in all its forms.

Discernment, by its adamantine rigor, refers as it were to the mystery of the Absolute; analogously, contemplation, by its aspect of musical gentleness, pertains to the mystery of the Infinite. In the human microcosm, the volitive faculty stems as it were from the absoluteness of the Sovereign Good, whereas the affective faculty testifies to its infinitude.

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48 Let us specify that stupidity often manifests itself through confusion between a material cause and a moral cause, or between a phenomenon due to circumstances and another resulting from a fundamental quality, in short, between an "accident" and a "substance"; for example, a government is taken for a people, or a collective psychosis for an ethnic character.
It would be easy to object that there are men who are intelligent while being bad, and that there are men who are good without being intelligent. Now we do not contest that a morally imperfect man can be intelligent, we merely contest that his intelligence can be complete and thus enjoy a pluridimensional infallibility. As for men who are morally sound but intellectually little gifted, they are never stupid, for virtue excludes stupidity pure and simple; no doubt their intelligence is more contemplative than discriminative, but it is real, virtue being precisely a mode of spiritual adequation, hence of intelligence in the essential sense of the term; and naivety is not stupidity.

What is in any case striking in virtuous people, even in those who are but modestly gifted, is that they always have good sense; in this they can be superior to certain philosophers who, while being artful and ingenious, yet are strangely lacking in the sense of the real. Many proverbs testify to a popular wisdom that doubtless has nothing Aristotelian about it, but which by way of compensation comes close to the angelically simple and concrete language of the Bible.

The ideal for homo sapiens is the combination of a perfect intelligence with a perfect character, and this is the proper meaning of the word "wisdom"; it is the ideal represented by gnosis, which a priori is attached to the restoration of the primordial perfection of man. Esoterism is so to speak the "religion of intelligence": this means that it operates with the intellect — and not with sentiment and will only — and that consequently its content is all that intelligence can attain, and that it alone can attain. The "subject" of esoterism is the Intellect and its "object" is

49 It is far from being the case that all historical esoterism is esoterism pure and simple; an exegesis colored by confessional bias, or overly involved in mystical subjectivism is far from
ipso facto total Truth, namely — expressed in Vedantic terms — the doctrine of Ātmā and Māyā; and he who says Ātmā and Māyā thereby says Jnāna, direct knowledge, intellectual intuition.

To say that man is made of intelligence, will and sentiment, means that he is made for the Truth, the Way, and Virtue. In other words: intelligence is made for comprehension of the True; will, for concentration on the Sovereign Good; and sentiment, for conformity to the True and the Good. Instead of "entiment," we could also say "soul" or "faculty of loving," for this is a fundamental dimension of man; not a weakness as it is all too often thought, but a participation in the Divine Nature, in conformity with the mystery that "God is Love."

All things considered, only the sophia perennis can be considered a total good without reservations; exoterism, with its evident limitation, always comprises an aspect of "lesser evil" owing to its inevitable concessions to collective human nature, hence to the intellectual, moral and spiritual possibilities of an average that by definition is "fallen"; "God alone is good," Christ said. From the operative even more than from the speculative point of view, exoterism places pure intelligence between brackets, as it were: it replaces it with belief and reasonings linked to belief, which means that it puts the accent on will and sentiment. It must do so, given its mission and its reason for being; but this limitation is nonetheless a double-edged sword whose consequences are not as purely positive as religious prejudice would have it. It is true that the ambiguity of exoterism is not unrelated to the designs of Providence.

Impious intelligence is incomparably worse than pious stupidity; corruptio optimi pessima. In itself, intelligence is "pious" because its very substance is pure discernment, and pure contemplation, of the Sovereign Good; a true intelligence is inconceivable outside that already celestial quality that is the sense of the sacred; the love of God being the very essence of virtue. In a word, intelligence, to the very extent that it is true gnosis. On the other hand, it is far from being the case that all that is put into the category of esoterism pertains to it: it too often happens that in treating this subject authors make no distinction between what is genuine and what is counterfeit, thus between truth and error, in accordance with the two sins of our time which are the replacement of intelligence by psychology and confusion between the psychic and the spiritual.

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faithful to its nature and its vocation, produces or favors the moral qualities; conversely, virtue, with the same conditions, necessarily opens onto wholeness of mind, hence onto knowledge of the Real.
The Primacy of Intellection

It has been said that the proof of an affirmation is incumbent upon him who enunciates the thesis, not upon him who rejects it; but this is a perfectly arbitrary opinion, for if someone owes us a proof for a positive affirmation, he equally owes us one for a negative affirmation. It is true that those who deny the supernatural do not lack arguments which in their eyes are proofs of their opinion, but nonetheless they imagine that their opinion is a natural axiom that needs no demonstration; which is rationalist juridicism, and not pure logic. Theists, on the contrary, feel that it is normal to support by proofs the reality of the invisible Divine, except when they speak *pro domo*, basing themselves upon the evidence of faith or gnosis.

The ontological proof of God — expressed by Saint Augustine and developed by Saint Anselm — has often been misinterpreted since the Middle Ages. It does not signify that God is real because He can be conceived, but on the contrary that He can be conceived because He is real: in other words, the reality of God entails, for our intellective faculty, certitude concerning that reality, and this certitude in its turn entails, for our rational faculty, the possibility of conceiving the Absolute. And it is precisely this possibility of reason — and, a fortiori, the prerational intuition of the intellect — that constitutes the characteristic prerogative of man.

In the critique of the ontological proof of God, the error consists in not seeing that to imagine some object is in no way the same thing — as regards the economy of our intellectual means — as to conceive the Absolute as such; for what has primacy here is not the subjective play of our mind, but essentially the absolute Object that determines it, and which, in the final analysis, even constitutes the very reason for the existence of human intelligence. Without a real God, man is not possible.

In speaking of the ontological argument, we have in mind the essential thesis and not the partly problematical reasonings which are supposed to uphold it. Fundamentally, the basis of the argument is the analogy between the macrocosm-metacosm and the microcosm, or
between God and the soul: in a certain respect, we are That which is, and consequently we can know all that is, and therefore Being as such; for if in one respect there is incommensurability, there is also analogy and even identity, otherwise we would be nothingness pure and simple. The principle of knowledge does not of itself imply any limitation; to know is to know all that is knowable, the knowable coinciding with the real, given that the subject and the object coincide a priori and in the Absolute: to know is to be, and conversely. This brings us to the Arabic saying: "He who knoweth his soul, knoweth his Lord"; without forgetting the injunction of the oracle at Delphi: "Know thyself." If we are told that the Absolute is unknowable, this relates, not to our principal intellective faculty, but de facto to a particular modality of this faculty; to a particular husk, not to the substance.

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In the domain of human thought there are few things as pitiful as the need to "prove" Ātmā or Māyā; for to say that these two things — "if they exist" — are absolutely remote is to say implicitly that they are absolutely near — too near, in a certain sense, to be provable. The following is a fallacious argument: since all that is not the Absolute — "supposing that It exists" — is enclosed in Māyā, how can we know the Absolute, and consequently the Relative as such, given that our knowledge quite obviously lies within Māyā? Our reply — and it follows from our preceding considerations — is that neither of these two notions pertains absolutely to Māyā: the first because its very content situates it outside Illusion, even though the notion qua notion obviously pertains to the illusory order; and the same holds true for the second notion, that of Māyā, precisely: if it necessarily pertains to Illusion as an intellectual or mental phenomenon, it is nonetheless linked to Ātmā since it does not exist except in relation to It; without Ātmā, Māyā is not possible. This amounts to saying that the notion of Illusion is a ray of Ātmā entering into Māyā, in a less direct fashion no doubt than is the case for the notion of Ātmā, but
nonetheless in a real, or relatively real, manner. We could also say that the notion of the Real is real, or that the notion of the Absolute is absolute; in the same way that it has been said that "the doctrine of Unity is unique." The idea of the illusory, of the relative or the contingent, is linked to that of the Real and benefits from the same logical and ontological rule.

The proof of the pure logician is on the whole based upon a starting point that is "contrary to nature" — if man is viewed in his primordial and normative integrity — namely an ignorance and a doubt which, precisely, are not normal to man as such; the argumentation of the pure metaphysician on the contrary — even if he happens to employ the language of the logician as a dialectical stratagem — is founded, not upon doubt, but upon analogy and, more profoundly, upon identity both intellectual and existential. If, analogically speaking, Reality is the geometric point, the knowledge that we have of it corresponds either to the concentric circles or to the radii which are both centrifugal and centripetal, for on the one hand Truth emanates from the Real, and on the other hand Knowledge extends to the Real. The point, the circle, the radius, and also the spiral: these are the graphic symbols of Knowledge, whatever be the symbol — or relation — that predominates according to the aspect considered.

Ramanuja and others have maintained that the Shankarite doctrine of the two "hypostases" of the Divine Self — Brahman as such and Brahman as Māyā — is false because it introduces, it would seem, an unintelligible and irreducible duality into the Absolute; but this is an artificial argument, because it considers the problem in only one respect, while deliberately neglecting another most essential one. The absolute Self is pure Subject; now contingent subjects also are nothing but subjectivity or consciousness, and it is in this respect, and not with respect to contingency — or projection and reverberation — that Brahman or Ātmā is one and indivisible. As for Māyā, it proceeds necessarily from the very nature of Ātmā — on pain of being a pure impossibility — and proves the Infinitude, All-Possibility and Radiation of Ātmā; Māyā exteriorizes and unfolds the innumerable potentialities of Ātmā. Māyā cannot not be, and to deny it is to be unaware of the nature of the supreme Self.
To ask for the proof of intellection — hence of a direct, adequate and infallible knowledge of the supernatural — is to prove that one does not have access to it, and, analogically speaking, it is like asking for the proof of the adequacy of our elementary sensations — which no one doubts — while claiming that one is not able to live without such proof. But the absence of metaphysical intellection in most men of the "iron age" does not for all that close the door to the supernatural, as is shown by the phenomenon of revelation, and the subsequent phenomenon of faith, both of which presuppose a kind of elementary, but in no way insufficient, intuition, which we could term "moral" and sometimes even "aesthetic"; for in fact, the reality of God penetrates all our being. To doubt this is to make of oneself "a house divided against itself."

In fact, when God is removed from the universe, it becomes a desert of rocks or ice; it is deprived of life and warmth, and every man who still has a sense of the integrally real refuses to admit that this should be reality; for if reality were made of rocks, there would be no place in it for flowers or any beauty or sweetness whatsoever. Similarly for the soul: remove faith — including that element of faith that forms part of gnosis — and the soul becomes impoverished, chilled, rigid and embittered, or it falls into a hedonism unworthy of the human state; moreover, the one does not preclude the other, for blind passions always overlay a heart of ice, in short, a heart that is "dead." Thus, there is an ostentatious and "humanitarian" charity which, at bottom, is no more than the psychological compensation for spiritual bitterness or hatred of God.

Be that as it may, pure rationalism aims at passing for the pinnacle of "exact thought," or for the only exact thought, for exactitude as such; however, it must not be forgotten that rationalism, or the "criticism" which systematizes it, comprises arbitrary and practically pseudo-mystical arguments, such as the Kantian thrust against the intuitive certitudes of the

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50 This epithet is not a tautology, since Aristotle and even Plato are readily numbered among the rationalists, whereas they never claimed to draw everything from reason alone.
believer: to have recourse to this certitude is, it would appear, "to make abusively an objective reality out of a subjective ideality"; now where does this philosopher get the knowledge that this "ideality" is not a reality? He speaks of the "delusion of the enthusiast" (schwärmerischer Wahn) which would consist in knowing supernatural entities through sentiment; by what right does he speak thus, since he has never experienced such a sentiment? This leads us to the opinion according to which he who denies an affirmation does not have to prove his negation, given — so it would appear — that a proof imposes itself only upon him who affirms; as if the peremptory negation of something which one does not know were not an affirmation in its turn! Moreover, how can one not see from the outset the initial contradiction of "criticism": namely the illusion of being able to define the limitations — clearly conjectural — of reason starting from reason itself. It is to wish to legislate — analogically speaking — on the possible limitations of the optic nerve with the help of the visual faculty; or it is to wish to hear hearing, or to grasp with the hand the capacity of grasping.  

Nevertheless, the possibility of determining the limits of reason does exist; but it exists only starting from — and by means of — the pure intellect, hence precisely from what the Kantian criticism denies without the shadow of a proof. We will perhaps be told — although this would mean sidestepping the issue — that criticism has long been obsolete, and that it is not worth fighting the dead; no doubt it has been obsolete philosophically and literally, but not practically, for it survives in its fruits, or fruit; namely the quasi-official abolition of speculative intelligence, which in the final analysis means: the abolition of specifically human intelligence, or of intelligence pure and simple.

After all, Pascal's wager is not to be disdained; what gives it all its force are not merely the arguments in favor of God and our immortality, but also the importance — quantitative as well as qualitative — of the

51 In order to discredit faith and seduce believers, Kant does not hesitate to appeal to pride or vanity: whoever does not rely on reason alone is a "minor" who refuses to "grow up"; if men allow themselves to be led by "authorities" instead of "thinking for themselves," it is solely through laziness and cowardice, neither more nor less. A thinker who needs to make use of such means — which on the whole are demagogic — must indeed be short of serious arguments.
voices in favor of these two capital notions, that of God and that of our soul; we have in mind here the power and majesty of the Sacred Scriptures and the innumerable army of sages and saints. If these great men are not qualified to speak in the name of man, then there is no such thing as man.
Gnosis Is Not Just Anything

It is a fact that too many authors — we would almost say: general opinion — attribute to gnosis what is proper to Gnosticism and to other counterfeits of the *sophia perennis*, and moreover make no distinction between the latter and the most freakish movements, such as spiritualism, theosophism and the pseudo-esoterisms that saw the light of day in the twentieth century. It is particularly regrettable that these confusions are taken seriously by most theologians, who obviously have an interest in entertaining the worst opinion possible concerning gnosis; now the fact that an imposture necessarily imitates a good, since otherwise it could not even exist, does not authorize charging this good with all the sins of the imitation.

In reality, gnosis is essentially the path of the intellect and hence of intellection; the driving force of this path is above all intelligence, and not will and sentiment as is the case in the Semitic monotheistic mysticisms, including average Sufism. Gnosis is characterized by its recourse to pure metaphysics: the distinction between Ātmā and Māyā and the consciousness of the potential identity between the human subject, jīvātmā, and the Divine Subject, Paramātmā. The path comprises on the one hand "comprehension," and on the other "concentration"; hence doctrine and method. The modalities of the latter are quite diverse: in particular, there is on the one hand the *mantra*, the evocative and transforming formula, and on the other hand, the *yantra*, the visual symbol. The path is the passage from potentiality to virtuality, and from virtuality to actuality, its summit being the state of the one "delivered in this life," the jīvan-mukta.

As for Gnosticism, whether it arises in a Christian, Moslem or other climate, it is a fabric of more or less disordered speculations, often of Manichean origin; and it is a mythomania characterizd by a dangerous mixture of exoteric and esoteric concepts. Doubtless it contains symbolisms that are not without interest — the contrary would be astonishing — but it is said that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions"; it could just as well be said that it is paved with symbolisms.
It may be remarked, perhaps, that in gnosis as well as in Gnosticism, "illumination" plays a preponderant role; but this is to confuse "illumination" with intellection, or the latter with the former; whereas in reality intellection is active, and illumination, passive, whatever the level of experiences involved. This is not to say that the phenomenon of illumination does not arise in the climate of gnosis; it does so necessarily, but not by way of method or as a point of reference. An analogous remark could be made regarding hermeneutics, that is, the interpretation of sacred scriptures; no doubt commentary on the scriptures is practiced in the climate of gnosis — for example, it goes without saying that the Upanishads have been explicated — but this is quite different from the far-removed and unverifiable interpretation of scriptural formulas whose literal meanings do not at all indicate what the mystical exegetes try to draw from them — with the aid of "illumination," precisely.\(^\text{52}\)

It is true that the word "illumination" can have a superior meaning, in which case it no longer designates a passive phenomenon; unitive and liberating illumination is beyond the distinction between passivity and activity. Or more exactly, illumination is the Divine Activity in us, but for that very reason it also possesses an aspect of supreme Passivity in the sense that it coincides with the "extinction" of the passional and dark elements separating man from his immanent Divine Essence; this extinction constitutes receptivity to the Influx of Heaven — without losing sight of the fact that the Divine Order comprises a "Passive Perfection" as well as an "Active Perfection," and that the human spirit must in the final analysis participate in both mysteries.

In gnosis, there is first of all the intellective knowledge of the Absolute — not merely of the "personal God" — and then self-knowledge; for one cannot know the Divine Order without knowing oneself. "Know thyself," says the inscription over the portal of the initiatory temple at Delphi; and "the Kingdom of God is within you."

Just as the ether is present in each of the sensible elements, such as fire and water, and just as intelligence is present in each of the mental

\(^{52}\) We do not contest that a word or an image in a sacred text may have a meaning that cannot be divined at a first reading; but in such cases this meaning cannot be contrary to the literal meaning nor incompatible with the context.
faculties, such as imagination and memory, so gnosis is necessarily present in each of the great religions, whether we grasp its traces or not.

We have said that the driving force of the path of gnosis is intelligence; now it is far from being the case that this principle is applicable in a spiritual society — unless it is not very numerous — for in general, intelligence is largely inoperative once it is called upon to hold a collectivity in balance; in all justice, one cannot deny in sentimental and humilitarian moralism a certain realism and hence a corresponding efficacy. It follows from all this, not that gnosis has to repudiate socially its principle of the primacy of intelligence, but that it must put each thing in its place and take men as they are; that is precisely why the perspective of gnosis will be the first to insist, not upon a simplifying moralism, but upon intrinsic virtue, which — like beauty — is "the splendor of the true." Intelligence must be not only objective and conceptual, but also subjective and existential; the unicity of the object demands the totality of the subject.

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When one has experienced the usual pious sophistries of voluntaristic and moralistic doctrines, it becomes quite clear that gnosis is not a luxury, and that it alone can extricate us from the impasses of the alternativism that is part and parcel of the confessional spirit. There is, for instance, the stupefying thesis of the Asharites, according to which there are no natural causes: fire burns, not because it is in its nature to burn, but because, each time something burns, it is God who intervenes directly and who "creates" the burning. Ibn Rushd pertinently objects — against Ghazali, who made this holy absurdity his own — that "if something did not have its specific nature, it would have no name proper to it . . .

53 Equally antimetaphysical is the Christian opinion that the hypostases are neither substances nor modes, that they are merely "relations" and yet that they are persons. It is appropriate to distinguish between the Trinity and trinitarian theology, and no less so between Unity and unitarian theology.
Intelligence is nothing else than the perception of causes . . . and whoever denies causes must also deny the intellect."

What the Asharites have not understood — and this is characteristic of the alternativism of exoteric thought — is that natural causes, such as the function of fire to burn, in no way exclude immanent supernatural causality, any more than the limited subjectivity of the creature excludes the immanence of the absolute Subject. Immanent divine causality is "vertical" and supernatural, whereas cosmic causality is "horizontal" and natural, or in other words: the first is comparable to centrifugal radii, and the second to concentric circles. It is this combination of two relationships or of two perspectives that characterizes integrally metaphysical thought, hence gnosis.55

There is intelligence and there is intelligence; there is knowledge and there is knowledge; there is on the one hand a fallible mind that registers and elaborates, and on the other hand a heart-intellect that perceives and projects its infallible vision onto thought. Here lies the entire difference between a logical certitude that can replace another logical certitude, and a quasi-ontological certitude that nothing can replace because it is what we are, or because we are what it is.

54 According to the Koran, God ordered the fire that was to burn Abraham:"Be coolness. . .!" which would be meaningless if the nature of fire were not to burn, and which therefore refutes a priori and divinely the Asharite opinion.
55 Let it be noted that, just as there is a "relatively absolute" — the logical absurdity of this formulation does not preclude its ontologically plausible meaning — so too is there a "naturally supernatural," and this is precisely the permanent divine intervention, in virtue of immanence, in cosmic causality.
Aristotle, in erecting his table of categories — substance, quantity, quality, relation, activity, passivity, place, moment, position, condition — seems to have been more concerned about the rational classification of things than about their concrete nature.\textsuperscript{56} Our own standpoint\textsuperscript{*} being closer to cosmology than to Peripatetic logic — although the boundaries fluctuate — we give preference to the following enumeration: object and subject, space and time, which are container-categories; matter and energy, form and number, which are content-categories; quality and quantity, simplicity and complexity, which are attribute categories; the first term of each couple being static, and the second, dynamic, approximately and symbolically speaking. This being granted, we cannot exclude other possible angles of vision, whether they be more analytic, or on the contrary more synthetic; and always prefigured by some symbolism of nature.\textsuperscript{57}

This is not to say that all of the categories are equal: thus, space is related rather to the "being" of things, and time, to their "becoming." At the beginning of a human cycle — in the "golden age" — it is in a way space which predominates, whereas at the end of the cycle, it is time. Likewise, form prevails over number, just as quality takes precedence over quantity. And so too, matter takes precedence over energy, just as "to exist" takes precedence over "to do," but here one could no doubt also say the inverse, by opposing the "subtle" to the "gross." As for the categories subject and object, they are ontologically, and therefore qualitatively, interchangeable: the whole question is to know on which of the poles the

\textsuperscript{56} The Greek word \textit{kategoria}, "argument," means in the last analysis: an ultimate form of thought, that is to say a key-notion capable of classifying other notions, or even all the notions having a bearing on existence.

\textsuperscript{*} Translator's note: See also the author's chapters "Structure and Universality of the Conditions of Existence," in \textit{From the Divine to the Human} and "Hypostatic and Cosmic Numbers," in \textit{Esoterism as Principle and as Way}.

\textsuperscript{57} Let us mention this fundamental enumeration: space, time, form, number, matter — fundamental because of its relation to the symbolism of the pentagram, the human body, the hand, the five elements. There are some who put "life" in place of matter, thinking no doubt of energy, which penetrates everything.
emphasis is placed, that is to say, on which side God or His reflection is situated.\textsuperscript{58}

It is not possible to give one simple and definitive answer to the question of knowing how many existential categories there are.\textsuperscript{59} The lines of demarcation in this matter are both precise and vague: on the one hand, the numer of categories chosen in function of any particular definition is precise, but the defining perspectives are diverse; on the other hand, and outside such perspectives or such systems, the number of categories is unlimited, as is that of phenomena. Color for example is a category which embraces all possible colors; but any particular color is a new category and it embraces all of its own shades, but not those of other colors; which amounts to saying that everything involving modalities — or insofar as it involves them — may be considered as being a category. In this way the Aristotelian category of "relation" is the denominator of an indefinite series of other conceivable categories, such as cause and effect, reality and possibility, potentiality and actuality, necessity and liberty, activity and passivity, container and content, excess and privation; the latter distinguo being moreover the point of departure of Peripatetic ethics, which consists in choosing the proper mean.

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The Greeks, and after them Saint Augustine, taught that it is in the nature of the Good (\textit{Agathón}) to communicate itself; that is what explains the presence, at every level of the Universe, of an existential system composed of containers, contents, and modalities, \textit{ad majorem Dei gloriam}.

\textsuperscript{58} The \textit{Vedānta} puts its whole emphasis on the absolute "Self," whereas the religions envisage above all the "God-Object," that is to say the "absolutely other."

\textsuperscript{59} Aristotle indicates ten, but elsewhere only mentions three: substance, quality, relationship.

\textsuperscript{60} There is no reason for objecting here that the possible is also real in its own order, because it goes without saying that from the standpoint of the distinction in question, "real" is a synonym of "effective" or "effected."
The notion of the Good which we have just evoked allows us to come back once again to the crucial problem of evil. The distant and indirect cause of what we rightly call evil — namely privation of the good — is the mystery of All-Possibility: that is to say that the latter, being infinite, necessarily embraces the possibility of its own negation, thus the "possibility of the impossible" or the "being of nothingness." This paradoxical possibility, this "possibility of the absurd" — since it exists and since nothing can be separated from the Good, which coincides with Being — has of necessity a positive function, which is to manifest the Good — or the multiple "goods" — by means of contrast, as much in "time" or succession as in "space" or coexistence. In "space," evil is opposed to good and by that fact heightens the latter's luster and brings out its nature a contrario; in "time," the cessation of evil manifests the victory of the good, in accordance with the principle that vincit omnia Veritas; the two modes illustrate the "unreality" of evil and at the same time its illusory character. In other words: since the function of evil is the contrasting manifestation of good and also the latter's final victory, we may say that evil by its very nature is condemned to its own negation; representing either the "spatial" or "temporal" absence of good, evil thus returns to this absence, which is privation of being and hence nothingness. If one were to object that good is likewise perishable, we would answer that it returns to its celestial or divine prototype in which alone it is wholly "itself"; what is perishable in the good is not the good in itself, it is this or that envelope limiting it. As we have said more than once — and this brings us back to the root of the question — evil is a necessary consequence of remoteness from the Divine Sun, the "overflowing" source of the cosmogonic trajectory; 61 the mystery of mysteries being All-Possibility as such.

A remark is necessary here: one might object that evil likewise, by its very nature, tends to communicate itself; that is true, but it has this

61 Evil — the "serpent" of Paradise — rose out of nothingness as soon as the interior world of the primordial androgyne became exteriorized; now this cosmogonic moment coincides with the creation of Eve, and thus with the scission of the still immaterial androgyne who was the "first Adam." The materialization, or fall, came after the exteriorization and under the influence of the serpent; individualism — an elementary mode of luciferianism — caused the imprisonment in matter, with all the subsequent calamities, but also with the appropriate graces.
tendency precisely because it is opposed to the radiation of the good and thus cannot help imitating the latter in some fashion. For evil is by definition both opposition and imitation: within the framework of opposition it is ontologically forced to imitate; "the more they curse God the more they praise Him," said Meister Eckhart. Evil, insofar as it exists, participates in the good represented by existence.

Good and evil are not, strictly speaking, existential categories as are the object, the subject, space and time; because the good is the very being of things — manifested by the categories precisely — such that they, the things, are all "modes of the good"; whereas evil indicates paradoxically the absence of this being, while annexing certain things or certain characteristics at the level at which they are accessible and by virtue of predispositions allowig it. But despite this reservation, one may consider good and evil as existential categories for the following reasons. The good includes on the one hand all that manifests the qualities of the Divine Principle, and on the other hand all things inasmuch as they manifest this same Principle by their existence, and also inasmuch as they fulfill a necessary ontological function. Evil for its part includes all that manifests a privation from the standpoint of the qualities or from that of Being itself; it is harmful in various ways, even though this harmfulness be neutralized and compensated, in given cases, by positive factors. That is to say that there are things which are bad or harmful in principle but not in fact, just as there are others which are good and benefic in the same way; all of which contributes to the unfolding of the cosmic play with its innumerable combinations.

As for the categories "subject" and "object," we shall begin by taking note of the fact that the object is reality in itself, or reality envisaged in connection with its perceptibility, whereas the subject is consciousness in

62 Because there is, for example, the physical ugliness of a given good man, and the physical beauty of a given bad man.
itself, or consciousness envisaged in relation to its faculty of perception. In both cases there is a relationship of reciprocity and a relationship of divergence: with respect to the first, we would say that the world insofar as it is a perception is part of the subject, which perceives it; inversely the ego, insofar as it is something which the subject perceives as being outside itself, is part of the object. In the second case, that of divergence, we oppose the "in itself," which is evidently objective, to pure consciousness "withdrawn into itself"; in the last analysis this brings us back to transcendence and to immanence, which meet in Unity and in the Indivisible.

On the plane of intellectual, or even simply rational, knowledge, the complementarity "object-subject" is the parallelism between being and thought, the thing and the notion, the formal situation and the notion adequation; this is what constitutes the foundation of Aristotelian logic — or simply of logic as such — the key to which is the syllogism. Let us remark on this occasion that modern men, when they speak of "object" and "subject," tend to think that the former is unknowable and that the latter is incapable of exact knowledge; in other words, they like to evoke the specters of the "in itself" (das Ding an sich) and the supposed inadequacy of cognition. In reality, knowledge of the contingent and the relative is necessarily contingent and relative; not in the sense that it would not be adequate — because adequacy is the very nature of knowledge — but in the sense that we can only perceive one aspect of the object at a time, and this depends on our standpoint, that of the subject, precisely. Only knowledge of the Absolute is absolute, and it is so because, in gnosis, the Absolute knows itself in the depths of the human subject; this is the whole mystery of divine immanence in the microcosm.

What we have just said evidently implies that there is not only the physical object — sensorial or psychic — there is also the meta-physical Object which confers on the world, and thus on what the world contains, all of its reality and all of its meaning. If the object is "the other," the first "Other" is the transcendent Principle, and that is why the notion of the objective embraces on the one hand all that is, and on the other hand the only One that is. And the same, mutatis mutandis, for the notion of the subjective: if on the one hand the subject is the ego both psychic and
sensorial, on the other hand it is the Intellect and the immanent Logos, which is the pure Knower and whose consciousness extends in principle from the human ego to the Divine Self.

The relatively "other" and the relatively "oneself" constitute evidently a complementary opposition; whereas the "absolutely Other" and the "absolutely Oneself" coincide. Here one could object that there is also the confrontation between the "relatively oneself," i.e. the ego, and the "absolutely Other," i.e. God; but in point of fact the God in relation to whom we can be the interlocutor is not the "absolutely Other," or is so only in a "relatively absolute" sense. And if we are able to conceive of the pure Absolute, that is because our Intellect, which is "uncreated and uncreatable," penetrates "to the very depths of God"; once again the Transcendent and the Immanent are One and the same. Liberating Knowledge consists in being aware of the nature of things, because it is in the nature of things that we should be aware of it.

All this amounts to saying that the cosmic object — the world — is as if suspended between two complementary dimensions, namely transcendence and immanence: on the one hand, God is the "Other" who is infinitely "above" the world, and on the other hand, the world is His manifestation in which He is present; this implies that without this immanence the world would be reduced to nothing, and that the world — and all that it contains — is necessarily symbolical. In a certain sense, nothing resembles God; but in another sense, everything resembles Him, at least with respect to positive, not negative, manifestation. Likewise, the human subject — the ego — is as though suspended between "elevation" and "depth": between the Divine Being which resides "in the Heavens," and the Divine Self which resides "in the depths of the heart." The first is the separative dimension, that of adoration, worship, law, obedience, in short, of religion; the second is the unitive perspective, that of wisdom and union; or that of pure sanctity, which by definition is "being" and not merely "thought."

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The nature of things requires an equilibrium between a theosophy which is positive and another which is negative; between a perspective — or way of approach — either cataphatic or apophatic. God knows Himself; we would even say: He "is" knowledge of Himself, and He can project this knowledge into man, without our being able to say on that account that man as such knows God. In any case, the distinction between a conceptualization that is either positive or negative — or inclusive or exclusive — can only take place on the plane of thought or expression, not on that of pure intellection, which essentially transcends the scission between subject and object.

One should not purely and simply confuse consciousness as such with the subject, and existence as such with the object; because the subject exists, and the object contains phenomena connected with consciousness. Furthermore there seems to be an appreciable asymmetry between existence and consciousness, because — as we have just said — the latter is included in the former, while existence is not necessarily conscious; however, existing things need to have a witness in order to exist to the full: in a certain sense, an unconscious object is nothing without a subject perceiving it; the brute existence of the inanimate object being no more than a sort of virtuality.63

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Space differentiates and conserves; time changes and transforms. The importance of certain symbolisms obliges us to mention here things which are at first sight only too evident, but which are in fact rarely examined in depth; namely, and first of all, that space has three dimensions: length, width and height; then six subjective dimensions: above, below, right, left, before, behind. Analogously, time has four objective dimensions — the four phases of a cycle: morning, day,

63 Pascal said, in substance, that we are minute, but that we know it, whereas the universe in incommensurable, but it does not know it.
evening, night; or spring, summer, autumn, winter; or again, childhood, youth, maturity, old age — and two subjective dimensions: the past and the future; the present being beyond our grasp, as is the center in space. All of these elements give rise to various analogies, on the plane of the spiritual or simply moral life as well as on that of ontology or cosmology.

It should be pointed out that space and time — those which we know through experience — include psychic as well as physical phenomena, but do not reach the domain of the spirit. Psychic elements can in fact fix themselves in a given place and have a given duration; which is excluded as regards an idea, a knowledge, a principle, as such.

Let us mention here that instead of speaking of "space" and "time," we could also — as Aristotle does — speak of "place" and "moment," thereby emphasizing their concrete application, but to the detriment of the general notions. This can easily be seen from the following considerations: there is a relationship on the one hand between matter and space, and on the other hand between energy and time: matter is quintessentially ether, which is identical in fact with space, while energy is conceivable — at least in act — only within time because it coincides practically with change.

Transposed into time, the point — a spatial symbol — signifies the instant; psychologically and spiritually speaking, it is concentration. The circle expresses not only spatial infinitude, but also eternity; infinitude, because it prolongs the center and evokes concentric circles repeating themselves without limit; and eternity, because it has neither beginning nor end. The circle evokes the roundness of the celestial vault and that of the horizon, and it is thus an image of space; in an analogous manner, the square evokes the four phases of the annual cycle; consequently it can be an image of time. In space, quaternity signifies stability; in time, it signifies movement; in spirituality, progressive movement as well as

64 Because there are others, each category being a manifestation — at a given cosmic level — of a universal principle. — In our book Survey of Metaphysics and Esoterism (in the chapter "Creation as a Divine Quality") we have specified that "the Hindu conceptions are often more indicative than systematically consistent," having in mind the fact that space and time are presented as being integral parts of "pure" or divine Māyā; taken literally, this would imply that terrestrial things are situated, by virtue of their contents, in the Divine Order; but symbolically or "indicatively" speaking, this seemingly restrictive language is sufficient.
qualitative stability are conditions sine qua non of realization. Thus it is that numerical and geometrical symbols have their applications not only in space, but also in time; as they have them a priori on the ontological, cosmological and spiritual planes, of which the cosmic planes are only projections.

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Time like space contains matter, energy, form and number; nevertheless one may say that matter is closer to space, and energy closer to time. Space equals the ether which fills it and which is the basic matter from which the four other elements and all the substances are derived; and time equals change, and thus the energy which provokes it. To say "matter," is to say "crystallization" or "coagulation"; to say "energy" is to say "vibration."

As regards the category "form" — envisaged a priori under its physical mode — one must distinguish first of all the forms which are two-dimensional from those which are three-dimensional, thus figures from volumes; then, we perceive the diversity of circular, triangular and other forms, in short all the geometrical possibilities, irregular as well as regular; not forgetting, on an entirely different plane, the difference — independent of our tastes — between arbitrary and necessary, beautiful and ugly, noble and vile forms, depending on whether their contents are positive or privative.

In the domain of numbers, one distinguishes first of all between even numbers and odd numbers; the latter refer to unity and evoke the return to the principle, and the former signify projection and therefore increasing remoteness. Next, one distinguishes between the whole numbers, which repeat or increase unity, and fractions, which divide it, the former referring

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65 Transposed to other orders, the difference between planimetric and three-dimensional geometry is equivalent to that between the abstract and the concrete, theory and practice, program and realization, truth and reality, doctrine and sanctity.
to manifestation or effectuation, and the latter — which stay within unity — to the principle or to potentiality. Finally, another distinction is that between numbers which are simply quantitative, and those which are symbolical and qualitative, the latter — such as duality, trinity, quaternity — being equivalent to the fundamental geometric figures and to Pythagorean numbers.

And this is important: there is an analogy between the positive or active principle and odd numbers, and between the negative or passive principle and even numbers; this is the couple Yang and Yin which determines all oppositions and all complementarities, the latter being unitive, such as active and passive, masculine and feminine; and the former being separative, such as positive and negative, good and evil. The odd numbers are centripetal, they bring things back to Unity and consequently represent it in the mode of plurality; whereas the even numbers are centrifugal, they represent projection into the multiple and indefinite. But since the two principles, Yin as well as Yang, have come forth out of Tao — their prefiguration in Tao being respectively Infinitude and Absoluteness — they must necessarily manifest their underlying unity on the very plane of their divergence, and that is what the Yin-Yang sign indicates, where the black part includes a white point, and conversely. In other words, masculinity involves an element of femininity, and femininity an element of masculinity, and each pole possesses, to varying degrees, a function that is positive and another that is negative. In the first case — as we have remarked more than once — the masculine element refers to the Absolute, and the feminine, to the Infinite; in the second case, there is in masculinity a danger of contraction and hardening, and in femininity a tendency to dissolving and indefinite exteriorization. Let us add finally — and this demonstrates in its own way the compensatory reciprocity just mentioned — that in geometrical symbolism, Yang is represented by surfaces which delimit, "enclose" and thus connect with unity; whereas Yin is represented by stars — of three or more branches — which project and "radiate"; all this independently of the question of odd or even numbers.\(^{66}\) This whole digression on a Far Eastern symbol is justified here

\(^{66}\) In an analogous but less direct manner, the Swastika expresses under a "star" form and in centrifugal mode what the Yin-Yang and its derivatives represent under a "surface" form and in centripetal mode. This question has been examined in one of the treatises of symbolist
by the fact that it implies a numerical dimension, or more precisely a doctrine of duality.

There is something quasi-divine about the first four numbers, and likewise about the first four forms, because they are incomparable, on the one hand among themselves and on the other hand in relation to all the other numbers and all the other forms. The point, the line, the triangle, the square are fundamentally differentiated, as if each one constituted a separate species, whereas the subsequent forms, starting with the pentagon, all seem to belong to one and the same species; moreover their series rapidly ends in the circle, since one cannot imagine a regular polygon having a hundred or a thousand angles; already the dodecagon gives the impression of being "out of breath." There is thus something quasi-absolute in the first four forms as in the first four numbers; they are symbols which are properly speaking hypostatic, whereas the number five, together with the pentagon or the pentagram — or the five-branched star — seems to inaugurate the world, the creation, the cosmos, while referring necessarily to prototypes in divinis. In other words, it is the first four numbers and the first four forms which have so to speak the privilege of being able to "define" or "describe" Pure Being; and this is not an arbitrary delimitation, given their altogether fundamental and therefore unparalleled meanings.

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In geometric figures, space becomes form; in rhythm, time becomes number; the world is woven of figures and rhythms, whose beauty or ugliness lies respectively in their regularity or irregularity. And this shows

archeology of the German Emperor William II (Die Chinesische Monade); in the same pamphlet, the author remarks that "this dualism (Yin and Yang) is fundamentally distinct from that of the Persians as it was taught by Zoroaster and later by Manicheism, because for the latter the combat between the two principles is supposed to end in the victory of light, whereas in China Yin and Yang . . . represent a harmonious and balanced relationship."

67 In fact, the circle symbolizes totality, just as the point symbolizes unity or unicity; all the other geometrical figures or numerical values are situated between these two poles.
that beauty does not pertain to form alone, but also to number, in the sense that perfect forms — especially the human body — comprise number in their structure which, precisely, constitutes their regularity and thus their aesthetic value. And if every form is implicitly a number, every number is implicitly a form.

In the category of form, a figure of primary importance is the cross, which is the very symbol of symmetry both in respect to verticality and to horizontality. Vertically, symmetry expresses opposition; horizontally, it expresses complementarity. From another point of view, the vertical line represents creative projection or cosmogonic prolongation and thereby universal totality, the juxtaposition Atma-Maya; the horizontal line, for its part, if it represents in the first place existentially equivalent yet functionally unequal differentiations, it nonetheless comprises incompatibilities such as moral or aesthetic oppositions. Strictly speaking, the vertical axis opposes "degrees" — although this word risks being improper — such as absolute and relative, principle and manifestation, substantial and accidental, we might even say cum grano salis: being and nothingness; whereas the horizontal axis opposes "modes," such as active and passive, dynamic and static, rigorous and gentle, et cetera. However, this does not preclude the modes from necessarily being prefigured on the vertical axis, nor conversely the degrees from being reflected on the horizontal axis; which in each case — mutatis mutandis — confers a new significance upon the elements under consideration. And the following is a principle of primary importance: each thing that we distinguish from the Sovereign Good either prolongs it or is opposed to it, at least apparently, for nothing can really be opposed to God.

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68 Regarding geometrical symbols generally, let us add that tridimensionality makes the symbolism more complex by introducing into the horizontal plane the subjective and the objective, the initial and the terminal, in short, poles that refer to experience, transition, the future.
Until now we have spoken of the four container-categories: object, subject, space, time; and the four content-categories: matter, energy, form, number; next come the attribute categories: quality, quantity, simplicity, complexity, which determine the modes of the preceding categories. Each of the latter comprises in fact one or more qualitative aspects, and then one or more quantitative aspects: an object may possess value because it is made of a precious material, but it may also possess it through the symbolism and beauty of its form; analogously, an object can be imposing either on account of its size or by its repetition or multitude. Quality can be either substantial or expressional; and quantity can be either continuous or discontinuous.

The notion of "size" implied in that of quantity leads us to the following point. In all the existential categories there is an opposition between the "infinitely great" and the "infinitely small," according to the appropriate modes; now nothing can be metaphysically infinite outside the Absolute, hence we must acknowledge that the "two infinities," the small and the great — the word "infinite" having then but a relative and empirical meaning; namely reach a limit, doubtless unimaginable, yet in any case conceivable. For one can perfectly well conceive that both apparent infinitudes open onto nothingness in a certain sense, by a kind of supersaturation and "ontological explosion" — if one may express oneself thus — whose principle or prefiguration is given by the specific limitation of the categories.

Let us note in this connection that from the standpoint of human nature, the infinitely great and the infinitely small are in principle two abysses of exile and terror; we say in principle, because in fact it is scarcely possible to pierce the protective walls of our cosmic position, a position at once providential and normative, man being the real measure of things on pain of being deprived of sufficient reason. What we wish to stress here is that there are cosmic dimensions which by their nature are forbidden to man, mercifully in a certain sense; to attempt to cross our

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69 When we speak of the "infinite," we mean simply that which is without limits in its domain; we see no reason to reserve this term for the metaphysical Infinite only, especially since the usages of language do not oblige us to do so.
barriers is to withdraw from the human and thus from the divine. For it is starting from our providential cosmic position that we can and must realize the meaning of life, and understand deeply that "the kingdom of God is within you."

As regards the notions of "largeness" and "smallness," it may be objected that both of these characteristics represent eminently relative evaluations, and that nothing is small or large in itself; which is both true and false: false, because it amounts to forgetting firstly that the measures of things correspond to archetypal realities, hence to divine intentions, and secondly that man is a criterion of these intentions owing to the fact that his intelligence is "central" hence "total," which is precisely the reason for being of the human condition. To put it differently: a thing is great, extrinsically, because we are less great than it is and, intrinsically, in virtue of the existential possibility it manifests; human subjectivity here is not the cause of some optical illusion, but the consequence of realities, the adequate perception of which is foreseen by the Creator. This point is of extreme importance, for it supports the entire theory of symbolism; moreover, if all evaluation were merely relative or subjective, nothing would be left to evaluate, and the notions of quantity, quality and primacy would lose all meaning. What has just been said shows the falseness of the evolutionist idea that man — his spirit as well as his form — is merely some phase among a thousand others, and thus that there is nothing quasi-absolute, perfect or definitive in this phenomenon "made in the image of God"; in short, that instead of the projection of meaningful archetypes there is nothing but an altogether contingent chain of insignificant forms, always transitory and ipso facto monstrous.

But let us return after this digression to the general question of the attribute-categories, or more exactly to that of the two categories "simplicity" and "complexity." Each category comprises a kernel and an unfolding; we might also say: a "root" and a "crown." For example, the root of space is quite obviously the point or the center, and the crown is voidness or distance; for matter, the root is ether, and the crown, the five elements and the chemical substances; for form, the root is the sphere, and

70 Nuclear physics and the "conquest of space" are enterprises of this kind, of which the least that can be said is that they totally lack barakah.
the crown, the multitude of figures and volumes.

It should be noted that there are perfect and imperfect forms, just as there are precious and vile materials, whereas such an alternative does not seem to exist for space or time, as quality in them appears to reside in their general aspects rather than in some accident. Yet space, which in itself has no center, is like a fabric woven of "stars," in other words, by its very nature it realizes the qualitative idea of the central point, of which sacred geography offers numerous examples, if only in a symbolic and approximate manner. And similarly, time by its very nature comprises "golden ages" which, aside from their necessary cyclical manifestations, are also reflected in a more or less contingent manner in the order of human phenomena. To say "space" is to say "network"; to say "time" is to say "rhythm."

That which must be, hence that which cannot not be, is realized through the categories; they constitute the "theater" of all the modalities of the possible, modalities that are either plausible or paradoxical. In addition, it is important to distinguish between what is possible in principle and what is possible in fact, and likewise as regards impossibilities. In other words, it is necessary to distinguish between things which are realized because they must be so by their very nature, and those which could be realized but are prevented from being so by some contingent cause; and similarly, but conversely, for impossibilities, which may be either principal or accidental, and this to varying degrees. Moreover, it should be specified that there are two main orders of possibilities, the hypostatic and the cosmic, both orders containing possibilities which are either hierarchically arranged or else simply diverse; this is the distinction between degrees and modes — or between the "vertical" and the "horizontal" — of which the cross is universally the symbol.

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Previously, and parenthetically, we have considered the problem of good and evil. Closely related to this question is that of being and nothingness, although the latter term does not represent any direct reality, while nevertheless comprising an indirect one, as is shown by the very existence of the word. Of course, being and nothingness — as well as good and evil — cannot be viewed as existential categories; however they are prototypes of a kind, as are the Absolute and the Infinite or — in a "vertical" sense — Principle and Manifestation, Atma and Maya. It might be objected here that nothingness, being nothing, cannot be the prototype of anything; this is precisely the question we would like to examine here as a matter of practical interest.

The notion of "nothing" is essentially a reference — obviously negative — to something possible or existent, otherwise it would be meaningless and even inconceivable. Indeed, "nothing" indicates by definition the absence of something: it excludes one or many objects, or all objects, according to context; to speak of an intrinsic "nothingness," of a nothing in itself, without reference to the things which it excludes, would be a contradiction in terms. When a receptacle is filled and then emptied, there is a difference; now this difference is a reality, otherwise no one would ever complain about being robbed. If this "nothing" were in itself a "nothingness" — if it had no "referential" character — there would be no difference between presence and absence, plenitude and vacuity, existence and inexistence; and every thief could argue that the "nothing" he produced in someone's purse does not exist; the word "nothing" would be devoid of meaning just as the nothingness is devoid of content. "Nothing," envisaged in a concrete context, can in practice compete with "something"; while an intrinsic nothingness cannot concretely be opposed to anything or be affected by anything in any way. And similarly space, if it were an absolute emptiness — if it did not in practice coincide with ether — could not comprise distance and separation, for a nothingness added to another nothingness — if this were conceivable without absurdity — could not produce a distance.

A logically utilizable "nothing" has therefore nothing absolute about it; it is by definition relative to something, although in a negative manner.

71 In order of superposition or hierarchy, not of juxtaposition or complementarity.
However, it comprises an aspect of absoluteness through the totality of the negation it represents: the difference between 1 and 2 is relative, but the difference between 1 and 0 can be termed absolute, with evident metaphysical reservations. A thing cannot exist half-way, either it exists or it does not exist; consequently, since there is something absolute about existence in relation to inexistence — this being the whole miracle of creation — there is likewise ipso facto something absolute about the negation or exclusion of something existent — not the negation "in itself," but in relation to that which is negated or excluded; this is our well-known thesis of the "relatively absolute."  

The idea of "being" positively implies reality, and restrictively manifestation; we say "restrictively" because manifestation or existence represents a "less" or a limitation in relation to the Principle which is pure Being. In signifying reality, the idea of "being" evokes ipso facto the "good" and also the "more," hence quality and quantity; but above all it evokes "presence." As for the opposite idea of "nothingness," it implies first of all the "absence" of being, or impossibility, and more relatively the absence of determinate things; it also implies, by derivation and by analogy, the phenomenon of "less" and, in another respect, that of "evil." But this idea can also be applied, quite paradoxically, to the transcendent or principal order: from the standpoint of the manifested world — hence from the standpoint of existence in the restricted sense of the term — all that transcends this world and consequently is free from existential limitations, is "nothingness."  

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72 When one, two or three out of four candles are extinguished, the difference in luminosity is relative; but when the last one is extinguished, the difference is total, for it is that between light and darkness.

73 This is what allows negative expressions such as "the Void" (Shunya), "not this, not this" (neti neti), and other terms of the kind to be applied to pure Being, and a fortiori to Beyond-Being. All apophatic theology stems from this principle of terminology.
When we examine the existential categories, it is certainly not to encourage an iconoclastic perspective aiming at the "reduction" of phenomena to their structural conditions, for it is the content, the message, the divine intention which has priority, and not the mechanism of the manifestation; even though, considered in itself, this mechanism can in its turn signify a divine mystery, which is precisely the case of the categories of which the world is woven. One has to insist: nothing is more aberrant than to cry victory because one believes one has dismantled a beauty by reducing it to some mechanism, as if the sufficient reason for such a mechanism were not its result; this, however, is the very essence of the "demystification" so dear to modern man. The realistic attitude towards existence is fundamentally respect and not scorn; adoration and not impiety; praise and not blasphemy. The supreme Being is not only the quasi-mathematical Principle underlying the structure of things, It is also — and even above all — the Sovereign Good which, as such, wills to overflow in order to communicate Its values.

The primacy of the divine intention — hence of the message — in the domain of appearances, implies a quite paradoxical but nonetheless pertinent consequence: namely the existence of a "double reality" which makes one think of the "double truth" of the Scholastics. Thus it is necessary to distinguish, in certain cases, between a "reality of fact" and a "reality of appearance": that the earth is round and turns around the sun is a fact, but that it is flat and that the sun travels from one horizon to another is, in the divine intention, no less a reality for us; otherwise the experience of man — a central and thus "omniscient" creature — would not be, a priori and "naturally," limited to these physically illusory but symbolically meaningful observations. However, from a certain point of view the physical illusion is relative, since for man the earth is unquestionably made up of flat regions, and only their sum — imperceptibly to earthly creatures — constitutes a sphere, so much so that it could be said that the earth is at once flat and round. As for traditional symbolism, it implies a moral consequence, which allows us to conclude that man has the right, in principle and a priori, only to a knowledge that he can bear or that he is capable of assimilating; a knowledge, therefore, that he can integrate into total and spiritual knowledge which he is meant to possess in his quality as
If the earth seems to be motionless while the heavens seem to turn around it, that is because manifestation is passive in relation to the Principle which is active and determines it. In a certain sense, the earth is us, and heaven is time to which we are subject; whence the relationship — not absolute, but nonetheless real — between the stars and our destiny.

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By the nature of things, each category is an image of God and consequently manifests a relationship according to which God may be envisaged. It will doubtless be objected that our categories are strictly existential, hence "creaturely," with the exception of the first two, namely object and subject. But such is in no wise the case, for if it goes without saying that the space and time which we know and which determine us pertain to the world of our experience, it is no less evident that they manifest truly universal conditions which ipso facto encompass all that exists, even though according to very different modes resulting from All-Possibility; in other words, "to exist" is to be included in a "space" and a "time." As regards All-Possibility, or more precisely the "forms" that it actualizes or projects, we shall make the following observation: on the one hand, God always manifests the same principles, possibilities or

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74 Unquestionably, modern science abounds in knowledge, but the fact is that man cannot bear it, either intellectually or morally. It is not for nothing that the sacred Scriptures tend to be as naive as possible, which doubtless arouses the mockery of sceptics, but which does not prevent either the simple or the wise from sleeping tranquilly.

75 A Moslem would say that the immobility of the sun — in relation to the planets — is not visible to men, so that they will not think that the sun is God. It should not be forgotten, moreover, that the sun, along with its entire planetary system, moves in its turn; which fact would have allowed Ptolemy — mutatis mutandis — to make his own Galileo's famous exclamation: Eppur si muove!

* Translator's note: Traditional astrology deals with the symbolism of the correspondences between the macrocosm and the microcosm but does not hold that the heavenly bodies literally exercise an influence on earthly destinies.
archetypes, because being absolute He is immutable, hence always identical to Himself; on the other hand, He manifests them in modes that are always new, from cycle to cycle, because being infinite He comprises inexhaustible possibilities.

It is easy to discover the prefiguration of the couple Matter-Energy in divinis: in effect, God is "Substance" and "Energy," "Being" and "Possibility"; which leads us to the distinction between the Absolute and the Infinite, or more exactly: between the Absoluteness and Infinitude of the Sovereign Good.

Let us now return to the complementarity Space-Time, but envisaged at the ontological level: God is both the "Infinite" and the "Eternal" but from another angle, if it be said that God is "Space," it means that He is Possibility inasmuch as it contains, conserves and diversifies; and if it be said that He is "Time," it means that He is Possibility inasmuch as it produces, modifies, destroys and causes succession. And if space has regions, time has cycles; however, "divine Regions" and "divine Cycles" are not intrinsic divine Qualities, they concern only the relationships between God and the world.

To speak of the divine "Form" is a contradiction in terms, unless by this word is meant the Perfection of the Sovereign Good, at the degree of Being and not beyond. Be that as it may, it is easily conceived why the sun is an image of the divine Being: its form is perfect since it is spherical, its rays are innumerable and limitless; it is made of matter and energy and it produces both heat and light — all so many symbols of the divine Archetype. It is true that from the angle of transcendence nothing resembles God — certain theologians insist upon this not without ferocity, notably Maimonides — whereas from the angle of immanence everything attests to God, if only by the sole miracle of existence. "Nothing is like unto Him," proclaims the Koran, but also: "God is the light of the Heavens and of the earth," and "God's Hand is above their hands." It could also be said that every positive thing necessarily resembles God, but that He Himself resembles nothing.

One could, however, qualify every religion as a "divine Form" — and all the more so the "hypostatic Face" which is revealed in each religion and which characterizes it.
Intrinsically, "quantity" refers to the unlimitedness of the divine Qualities, hence of the Names of God. As regards "God-Number," there is also a mathematical symbolism to consider: as we have remarked more than once — and moreover the matter admits of no doubt — one may, in the divine Order, conceive a Duality, a Trinity, a Quaternity; but the number is then Pythagorean and no longer has any relationship to quantity; it becomes on the contrary qualitative and coincides, by analogy, with geometric forms. In fact, this is intrinsic number — represented arithmtically by the divisions of unity — whereas number in the ordinary sense of the word is extrinsic, hence quantitative.\textsuperscript{77}

The universal poles are the object and the subject: as "Object," God is Reality, the only one that is; now Reality coincides with the knowable: only that is knowable which is real, and conversely. As "Subject," God is Consciousness, again the only one that is; this Consciousness coincides with its content, the unique Real. Relativity is the bipolarization into subject and object; hence into "point of view" and "aspect."

Thus the question of knowing whether "everything began" with the subject or with the object is altogether vain; each of the two poles can be interpreted as the absolute origin of the world. Doubtless one may distinguish between a metaphysics that is "existential" as regards its starting-point, and another that is "intellectual," in the same respect,\textsuperscript{78} but on condition of adding that the pole chosen contains the other pole, and that there is thus only a difference of accentuation involved in the choice, and not an exclusive principle. Finally, the metaphysician needs both perspectives: the "objectivist" vision being determined primarily by the discernment of the Principle inasmuch as it manifests the Universe, and the "subjectivist" vision on the contrary having in view above all the reintegration — at some level — of consciousness into its Archetype, the Divine Self. At some level: for "in my Father's house are many

\textsuperscript{77} The fundamental geometric figures — point, circle, square, cross, spiral — can signify "divine Forms" in the sense that each of them from a certain angle of vision retraces the relationship between the Absolute and the Relative, Ātmā and Māyā, or Nitya and Līlā; and this \textit{in divinis} as well as in the manifested Universe.

\textsuperscript{78} It is thus that Vedanta is founded on the subjective symbolism of the "Self." And in Sufism, there is the quasi-rivalry between a school founded upon "Being" (\textit{Wujūd}) and another founded upon "Perception" (\textit{Shuhūd}).
mansions."

We have said above that every category comprises a root; now this root is a kind of theophany or sacrament. Thus the spiritual significance of these roots or seeds is plain: the category "object," whose point of departure is "the other" in itself, demands on our part discernment, the sense of the real, attachment to the truth, justice, thus also humility; and the category "subject," whose point of departure is the most intimate "oneself," namely the "heart," demands contemplation, the sense of the sacred, inwardness, holiness, thus also charity. Still from the standpoint of spiritual alchemy, space evokes the mystery of the center, which coincides with that of the heart-intellect; time evokes the mystery of the present, which coincides with that of spiritual wakefulness. Infinite center and eternal present: the purified heart is Elijah's altar upon which the heavenly fire descends.

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The consideration of the existential categories is important because it pertains not only to knowledge of the world, but also to the knowledge of God: the categories are hypostases which are prolonged in creation and govern it. They are "divinities" — or archangelic projections — which in the final analysis become manifest before our very eyes and within our very being, and which constitute the warp and weft of existence or of the universe. Of all this profane man has no awareness; with the assurance of a sleepwalker, he moves exclusively in the fragile content of the cosmic fabric, the divine workmanship of which he practically forgets, whence an unrealistic overestimation of things and facts as well as of himself, as if phenomena were absolute and as if earthly life were eternal. In this there lies a prodigious lack of imagination, all the more astonishing and absurd in that it affects men who are supposed to be intelligent and who claim insistently that they are, but who precisely forget that intelligence is the perception of the real and not the "intellectualization" of the unreal.
A priori, man is indeed obliged to register concrete phenomena and this is quite normal for him, all the more so in that phenomena can be meaningful, to say the least, and that there are phenomena which are sacred; but while looking at phenomena with the respect that may be due them, man must be deeply aware of that universal and underlying mystery which is the manifestation of Ātmā. And this awareness not only prolongs necessarily the awareness we have of the Absolute as such, but also confers upon our relationship with phenomena its rightful proportions, its legitimacy, its nobility and its spiritual significance.
Concerning an Onto-Cosmological Ambiguity

When the Intellect envisages the Divine Reality from the standpoint of the Absolute, this Reality reveals itself as perfectly one, or "nondual" — as the Vedantists would say in order to avoid any suspicion of limiting determination; but when this same Reality is envisaged by the Intellect starting from the Relative, it reveals itself under the three hierarchized aspects of Principle-Essence, Principle-Person and Principle-Demiurge. The word "Principle" is repeated here intentionally, in order to show clearly that it is always a question of the one and indivisible Reality.

The importance of these distinctions appears concretely when people speak of God's "will" and His "actions"; in so doing they readily reduce Divine Reality to the Person alone, while improperly claiming for the latter the metaphysical prerogatives of the Essence as well as the cosmic activities of the Demiurge. This is the ordinary perspective of the anthropomorphic monotheism of the Semites; and since this way of looking at things gives rise to inevitable contradictions, the theologies — and even the Scriptures in their own way — speak of mysteries and respond to our need for causality by refusing to give any explanation. If we come back here to a problem which we have dealt with more than once, it is with the intention of clarifying the problem of divine causality — *ad majorem Dei gloriam* — and of situating the principle of evil, the existence of which is one of the great pitfalls of religious thinking.

To the Principle-Essence belongs Possibility as such, thus universal Possibility; the Principle-Person is not responsible for the latter, because it merely crystallizes the fundamental consequences thereof, namely the archetypes or the "ideas." The Principle-Demiurge, in its turn, does not bear the responsibility for the archetypes; it merely transfers them to the universal substance, whose center it occupies and which obliges it to differentiate and particularize them, as well as to contrast them, in conformity with the characteristic structure of this substance.

In other words: it is in the supreme and essential Principle that Possibility as such originates; and it is in the self-determined and personal Principle that the fundamental possibilities originate; and it is to the
manifested and demiurgic Principle that the contingent possibilities are ascribable, down to the most insignificant "chance happenings," which are nonetheless "willed by God" since they exist. And it is from this third "hypostasis" of the Principle that the evil genius derives, not directly, but by a sort of "fall," ontologically foreseen since a radiation always implies a movement away from the Center.

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In Semitic monotheism, Satan appears first of all as an evil genius paradoxically in the service of God: he is at one and the same time the accuser, the seducer and the corrupter; it is only later that he reveals himself as the enemy of God and as the principle of evil itself. In the Koran as in the Bible, the *princeps huius mundi* manifests himself under the two aspects just mentioned: he is the vehicle for carrying out such and such a punishment willed by God as well as of his own revolt against all divine volition. In fact, the Bible sometimes attributes ways of acting to God that it could with better reason attribute to the adversary: when God "hardens the heart of Pharaoh," He necessarily does so in an indirect manner and by means of the cosmic power of subversion; thus it is that Islamic theology specifies that "God leads into error" — according to the Koran — by turning away from man, not by determining him; which amounts to saying that God "permits" evil but does not accomplish it. "Turning away" from man, God abandons him to the devil whom man himself had chosen previously; and that is why the Koran says more than once that it is not God who wrongs man but that it is man who wrongs himself; metaphysically, man punishes or condemns himself a priori by his initial and substantial possibility. It should be pointed out here that the

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79 The Midrash, and after it the Koran, attribute the same paradox to Solomon, who had in his service demons to carry out all sorts of tasks; something which is indirectly connected with magic, accessible de jure to initiates only. Another example of this same paradox, in human society, is the executioner, the "legalized criminal" who executes the judge's sentences.

80 This is the meaning of the "primordial pact" between God and man: "And when thy Lord
"devil" is less the principle of evil than the adaptation of this principle to the human world, hence the personification of the genius of darkness; he pertains accordingly, not to the principial order, but to the psychic domain. He is "made of fire," as the Koran says, and he is a jinn, not a principial power, although he prolongs the latter; but this prolongation amounts, precisely, to a sort of fall.

If for the Shamanists there is no devil, that is because they envisage evil in its principial and non-humanized aspect: they distinguish between a "divinity" who is beneficent and another who is maleficent, because all the cosmic laws have a celestial origin. Although man necessarily occupies a central position in the Universe, he does not detach himself from it nor does he oppose it; Shamanism is not "humanistic" and for that reason man does not appear there as the lord, or even the tyrant, of the surrounding world; a personification of evil is scarcely called for in a world where man is organically integrated into a more or less divine whole. We meet with this perspective likewise in Hinduism, where evil is deified as well as "demonized"; it is well known that Hinduism tends to realize every possible perspective, from monotheism to Shamanism. For that matter, even the Koran makes Job say, "the devil hath afflicted me with calamity and pain" (Sura "Sad," 41), whereas, according to the Islamic perspective — or the monotheistic perspective in general — illness like all other trials in life could only come from a divine will; mā shā'a 'Llāh; in the aforementioned passage there is thus a projection of a divine function into the demon, or on the contrary "demonization" of the same a priori divine, but privative, function. Likewise, in Shiva — not the supreme Shiva of course, which is identical with Parabrahma, but the demiurgic Shiva of the Trimūrti — it is not always easy to make a clear separation between principial necessity and demoniacal initiative; or between the wrath of Heaven and this or that malefic caprice of the

brought forth their descendants from the loins of the sons of Adam and took them to witness against themselves, saying, Am I not your Lord? They answered, Yea, we do bear witness. This was done lest ye should say, at the day of Resurrection: Verily, of this were we unaware" (Koran, Sura "The Heights," 172). This means that the particular individual possibility contains by definition the consciousness of the divine and normative Possibility, to which it conforms or to which it is opposed; the opposition being the Luciferian desire to be "like God."
samsāra.\textsuperscript{81}

Be that as it may, there is some ambiguity, traditionally speaking, concerning certain negative functions of the Logos-Demiurge on the one hand, and particular aspects of satanic personification on the other, so much so that one could say that the lowest point of the demiurgic domain and the highest point of the satanic domain can coincide, as is shown by certain terrifying images of divinities, in the Mahayanic as well as in the Hindu pantheon. For "it takes all kinds to make a world"; even a celestial one.

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The myth of Lucifer's fall — or the "fall of the angels" — can be interpreted at different levels, but the most profound meaning is the one which pertains to the ontological order. The dominion of Māyā — the total Universe — extends starting from God the Creator inclusively to what we would call "nothingness," if it existed; the reason we can speak of it, is that nothingness exists as a tendency, or under the appearance of a power in itself ungraspable which eats away existing things: things being within its reach by the fact that they are situated in the "peripheral" or "terrestrial" world, the samsāra; not in the "central" and "celestial" world, the Swarga. Thus, the whole Universe is situated between two "nothingnesses," one divine and concrete, and one cosmic and abstract: the Principle-Essence, which is above Being itself, and the nothing which, placed evidently "beneath" existence, tends to negate and to pervert the latter. This is all that the divine Possibility concedes to impossibility, and

\textsuperscript{81} Goethe's Mephisto confuses the two things: for him, evil is "sin and destruction"; sin pertains, however, to Satan, and destruction to Shiva. Satan causes souls to lose themselves, smiling; Shiva causes their salvation, fulminating. In principle, one could admit that death comes from the devil since he is the one who is primarily responsible for it, given the fact that he caused the fall of man and the loss of Paradise; but de facto, death is attributed to God's will, or more directly — in Islam — to the intervention of the Archangel Izrā'īl, described as being the "most terrible" being that God created, and comparable, therefore, to the black and terrifying goddess Kali, the spouse of Shiva.
It does so while lending impossibility a semblance of indirect reality — by virtue of the Infinitude which pertains to All-Possibility, or rather coincides with It.

Thus, what is the highest affirms itself also at the lowest rung of the ladder; this truth is symbolized by the seal of Solomon. To the Divine Nothingness — for the principal Reality always appears as a nothingness in relation to the inferior degrees — seems to be opposed nothingness pure and simple; we say "seems," because there is no thing that could be opposed to the Absolute. When a tree is reflected in a lake, its summit in the reflected image is at the bottom; this is what happens also, or rather a priori, in the ontological order. The reflected and inverted summit of the tree is unreal — since it is only an optical illusion — like nothingness tending to transcend the world by annihilating it, and tending thus to imitate — or to "ape" — the Transcendence of the Supreme Principle.

Let us summarize: the dominion of Māyā — which extends from the personal and creating God to the material world — is as if suspended between two nothingnesses: the "Divine Nothingness," which we term thus because there is not a trace of determination or affirmation in it; and nothingness properly speaking, nothingness pure and simple, about which one can speak only on account of its existential effects; it is the "existing inexistence" or the "possible impossibility." The All and the nothing: the All is so overflowing that it even lends an appearance of existence to nothing. Some people will ask: Why is this so? One could just as well ask why Being is Being; it is the very nature of Being which provides the answer.

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82 The creating God likewise appears as a nothingness from the human standpoint, whence the "obscure merit of faith"; whence too the possibility of atheism, for those who believe only in what they see.

83 From the standpoint of human intelligibility, Māya is a greater mystery than Ātmā; and within the framework of Māya, evil is a greater mystery than the good. Within the framework of evil finally, human absurdity is a greater mystery, if one may say so, than natural calamities.
The All or the nothing, we have said. That is also the profound meaning of Zoroastrian dualism: Ahuramazda or Ormuzd is "That which alone is," and Angromainyu or Ahriman, "that which is not" but "wishes to be" to the detriment of that which is; it is always the illusory struggle — in Mâyâ — of the impossible against All-Possibility. But where then, one may ask, will this impossible, or this nothingness travestied transitorily as something possible, be at the final victory of Ormuzd? First of all, one must not confuse the laws of cosmic cycles — not even the great universal cycle — with the laws of ontology, which coincide with pure principles; from the standpoint of these principles, the victory is always there since the Principle alone is real: the "Supreme Nothingness" precisely. As for the cosmic cycles, the final victory means, not that the possibility of operatively satanic "nothingness" is abolished, but that the door of existence is closed to it; "efficient nothingness," so to speak, is always included in All-Possibility as a potentiality, and this, let it be said again, in virtue of the Infinitude of the "Divine Nothingness." Infinity implies by definition the at least symbolical possibility of its own negation; hence the "existentialization" of nothingness. "And the more man blasphemes," Meister Eckhart says, "the more he praises God"; in puffing itself up with pride in order to deny That which is, the existentialized nothingness pays homage to Being, the source of all existence.
Degrees and Scope of Theism

Each of the ideas associated with the term "theism" can have a legitimate meaning, on condition that it be interpreted in accordance with a metaphysically correct intention. Even "atheism" has an admissible meaning if — interpreted in accordance with the Buddhist point of view — it refers to an exclusively "subjective" and immanentist perspective, and this in a spiritual, not humanistic and profane, sense of course; however, this term is too spoiled by its purely negative application to be acceptable. Similarly, all the other expressions constructed with "theism" are somewhat hazardous, except for the word "monotheism"; but our purpose here is not to explain terms, but things; we shall use terms simply as points of reference.

Having voiced these reservations, we may call "metatheism" the Vedantic or Taoist idea of a supra-ontological Reality — the suprapersonal Ātmā — in order to indicate clearly that this idea basically transcends all theism properly so called; for a "God" creates, speaks, legislates, judges and saves, which the Divine Essence could not do, since by definition it excludes all Māyā, and consequently has no associate. Doubtless, theism — or monotheism — does not negate this Essence, but it puts it in parentheses, and takes it into account only incidentally and timidly, or by ascribing it to the personal God — this being the origin of the contradictions between a Sovereign Good which seems to "will" evil — since It cannot prevent it — even though It is necessarily opposed to it and even though It is omnipotent. We shall not return here to the solution of this paradox, which we have dealt with on other occasions.

After theism properly so called, which is based upon the distinction between the creative Principle and the created world, it is necessary to consider what may be termed "pneumatotheism" or "uranotheism," the first expression referring to the "Spirit of God" which is reflected at the enter of the cosmos, and the second, referring to the "Heavens" which God inhabits, according to the Lord's Prayer. Even monotheism, rigorous as it is in its distinction between God and the world, Creator and created, Principle and manifestation, incidentally includes "Divine Manifestation"
within the principial Order, exactly as it sometimes includes — in an inverse sense\textsuperscript{84} — the Essence in the Person, to the extent, precisely, that it cannot help being conscious of the Essence or its traces.

But monotheism will never go so far as to include in the Divine Order the infra-angelic world of the "spirits," that is, psychic creatures; thus it will never accept what we may designate by the term "pantheism." We use this term here without lending it the deist and Spinozan meaning that it has conventionally\textsuperscript{85} for the Divinity-synthesis in question is not the \textit{Deus sive natura} of the philosophers. Indeed, for the Shamanists — who are the traditional "pantheists" — God is situated above the world, but He penetrates it and manifests Himself "consciously" through the angels and the spirits\textsuperscript{86} this is the religion of the Siberians, of Bön-Po Tibetans, the Shintoists, the American Indians, and even, as regards its mythological foundation, the Confucianists and the Taoists. It is easy to conceive how this "pantheism" is linked to magic if one takes into account the practically divine function assumed in it by the "spirits," namely, the \textit{kami} of Shintoism and the \textit{manitu} or \textit{wakan} of the Indian tradition of North America.

The above represents the extreme limit of what still may be properly termed "theism"; what lies below is pantheism in the classical sense of the word, for which God is all that exists, no more no less. It may perhaps be objected that for the Shamanists also, each animal and each plant is a divine manifestation; but in this case, it is the underlying soul that counts, or the genius of the species, hence the archetype, and not the physical form as such. The metaphysician, who is not thereby a Shamanist, nonetheless shares in this way of looking at things: for him, everything is integrated into the universal Substance, hence into Existence, and then into given

\textsuperscript{84} That is, in this case the "annexation" operates in an ascending direction, whereas in the preceding case it operates in a descending direction. Clearly, it would be improper to take the word "God" exclusively in the usual and personalized sense, unless the context demands this restriction.

\textsuperscript{85} The term "pantheism" originated with an English "free thinker" of the eighteenth century, John Toland, whose aim was to deny the supernatural in religion.

\textsuperscript{86} Such as sylphs, salamanders, undines, gnomes. Paracelsus wrote on these kinds of creatures; they are the elves of the Scandinavians and the jinn of the Arabs. Fairies and peris, feminine genii, belong to the same category.
Qualities, Faculties or Functions, for "everything is Ātmā"; but this outlook never amounts to the total doctrine, it is simply an aspect of what we have termed the "metatheistic" perspective. For "extremes meet": to understand the Divine Essence is at the same stroke to understand the "indirect divinity" of all that is "not nothing"; but this understanding has no connection with an exclusive, hence abusive, worship of spirits or visible phenomena. An authentic metaphysician spontaneously feels a certain respect, not for privative phenomena as such, but for all phenomena inasmuch as they manifest universal Possibility, and which for that reason bear the signature of the Absolute.  

To return to the question of pantheism, we would say that it is essentially the point of view of immanence: now immanence is not only the presence of the divine in our soul, it is also this presence around us, in the world, just as inversely, transcendence is the inaccessibility of God, not only above us, in the Heavens, but also within us, in the depths of the heart. There are two deviations of immanence: one objective and the other subjective: the first is either idolatry or the idolatrous worship of the phenomena of nature, and the second is the self-divinization of a monarch, notably that of the Biblical Pharaoh, and later that of the Roman emperors.

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So many theisms, so many forms of worship: to "pneumatoltheism" or "uranotheism" — which we may also term "logotheism" — corresponds "logolatry," thus the worship of the Avatāra to which is attached metaphysically the worship — if this word is applicable here — of the immanent Logos, namely of the pure Intellect. To pantheism is attached

87 Hinduism being a tradition based upon metaphysics, the pantheistic perspective is necessarily manifested within it, as is shown by such forms of worship as that of the sun, of the Ganges, and other phenomena of nature; without forgetting the worship of certain animals, such as the cow, especially, or more precisely, the zebu, which was already sacred for the ancient Mesopotamians, and whose head, with its horns in the form of a crescent, recalls that of the Egyptian Apis.

88 At least a priori, leaving out of consideration mystical union or metaphysical realization.
heliolatry, or astrolatry in general, and also, in many cases, zoolatry, these being deviations, clearly, if by "worship" we mean an adoration properly so called.

Regarding the worship of animals, the following has to be taken into account. Doubtless, animals are inferior to man, but in respect to the symbolism concerning spiritual realities, they can evoke principles, norms, ideas, and therefore also angelic powers, depending on the animal species in view — at least such is the case when the symbolism resides in the nature of the animal, not when it is conventionally added to it in virtue of a mere association of ideas, as is the case when the bear is seen as a symbol of royal power, and complementally, the boar as a symbol of spiritual authority; in such cases, the symbolism is based, not on the intrinsic character of the animal, but upon an altogether outward aspect such as a particular physical detail or manner of behavior. Man is a central, hence integral or total being; he can be anything, according to his individual value — or lack thereof; an animal, on the contrary, depending on the species, incarnates either a particular value or a particular nonvalue; in the first case, it is for man the living image of an archetype, hence a norm, an ideal, and can even become the vehicle or support of spiritual influences, so much so that the notion of "sacred animal" is not an empty word. That an animal can also become the vehicle of any kind of magical or psychic influences, explains its ambiguity, and thus the ambiguity of its worship, an equivocalness resulting a priori from the half heavenly half earthly, or half spiritual half psychic nature of operative pantheism, hence of Shamanism.89

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89 Thus it is probable, in the case of the Shamanism of the American Indians, that the proximity of Christianity, so injurious in some altogether extrinsic, accidental and human respects, had at the same time an equilibrating influence from a strictly spiritual point of view, hence in virtue of the intrinsic values of the Christian message. Missionaries are one thing, and the Gospel is another.
In addition, one can distinguish even within one and the same theism several forms of worship: Islam, for example, offers us not only an adoration founded on the love of God — in virtue of the divine quality of "Benevolence" (Rahmah)\(^90\) — but also an adoration founded upon fear and the worship of Power; this second perspective, which is that of 'Ashari and, with some extenuating shades of meaning, that of Ghazali, is in principle fundamental for Islamic theology, but in fact it is compensated in the collective consciousness by an attitude, if not of mystical love, at least of trust, and by other factors conforming to the needs and rights of human nature. Be that as it may, the great pitfall of monotheism is its need — since "God is one" and since this "One" is creative Being — to attribute to Him on the one hand the All-Possibility which in reality pertains to Beyond-Being and for which the personal God could not be held responsible, and on the other hand the most contingent particular possibilities, which pertain to the Logos, center of the Universe and for that reason already "manifested" or cosmic.\(^91\)

Let us not fear to make this last point more precise, at the risk of repeating ourselves, but with an eye to perfect clarity: there is something singularly disproportionate and unlikely in imagining that the Sovereign Good could desire and predestine some particular trivial or vile event, as is assumed explicitly or implicitly by theologians anxious to safeguard at all cost the unity of a God at once absolute and personal. In reality, the personal God — a hypostasis already involved in Relativity although situated beyond particular contingencies — could not "will" such and such "accidental" possibilities; rather, He affirms archetypal possibilities, so that it could be said that God wills possibilities "as such" without concerning Himself directly with "such and such possibilities."\(^92\)

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90 The term Rahmah also contains the ideas of Mercy and Beauty, and then those of Love, and coincides in the final analysis with the Ānanda of Brahmanism, radiant "Beatitude."

91 So as not to risk appearing to introduce a duality, let alone a plurality, into the one and personal God, the Semitic texts and their commentators refuse to give the right answer by stating that God, being "all-powerful," "doeth what He wills"; we find this argument in Isaiah, Job and Saint Paul, as well as in the Koran. It is a double-edged argument, yet for certain psychological reasons it was efficacious for three or four millennia, in the climate for which it was destined.

92 "Such and such possibilities": particular facts, determined by contingency. "Possibilities as such": the principal possibilities or archetypes. It is evident that one could also speak of
Being, or the suprapersonal Essence, can only will All-Possibility in itself, which coincides with Its tendency to radiate — this being the effect of Its Infinitude.

For example, the possibility of man — together with the creatures surrounding him and of which he is the summit and center — falling into this relatively inferior substance which is matter — whereas the substance really proportioned to living beings had been incorruptible and paradisal — is a possibility which could not but be realized, for reasons connected with the principle of universal expansion; now it is this principal possibility that is contained in the consciousness of Being, and not all the possibilities resulting from the "fall" and the multiple consequences and contingencies which it engendered; these come from the Logos only. It is in fact the Logos which directly rules the world, and thus It coincides with the Demiurge of Plato and of the Gnostics, and no less with the Hindu Trinity of the efficient Gods, Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva.;  

But this is what is essential, in the face of the risks of pneumatotheism and angelolatry: Divinity, which is at once "Being" and "Consciousness," comprises — in the direction of Relativity — different "strata of Knowledge," if one may so put it; but this does not prevent It from being absolutely one in itself, for the relationships differ according to perspective; It does not cease to be Itself in any of Its hypostatic self-determinations; It could not lose its simplicity, and It never ceases to be God. Clearly, a God who is mathematically "one" in every respect, could not produce existence; it is not conceivable how He could create the world and speak to man.

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"such and such principal possibilities" and of contingent possibilities "as such," but these are not in question here.
93 And also — according to an obviously different perspective — with the four efficient Archangels of Islam, who pertain to Rūḥ, the "Divine Spirit."
94 Or "Object" and "Subject."
95 As Maimonides imagines, losing sight of the fact that it is not inasmuch as He is Absolute that God deals with the relative; the Divine capacity of projection into relativity, or on the contrary of anticipating it, being an aspect of the Divine Infinitude.
The Hindu spirit, with the penetration and suppleness characterizing it, takes perfectly into account the distinctions which we have just mentioned, but at the cost of what is rightly or wrongly termed "polytheism": wrongly, if by it one means that the supreme Principle is conceived as multiple; and rightly, if one has in mind the more or less popular forms of worship, without forgetting the mythological symbolisms by which they are inspired.

Hinduism, whose genius consists in excluding nothing, also comprises that very particular mode of religion which is gynecolatry; not only because it admits of goddesses, but also and even above all because it practices, in one of its sectors, a monotheism in feminine mode. Let us specify that the basis of all gynecotheism is the deiformity of the human being: if man is "made in the image of God," it is because God is in His way the transcendent prototype of man; now to say man, is also to say woman, since the human being comprises two sexes and since, quite obviously, woman is no less human than her masculine partner. Religious anthropotheism gives rise to two perspectives: either one starts from the idea that man — the male — represents "totality" and thus includes woman, who is a "part" — since Biblically speaking, Adam was before Eve — in which case the Divinity is conceived in a masculine aspect, but not necessarily in an ostentatious manner; or else one starts from the idea that woman is "mother," hence "creatrix," and that moreover — or rather a priori — she manifests the Supraformal, the Infinite, the Mystery, in which case Divinity is conceived in a feminine aspect, or let us say, rather: in its aspect of femininity. This second perspective is that of Shaktism, precisely; as for the first — "androtheism" — it is that of the three Semitic religions, with a certain exception in the case of Christianity which, without granting the Blessed Virgin the worship of "latria," does grant her, and to her alone, the worship of "hyperdulia," which practically, in spite of everything, amounts to a kind of divinization, if not "by right," at least "in

96 This form of worship — Shaktism — is most often situated within Shaivism. The one and supreme Goddess is in fact Durga, the wife of Shiva; however, Shiva becomes secondary next to the all-powerful and omniscient Shakti, rather as is the case when the male and female principles are compared respectively to the moon and the sun, in conformity with the mysticism of dilating extinction in the "Eternal Feminine."
In Hindu terminology, we would say that Mary is a feminine \textit{Avatāra} of supreme degree, as is proven by her qualities of "Bride of the Holy Ghost" and "Co-Redemptress," not to mention the rather problematical epithet "Mother of God"; and as is also shown by the practice of the \textit{Ave Maria}, which pertains to the worship of the Logos, and consequently to the cosmic prolongation of the Divine Order.

But all these demarcations are not solely a question of doctrinal perspective, they are also a matter of religious sensibility, and in this domain we shall not argue as to whether a given option is well-founded or on the contrary insufficient; for if on the one hand man chooses his God, on the other hand too, God chooses his man.

\footnote{Except in Evangelicalism which, in this respect, returns to the perspective of the Old Testament.}
"Our Father Who Art in Heaven"

In the monotheistic Semitic world, Christ was the only one to call God "our Father" and "my Father." Doubtless he was not the first to use this symbolism of paternity, examples of which we find in fact in the Torah: "I (Yahve) will be his father, and he shall be my son" (2 Sam. 7:14); "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103:13); "thou, O Lord art our father" ( Isa. 63:16); "But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (ibid. 64:8); "for I (Yahve) am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn" ( Jer. 31:9); "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10).

All this according to the Torah; Christ, however, made of this symbolism a central idea — the very Name of God, so to speak. In calling God "Father," Christ attests to the "Sovereign Good": he refers on the one hand to the essentiality of the divine Goodness, and on the other hand to the reciprocity between the Creator and the creature "made in His image"; this means that Christ grants priority, not to the divine Power and to the aspect of Lordship, but to the divine Love and to the aspect of Paternity, precisely; as a result, man is presented, not as a simple slave, but as a child who, in relation to his Father, has rights granted to him by that Father, and which stem from his being a "valid interlocutor" and "image of God."

In Christ's language, there is clearly a distinction to be made between "our Father" and "my Father": the relation of filiation is principal and potential in the former case, and fully actual and effective in the second. The ordinary man is "child of God" in the respect we have just indicated, that is, by the simple fact that he is man and hence "interlocutor"; but Christ is "child" or "son of God" in still another respect, which is superimposed onto the preceding; it is, geometrically speaking, what the vertical dimension is to the horizontal, or what the sphere is to the circle: he is "child" or "son" by his personality and not by the simple fact that he belongs to the human species, nor by virtue of an initiation or a

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98 The expression "Our Father" is also to be found in the Talmud and in Jewish liturgy; in the latter it is used ten times a year and in connection with the expression "Our King."
spiritual orientation capable of actualizing a potentiality of *theosis*. For the *Avatāra* is a cosmic phenomenon implying by definition every spiritual perfection possible — as well as every physical perfection — but which no realization on the part of an ordinary man could produce; the *yogi*, the *sannyāsi*, the *jnānī*, can realize *Brahman*, but he will never be Rama or Krishna.*

At this point we would like to digress and say the following: on the one hand, the Gospel says of the Holy Virgin that she is "full of grace" and that "the Lord is with thee," and that "henceforth all generations shall call me blessed"; on the other hand, Christ inherited from the Virgin his entire human nature, from the psychic as well as physical point of view, so that his sacramental body and blood are fundamentally those of the Virgin. Now a person who possesses such prerogatives — to the point of being called "Mother of God" — necessarily has an "avataric" quality, expressed theologically by the idea of "Immaculate Conception"; thus the cult of Mary is not merely a matter of tradition, it clearly results from Scripture.100

Theology is right to acknowledge that in Jesus there is a human nature and a divine nature and that in a certain respect both natures are united in a single person, that of Christ. However the distinction between a "nature" — human or divine — having its own will while not being a "person," and a unique and indivisible "person" having two incommensurable and in principle divergent wills, this distinction greatly

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*Translator's Note: For readers unfamiliar with these Sanskrit terms, the following meanings are offered: *avatara*: Divine descent or incarnation; *yogi*: one who practices, or who has realized, spiritual Union; *sannyasi*: one who has renounced the world, an initiated ascetic; *jnani*: one who follows the path of spiritual Knowledge or who has arrived at this Knowledge; *Brahman*: Supreme or Absolute Reality or Principle; Rama and Krishna are two avatars of Vishnu, who is the Principle in its manifested and "archangelic" aspect of preserver of the cosmos.

99 The Koran says of Mary: "Verily God hath chosen thee and hath purified thee, and hath chosen thee above all the women of the world" (Sura "The Family of 'Imran," 42).

100 Evangelicalism knows nothing of this cult because its aim is to concentrate solely on the Christ-Savior, and because it minimizes the import of the passages that we have quoted, by referring to other passages apparently less favorable to Mary. The upaya, the "saving means," does not always conform to historical facts — very far from it — as is amply proven by religious divergences.
risks being reduced in the final analysis to a question of terminology. Be that as it may, we have no difficulty in acknowledging that the pitfalls implied in the definition of the Man-God surpass the resources of a thought that intends to avoid every misunderstanding at every level; and the same observation applies to certain implicit "clauses" — no doubt unusable dogmatically — in trinitarian theology.**

Unquestionably, the Christian notion of "child of God" indicates an element of esoterism which asserts itself, not in relation to all exoterism, since the notion also comprises an exoteric application, but — from the Christian point of view — in relation to the "Old Law" which seems to be formalistic and to some extent social rather than intrinsically moral. This is to say that the "New Law" represents in its own fashion the perspective of "inwardness" which transcends the perspective of formal prescriptions and observances, while imposing on man an esoterically practicable but socially unrealistic ascesis. Aside from the natural prerogatives of human deiformity, it could be said that it is by the spiritual attitude of inwardness or of essentiality that the "servant" of the "Lord" becomes effectively the "child" of the "Father," which, as a human being, he was potentially or virtually.

Let us specify the following points: the alimentary prescriptions or the prohibitions concerning the Sabbath are plainly outward rules; by their very nature and quantity they constitute an "objective formalism" — willed by God in view of certain temperaments — but not necessarily a "subjective formalism," it being more or less a reduction of the religion to these observances. Be that as it may, the supreme Commandment — in Israel and everywhere else — is the love of God; this love may require us always to be aware of the profound and underlying reasons for given prescriptions, just as it may require only zeal in obedience to the Law; but neither our comprehension nor our zeal confers a quality of inwardness on the prescriptions themselves which by their nature are external. Thus esoterism, in the Hindu world above all, is fully conscious of the relative and conditional character of the rules of conduct; to deny this character is

** Translator’s Note: On this question, see the author’s Christianity/Islam: Essays on Esoteric Ecumenicism, as well as the chapter “Evidence and Mystery” in his book Logic and Transcendence.
The Jew is child of God on account of the Election of Israel; the Christian is such on account of the Redemption. The Jew feels he is a child of God in relation to the "pagans," whereas the Christian feels that way even with regard to the Jews whose perspective seems to him "exterior," or even "carnal." As for Islam, it has neither the notion of "Father" nor that of "child," but it does have that of "Friend" (*Wali*), which is applied both to God and to man: to God who "lends assistance" and to the saints who "help" God; but Islam does not for all that give up the notion of "slave" since for Islam this notion is equivalent to that of "creature." Besides, the primacy accorded to the idea of "Lord" — and the complementary idea of "servant" — also has its merits, by the nature of things; its result is a profound resignation to the "Will of God": a resignation that refuses to ask God why He permits a given trial or does not grant a given favor, and that wisely combines the need for causal explanations with the sense of proportions.

"Our Father who art in Heaven": the specification "in Heaven" indicates transcendence in relation to the earthly state, considered first from the objective and macrocosmic point of view and then from the subjective and microcosmic standpoint. Indeed, "earth" or the "world" can be our individual and more or less sensorial soul as well as the ambience in which we live and which determines us, just as "Heaven" can be our spiritual virtualities as well as the paradisal worlds; for "the kingdom of God is within you."

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101 A practice may be termed "formalist" not because it is based upon a form — otherwise every spiritual practice would pertain to formalism — but because its immediate object belongs to the outward — hence a priori formal — order,

102 If the human complement of the "Lord" (*Rabb*) is logically the "servant" or "slave" ('*abd), the complement of Allāh as such — and He presents Himself as a priori the "Clement" (*Rahmān*) and the "Merciful" (*Rahīm*) — will be man as "vicar on earth" (khalīfah fl'l-'ard).
"Hallowed be Thy Name": this verb "to hallow" is almost synonymous with "to worship" and consequently with "to pray" or "to invoke." To worship God is to be conscious of His transcendence, hence of His absolute primacy on the human plane; and to have this awareness is to think of Him always, in conformity with the parable of the unjust judge as well as with the injunction of the Epistle.\textsuperscript{103} And this is crucial: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou has shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret"; according to the Hesychasts, this chamber is the heart, whose door, open to the world, must be closed. This is quite characteristic of the Christian message, which is a message of contemplative inwardness and sacrificial love, precisely; inwardness being like the consequence — esoteric in varying degrees — of the perspective of love.\textsuperscript{104}

"Thy kingdom come": if the hallowing of the divine Name is connected with man's prayer, the coming of the divine Kingdom is linked to God's response; and this we may paraphrase as follows: "Let Thy Name be uttered in a holy manner, that Thy Grace may descend upon us." It could also be said that the first of the two sayings refers to transcendence, and the second, to immanence: for as the "kingdom of God" is "within you," our first concern ought to be to await it where it is most immediately accessible to us; for, not only is it impossible for us to realize it hic et nunc in the outward world, but every valid and holy work must begin within ourselves, independently of the outward result. And it is not by chance that the saying concerning the Kingdom comes after that of the hallowing of the Name; the unitive dimension in fact presupposes the devotional dimension; the mystery of transcendence must precede and introduce that of immanence.

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\textsuperscript{103} "And shall God not avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you he will avenge them speedily" (Luke 18:7). "Pray without ceasing (sine intermissione)" (1 Thess. 5:17).

\textsuperscript{104} The injunction not to "utter vain words" further reinforces this analogy; the "vain" or "many words" indicate outwardness, which can be interpreted at different levels.
This confronting of the relationships of transcendence and immanence leads us to specify a metaphysically crucial point. God is one, and as a result the Transcendent comprises a dimension of immanence, just as for its part the Immanent comprises a dimension of transcendence: for on the one hand, the divine Presence in the depths of the sanctified heart, or in the pure Intellect, does not lose its transcendence by the fact of its immanence, since the ego is not identified *tale quale* with the Self; and on the other hand, the transcendence of the creative Principle does not preclude the objective and existentiating immanence of the same Principle in creation. In other words: to say transcendence is to say, first of all macrocosm, and to say immanence, is to say a priori microcosm; however, each pole always includes the other, as is shown graphically by the Far Eastern symbol of the Yin-Yang, whose testimony we never tire of invoking in our doctrinal expositions.

On the one hand, there is no transcendence without immanence; for the very perception of transcendence implies immanence in the sense that the knowing subject is situated at the level of the object known; one can know divine truth only "by the Holy Spirit" which is immanent in the Intellect, otherwise man would not be "made in the image of God." On the other hand, here is no immanence without transcendence: that is to say, the ontological, and in principle mystical, continuity between the immanent Divinity and the individual consciousness in no way excludes the discontinuity between these two poles which in truth are incommensurable. We may also express ourselves by specifying that union goes from God to man, but not from man to God. Geometrically speaking, what relates to man is the perspective of the concentric circles, which symbolize the modes in the hierarchical arrangement of conformation to the Center; by contrast, what relates to God is the image of the radii, which project the Center in the direction of our emptiness, reintegrating us by that very fact into its Plenitude.

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105 As Meister Eckhart noted, who was not afraid of words, to say the least.

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But let us return, after this digression, to the idea of the divine "Father." This term, as we have said, has a meaning which differs according to whether it relates to man as such or to Christ alone; but it also has a meaning which differs according to whether it is conceived "vertically" or "horizontally": that is to say, according to whether it relates, either to "Beyond-Being," or to Being. In the first case, the "Father" is the pure Absolute and nothing can be associated with Him; the two other "Persons" already pertain to Relativity, of which they represent the summit; far from pertaining to the manifested world, they, together with the Absolute pure and simple, constitute what we may call the "Divine Order." In the second case — which alone has been retained by dogmatic theology — the "Father" is situated at the same level of ontological reality as the other two hypostases; whence the Trinity "Power," "Wisdom," "Love," if one may express it thus. True, this ontological and "horizontal" Trinity does not coincide with the "pure Absolute," but it is absolute from the point of view of creatures; thus man, when he prays, should not concern himself with the "degrees of reality" comprised in the principial Order, on pain of speaking into the void.

It may be objected that religion has no reason for including the idea of "Beyond-Being," since its aim is the salvation of souls and not metaphysical knowledge, and indeed, as far as its saving function is concerned, religion can do without the idea in question; but in another respect, that of its claim to absoluteness, it must include it, on pain of misleading — or excluding — certain souls or certain intelligences. One is therefore right in thinking that the word "Father" expresses all that it is capable of expressing, at all levels of doctrine and degrees of understanding. What explains certain impasses of dogmatic theology and its recourse to the unsatisfactory notion of "mystery" is precisely the accumulation of unequal perspectives, this accumulation being inevitable since religion must contain everything without for all that having to renounce its specific function.

106 In Vedantic terms: the "vertical" Trinity corresponds to Brahma, Ishvara, Buddhi; and the "horizontal" Trinity — which is to be found in each of these terms — corresponds to Sat, Chit, Ananda.
David, Shankara, Honen

David, Shankaracharya and Honen are spiritual personalities who are in many respects quite different, but who have in common the fact that they each represent an altogether fundamental mode of spirituality, and that they do so in a perfect, unsurpassable and incisive manner.

David is the great personification of prayer; of discourse addressed, from the depths of the heart, to the Divine Person. He thus incarnates all the genius of Israel, all the great Semitic message, which is that of faith; hence all the mystery of man standing before his God, and having nothing to offer but his soul; but offering it entirely, without reticence or reservation. De profundis clamavi ad Te Domine; the creature who stands thus before his Creator knows what it is to be a human being, and what it is to live here below. David represents the man of virtue contending with the powers of evil, yet invincible because he is a man of God.

It is thus that David, in his Psalms, spreads out before us all the treasures of the dialogue between the creature and the Creator. Everything is manifested therein: distress, trust, resignation, certitude, gratitude; and all is combined and becomes a song of glory to the Sovereign Good. It is easy to understand why Jesus is "son of David"; and why — by way of consequence — Mary could be called "daughter" of the Prophet-King, independently of the fact that she is his descendant according to the flesh.

To be a Prophet is to open a way; David, through his Psalms, opened the way of prayer, even though he was not, to be sure, the first to know how to pray. Metaphysically speaking, he manifested in concrete and human mode — not in abstract and doctrinal mode — the reciprocity between Māyā and Ātmā; he incarnated so to speak — and this was the purpose of his coming — all the varied and paradoxical play between contingency and the Absolute, and in this respect he even opened indirectly a way towards gnosis. But e always remains man and, consequently, does not seek to draw away from the human point of view, as is especially attested by Psalm 139: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou

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107 As is attested by the Magnificat, which is altogether in the line of the Psalms.
understandest my thought afar off..." And later: "For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

Independently of the fact that the Psalms, being inspired by the Divine Spirit, must contain implicitly all wisdom, these texts are not lacking in passages capable of directly transmitting esoteric meanings. It is thus that the first of the Psalms speaks of him whose "delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." The law of the Lord is, on the one hand Revelation, and on the other, the Will of God; as for meditation, it signifies a contemplation and not a cry of the soul. Moreover, this meditative contemplation comprises two modes or two degrees: the "day" and the "night"; the first concerning the literal and immediate truth, and the second, esoteric truth. "The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish," for only on the side of the Immutable is there stability, peace and life. And the fourth Psalm speaks to us thus: "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him." This invocation, in fact, is the very essence of the soul of the righteous, at whatever level we envisage the prayer of the heart.

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Aside from the esoteric allusions necessarily contained in the Psalms, it could also be said, from another point of view, that it is Solomon who represents esoterism most directly; thus David and Solomon appear as two inseparable poles, or as the two sides of one and the same Revelation.

David is the builder of Jerusalem; he represents, for Israel, the

108 We do not, however, believe that one can draw "any meaning from any word," for hermeneutics has its laws as does every science; but it is a fact that these rules have often been lost sight of.
passage from nomadism to sedentarism. As for Solomon, he is the builder of the Temple; from David comes the body, from Solomon the heart.\footnote{David, however, chose Mount Zion — as a kind of replacement for Mount Sinai — as the seat of the Ark of the Covenant; Solomon placed it in the Holy-of-Holies.} Solomon also had sanctuaries built for foreign divinities; through this universalism he entered into conflict, not with the formless Truth, but with the Sinaitic, Mosaic, Israelite form of this Truth. Moreover, we may consider the three Books of Solomon to be a spiritual mountain, the Song of Songs being — in the opinion even of the Kabbalists — the summit or the heart; or the wine, in the initiatory sense of the word.

As regards the problem of doctrinal formulation, one should not lose sight of the fact that for the Semites, prior to their contacts with the Greeks, metaphysics pertained in large measure to the inexpressible; now, not to know how to express something — not to know that one can express it or possibly not to wish to express it — is in no wise not to conceive it. And all the more so is this the case in a perspective of transcendence where the accent is on the fear of God, whence the prohibition of pronouncing the supreme Name; whence too the reticence to articulate the divine mysteries.

In Shri Shankaracharya, the distinction between Ātmā and Māyā does not appear as a mystery which is brought out "in the final analysis"; it is expressed from the outset without a veil, which is to say that it constitutes the message itself. As for the veil, which is exoterism, or legalism, Shankara abandons it to others.

Like the inspired Kings of the Biblical world, Shankara is a Prophet, but not the Founder of a religion; his message presupposed a preexisting framework. This is not to say that his message is merely partial; if it can have this appearance in relation to the Hindu system viewed in its totality, it is because, geometrically speaking, it is like the point which does not encompass the periphery; but it cannot be said that this is because something is lacking in the point, which is perfect and can suffice unto itself. Moreover, Providence foresaw for Shankara a quasi-exoteric complement, namely Ramanuja, the great spokesman of Vaishnavite monotheism: the convinced adversary of the Shankarite and Shaivite metatheism, yet tolerated by the Shankarite school as an elementary stage.
Even within Advaita-Vedānta, the necessity for worship is taken into account: the disciples of Shankara do not deprive themselves of adoring and invoking divinities, for they know that they are human beings and that it is proper to put everything in its place. One cannot transcend Māyā without the grace of a divinity which is included within Māyā — who is Ātmā of course, but within Māyā, as we ourselves are. The contact between man and God presupposes a common ground.

One could speak of the "Shankarite miracle," for this intellectual phenomenon is almost unique in its character at once direct, rigorous, explicit and complete; just as the Semites, through their Prophets, have brought the world the great message of Faith, so the Aryans, through Shankara — and in a certain manner also through the Greeks — have brought it the great message of Intellection. This is not to say, obviously, that Shankara was the first in India to speak of this mystery, for one finds it formulated first in the Upanishads, and later by the great commentator Badarayana; but Shankara offers a particularly precise and complete crystallization of it, unique in its perfection and fecundity.

The entire message of the Upanishads, of the Brahma-Sūtras of Badarayana, and finally of Shankara, may be condensed into the following words: "Brahman alone is real; the world is illusion, Māyā; the soul is not other than Brahman."

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Some scholars have quite improperly concluded that the Shankarite advaitism — "non-dualism" — stems in the final analysis from Nagarjuna, hence from mahayanic Buddhism which Shankara condemns implacably; the reason for this false assimilation is that there is a certain parallelism between advaitism and the Nagarjunan perspective in the sense that both represent a metatheistic immanentism; but the starting points are totally different. No doubt, the Buddhist Nirvāṇa is nothing other than the Self, Ātmā; but whereas for the Hindus the starting point is that reflection of the
Self which is the "I," for the Buddhists on the contrary the starting point is entirely negative and moreover purely empirical: it is the Samsāra as the world of suffering, and this world is merely a "void," shūnya, which it is not worth the trouble to try to explain. The Buddhists deny the concrete existence of the soul and consequently also that of the Self — they conceive in negative mode that which the Hindus conceive in positive mode — and the Hindus, for their part reject no less categorically this negativism of the Buddhists, which appears to them like the negation of the Real itself.

Here one may nonetheless wonder — and we cannot avoid this doctrinally important parenthetical insertion — why a mind like Shankara indulged in casting invective even on the very person of the Buddha; now it is excluded that a Shankara could have "indulged" himself; in fact, he exercised in this case a function which we will term a "self-defensive symbolist interpretation"; we meet with such examples in the sacred Scriptures themselves. Shankara's mission was not only to formulate the Advaita-Vedānta, but also to protect the vital milieu of this doctrine against the Buddhist invasion; but he could not have the mission of explaining the intrinsic validity of Buddhism, which did not concern the Hindu world. If Shankara's mission had been to explain traditional universality and thereby the validity of all the forms of revelation and spirituality, it could then be said that he erred in judging Buddhism and the Buddha Shakyamuni; but, again, Shankara's mission was altogether intrinsic — not extrinsic as the study of the diverse traditional forms would have been — consequently he could overlook, and wanted to overlook, the possible value of foreign traditions; he did not practice the "science of religions" (Religionswissenschaft).

On the plane of metaphysics as such — and it is this which alone counts in the final analysis — Shankara was one of the most eminent authorities who has ever lived; his scope was of a "prophetic" order, as we have said, which means that he was as infallible as the Upanishads. The doctrinal and institutional work of Shankara marked the inauguration of a millennium of intellectual and spiritual flowering;¹¹⁰ to say Hindu wisdom,

¹¹⁰ For he did not limit himself to writing treatises, he also founded spiritual centers whose influence was immense and which still exist in our time.
Like Shankara, Honen Shonin was not the founder of the perspective that he personified, but he was its most explicit and incisive representative, and this is precisely what allows us to say that he was the personification of his message. Doubtless — from the point of view of "avataric" phenomenology — he is not situated at the same level as David and Solomon, or as Shankara; the Buddhist equivalent of these rather would be Nagarjuna, the great spokesman of original Mahāyanā. But Nagarjuna — while he eminently represented the invocatory branch of Mahāyanā and is considered to be the first patriarch of this school;¹¹¹ — was hardly explicit concerning the perspective here in question; thus it became necessary later on to expound in detail this particular doctrine, and this was done by the other patriarchs of the so-called "devotional" Buddhism, Honen being the seventh and last of them; his predecessors — after the Indian Vasubandhu — were Chinese, followed by one Japanese.¹¹²

If David incarnates the meeting with God and Prayer, and Shankara metaphysical Truth, Intellection and Meditation, Honen for his part will be like the incarnation of Faith and Invocation; his perspective and his method coincide, as regards the essential, with the way of the "Russian Pilgrim" and the Hindu japa-yoga, as well as with the prapatti — saving trust — of the Vaishnavites. This is to say that it is the way of easiness, of Grace; the word "easiness" is not to be taken here in a pejorative sense, it rather means that the technique of this way is easy. Grace is conditionally acquired; but concrete perseverance is difficult de facto, for in the final analysis, it demands all that we are; man cannot bear the "divine climate" for long, except on condition of gently dying to the world and to himself. In fact, no way, if it is really spiritual, could be "easy" in the vulgar sense

¹¹¹ Founded on the worship of Amitābha Buddha, the great manifestation of saving Mercy.
¹¹² Namely, Tan-Luan, Tao-Cho, Shan-Tao and Genshin. Eminent Japanese precursors who are not counted as Patriarchs were Kuya and Ryonin.
of the word.

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The fundamental idea of the way of Amitābha (Amida in Japanese) coincides in substance with this saying of Christ: "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27). This is the Buddhist perspective of the "power of the other" (tariki, in Japanese), not of "self-power" (jiriki); it means that man adopts an attitude of faith "which moves mountains," combined with a divine and sacramental support which, for its part, is what in reality brings about salvation; there is something analogous in the case of Christian communion, which in fact communicates an incommensurable grace without man having any part in it, except as regards receptivity, which clearly has its requirements.

But the sharp alternative between a "way of merit" and a "way of grace" — for that is what the distinction between the principles jiriki and tariki means in Japanese Buddhism — this alternative is, we think, more theoretical than practical; in concrete reality, there is rather an equilibrium between the two procedures, so that the distinction evokes the Far Eastern symbol of the Yin-Yang, composed, as is known, by a white half containing a black dot, and a black half containing a white dot, this being the very image of harmonious complementarity. Shinran, the disciple of Honen, wished to place the accent on the "power of the other," which from a certain mystical point of view is defensible, on condition of not reproaching Honen for stopping half-way and of having mistakenly maintained an element of "self-power"; for, as initiative and activity are natural to man, we do not see what advantage there would be in depriving him of them. Faith, it seems to us, is much more easy to realize if one allows man the joy of collaborating with it; in our personal activity there is

113 For example, man bears in his soul a feminine element, and woman, a masculine element, and it is necessary thus, not only because every person has two parents, but also because each sex belongs to one and the same human species.
in fact a criterion of concrete reality and a guarantee of efficacy, whereas faith alone — as a condition of salvation — has no support which is ours and which we could control. Honen knew as well as Shinran that the cause of salvation is not in our work but in the grace of Amida; but we must in fact open ourselves in some fashion to this grace, otherwise it would suffice to exist in order to be saved.

The great Semitic message, as we have said in speaking of David, is that of faith; now the fact that devotional Buddhism is founded upon saving faith could cause one to think that in both cases it is a question of the same attitude and the same mystery, and consequently that the two traditional positions coincide. Now, aside from the fact that the element of faith exists necessarily in every religion, there is here this distinction to be made: the Semitic or Abrahamic faith is the fervent acceptance of the omnipotent Invisible and consequently submission to Its Law; whereas the Amidist faith is trust in the saving Will of a particular Buddha, a trust linked to a particular and well defined practice: namely the invocation Namomitābhaya Buddhaya: or Namu Amida Butsu.114

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Way of altogether human Prayer; way of metaphysical Discernment; way of saving Trust: the three ways can be combined because man has many chords in his soul, or in other words, because human subjectivity comprises different sectors. It is true that Prayer and Trust pertain to the same sector; but such is not the case with metaphysical Discernment, whose subject is not the sensible soul, but pure intelligence; which — far from creating an antagonism — permits the simultaneity of parallel approaches. The proof of this is the altogether lyrical piety of a Shankara, his hymns and invocations to the feminine as well as masculine aspects of the transcendent and immanent Divinity: to the Self who a priori is infinitely "other," but who in reality is infinitely "ourselves."

114 "Salutation to the Buddha Amitabha." The second of the two formulas cited is the Japanese adaptation of the Sanskrit formula.
Meditation, concentration, prayer: these three words epitomize the spiritual life, while at the same time indicating its principal modes. Meditation, from our standpoint, is an activity of the intelligence in view of understanding universal truths; concentration, for its part, is an activity of the will in view of assimilating these truths or realities existentially, as it were; and prayer in its turn is an activity of the soul directed towards God.

We have spoken of universal truths; by this term we mean principles which determine everything that exists. The function of the intelligence, from the point of view considered here, is to distinguish between the Absolute and the Relative; its second function will then be, on the one hand to perceive Relativity intellectually insofar as it seemingly enters into the domain of the Absolute and on the other hand to perceive the Absolute as it is reflected in the Relative.

Let it be said again — since the context requires it — that the "pure Absolute" is "the Essence of Essences" or Beyond-Being; as for the Relative, it includes both Being and its central reflection in the world, and then the world itself; Being — or the personal God, the Creator — is the "relative Absolute," if it may be designated thus for want of a less problematical term.

We may thus distinguish in the total Universe four degrees: Beyond-Being, God-Being, Heaven and Earth, this last term designating symbolically and comprehensively all that is situated below the celestial Summit. Or again: Beyond-Being and Being taken together — if one may so express it — constitute the Divine Principle; while Heaven and Earth constitute universal Manifestation — Heaven being able to be conceived as including Being and Beyond-Being, as is suggested by the expression "Our Father who art in heaven."

But the total Universe is not made up of degrees only, there are modes as well; the former are disposed in "vertical" order, while the latter

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115 Or insofar as it appears mysteriously within that which, seen from the standpoint of contingency, is still the Absolute — a paradox which can be explained despite the clumsiness of language, but not in a few words.
are in "horizontal" order, being situated in the appropriate manner at each of the four degrees. There is first of all a duality: an "active" and divinely "masculine" pole, and a "passive" and divinely "feminine" pole; then there comes a trinity: Power, Consciousness and Felicity. Lastly, we may distinguish a quaternity: Rigor and Gentleness, Activity and Passivity; in other words, Purity or Sacrifice, Goodness or Life, Strength or Light — or victorious Act — and finally Beauty or Peace; herein is to be found the origin of all the Qualities, divine and cosmic.

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Following upon meditation, which pertains to Truth and intelligence, comes concentration, which pertains to the Way and the will; there is no Truth that does not have its prolongation in the Way, and there is no intelligence that does not have its prolongation in the will; the authenticity and totality of the values in question require this.

Concentration in itself — apart from its possible contents — ultimately pertains to the "deiformity" of the planes constituting the human microcosm: man is like a tree whose root is the "heart" and whose crown is the "forehead." Now, our mental space — the substance or energy containing or producing thought — is in itself consciousness of the Divine Reality; the mind emptied of all coagulations "thinks God" by its very substance, in "holy silence"; man being "made in the image of God."

The same is true of our bodily substance — or more precisely, our consciousness of this substance — actualized in perfect immobility: the

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116 Purusha and Prakriti, at the level of Being, Ishvara; but these poles are reflected also at the other levels, beginning with the supreme Paramatma in which they necessarily have their root.

117 Sat, Chit, Ananda, which enter into all existence, although in Vedantic parlance these terms designate only the "dimensions" of Atma in itself.

118 Hindu mythology, like every other, designates these Root-Qualities by the names of numerous divinities, the quaternity being moreover the opening onto indefinite differenciation. With the American Indians, the four universal Qualities are manifested mythically by the cardinal points.
moment we do nothing but "exist," we are virtually identified with Being, beyond all cosmic coagulations. Concurrently with bodily consciousness, there is vital, energetical consciousness, in short, life and movement, which — as sacred dances testify — can be vehicles for our participation in cosmic rhythms and in universal life, at all the levels that are accessible to us by virtue of our nature and through Grace.

This leaves, in the human microcosm, the consciousness of self — namely the "heart," which can likewise be the support of an existential "remembrance of God" on the basis of intellectual, ritual and moral conditions that guarantee the legitimacy and efficacy of such an alchemy. Whatever the case, the psychosomatic analogies we have just called to mind convey teachings that concern all men: every human being must, through love of God, strive to "be what he is," to disengage himself from the artificial superstructures that disfigure him and which are none other than the traces of the Fall, in order to become once again a tree whose root is liberating certitude and whose crown is beatific serenity. Human nature is predisposed towards the unitive knowledge of its Divine Model; *amore e'l cuor gentil sono una cosa.*

We must now consider another aspect of the question, which is that of symbolic content. Mental activity is capable not only of thought but also of imagination, thus of visualizing a symbolic form; in like manner, the spirit is sensitive not only to concepts but also to evocative sounds, to auditory symbols; and in like manner again, the body is capable not only of movements that are necessary or useful, but also of symbolic gestures. All this enters into a psychosomatic alchemy of which the spiritual traditions of the East offer us many examples, and of which the Christian liturgies offer echoes. The visual image a priori addresses the mind, thus it pertains to the region of the forehead; sound is in connection with our center, the heart; and symbolic movement, quite evidently, concerns the body. And this relates both to the deiform character of the planes constituting the microcosm and to the alchemy of non-discursive, existential symbols — namely forms, sounds and gestures.

Such is the alchemy of existential participation in the life of the spirit; the mental space participates in it by means of the image, the heart-root through sound, and the body — which is a projection or extension of
the two poles — either through immobility and static gesture or through rhythm and dynamic gesture; and we have in mind here basic postures as well as ritual operations accompanied by an awareness of their profound nature. It goes without saying that all this has its applications in the diverse forms of sacred art or traditional craftsmanship, and sometimes even in legitimate forms of secular art.

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Man possesses a soul, and to have a soul means to pray. Like the soul itself, prayer comprises modes and each mode contains a virtue; to pray, then, is to actualize a virtue and at the same time to sow the seed of it. First of all comes resignation to the Will of God: acceptance of our destiny insofar as we cannot and should not change it; this attitude has to become second nature with us, given that there is always something from which we cannot escape. Correlative to this attitude or virtue there is the compensating attitude of trust: whoso puts his trust in God, while conforming to the Divine demands, will find God altogether disposed to come to his aid; but what we expect from Heaven we must ourselves offer to others: whoso desires mercy for himself must himself be merciful.

Another compensatory attitude with respect to resignation is the petition for help: we have fundamentally the right, based on our acceptance of destiny, to ask God for this good or that favor; but it goes without saying that we can ask nothing of Heaven if we lack gratitude. Now, to be thankful is to be conscious of all the good that Heaven has given us; it is to appreciate the value of even small things and to be content with little. Gratitude is the complement of supplication, just as generosity is the complement of trust in God. The great lesson of prayer is that our relationship with the world depends essentially on our relationship with Heaven.

119 Of which above all Hinduism and Northern Buddhism, with their science of mantra, yantra and mudra, possess the secret.
On the Art of Translating

There is no science of the spiritual without a science of the human, and there is no science of the human without a science of language. This is why it is proper to treat of such secondary things as the art of speaking, of writing or of translating, in the general context of an anthropology determined by metaphysics and spirituality. As Euripides said: "There is nothing shameful in what is necessary for mortals"; now language is necessary, and small things serve great ones.

The notion of translation has two rather different meanings, depending upon whether we meet with it in the West or in the traditional East; both meanings are legitimate, but they should not be confused. First of all, to make a translation is to convey a discourse, such as it is, from one language into another; and it is almost a truism to add that the translation ought to be literal while avoiding faults of grammar and absurdities. The translation ought to be literal to the extent that it can be, and because there is no reason for it not to be, since it is a matter of communicating what the author wished to say and nothing else.\textsuperscript{120} Such is the meaning of the notion of translation in the West, at least in principle, for it is far from being the case that it is always so in fact. In the East, the meaning of the word changes along with a difference in intention, hence with the purpose of the operation. For example, when Buddhist texts were translated from Sanskrit into Chinese, the intention was not to offer a linguistic equivalent, it was to enable the Chinese to understand what those texts intended to offer in substance. From this standpoint, the notion of translation coincides with that of commentary; thus, to translate is at the same time to explain; and nothing prevents the reader from having recourse to the original Sanskrit, if he so desires. But this particular perspective should never be introduced into the art of translating in the ordinary and Western sense of the term; nor must confuse neither divergent intentions nor the sufficient reason for these divergences.

Concerning translation properly so called — not interpretive

\textsuperscript{120} Before a court, what is demanded is "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth"; similarly the translator must communicate "what the author said," "all that the author said," and "nothing but what the author said."
commentary — it goes without saying that a translation must always convey the thought of the author; nothing but his thought, all his thought, whether this be expressed by a complex sentence or by a simple expression. But translation cannot always convey poetical values, and never euphonic ones, the latter pertaining exclusively to the language to be translated, while the former depends, as the case may be, on the grammatical, terminological and rhetorical resources of that language. This is not to say that a translation removes all the value of the original text, for the value of thought is situated beyond linguistic and aesthetic differences. And since thought has priority over style, let alone euphony, a text that would lose all its worth in a correct translation would thereby prove its own lack of worth. All this amounts to saying that a translation can sin, aside from other improprieties, by an over accentuation of the style at the expense of the thought; although there are translators of genius who have succeeded in recreating not only the stylistic climate, but even the musical element.¹²¹

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Keeping to the domain of translation in the strict sense, a question arises: how must one translate, in the Bible for example, a word that in the original language comprises an underlying meaning which it does not possess in the language of the translator, so that the meaning of the word is lost in the translation? Many translators are of the opinion that the word has to be replaced by another; we feel that on the contrary the word has to be translated literally — except when it is a question of a simple turn of phrase, in which case the word is of no importance — in order to safeguard if need be the symbolism of the image, and adding a "translator's note" at the bottom of the page, which is altogether normal for a sacred text.¹²¹

¹²¹ Certain German translations of Dante and Shakespeare have these merits, at least in large measure; this is made easier by the protean side of the Germanic.

* Translator's Note: In the French original, the author now cites several examples of faulty
From a somewhat different point of view, it is important not to confuse words that are nobly popular with words that are vulgar and plebeian. Simple, concrete and everyday words — that can be found in the Bible — should not be replaced by more abstract and learned words; but of course one should use the word that most directly conveys the word to be translated. Similarly, one should never be afraid of using words that are prematurely or arbitrarily considered as being "out of date," in order to avoid being an accomplice of the democratic and demagogic destruction of language; instead of abolishing words that, with a minimum of good will, are perfectly understandable, it is necessary to re-educate readers afflicted with terminological iconoclasm by habituating them to remain faithful to normal language and to take words for what they mean to say. The tendency to attribute particularizing and all too often trivializing nuances to words, ends by rendering language unusable.

All this evokes the question of "purism": there are indeed periods during which a language changes under the influence of new ethnic or religious factors: the Latin of Caesar and Cicero no longer corresponded to the mentality of Italy Christianized and partly Germanized; it had therefore the right to evolve. In our day, on the contrary, not merely degeneration pure and simple, but also the deliberate, eager and crude destruction of language is adorned with the title of "evolution." Be that as it may: in the normal course of things, after natural and legitimate periods of evolution come long periods of stabilization and stability; the safeguarding of the patrimony acquired is the function primarily of the aristocracy, and obviously also — and even above all — of the priesthood which, being the guardian of religion, is thereby also guardian of the dignity of man and of language.

* * *

We have noted above that under normal conditions, one must not translations from the Bible and the Koran into French, which do not apply in English and therefore cannot be included here.
translate freely, nor interpret or comment or paraphrase, except when paraphrase is required for grammatical reasons. Another crucial rule is the following, taking as an example the French and English languages: when a French expression, translated into English, is perfectly understandable and contains no fault, while not being the most usual English expression, there is no reason for replacing it with a "more English" expression; for the French author is not supposed to be an Englishman, and the English reader has the right to notice this, provided it not be at the cost of plain error. This is all the more plausible when the English expression is not only more usual, but also expresses a manner of feeling that is too specifically British; in such a case, it is necessary to avoid the expression so that a non-English author is not presented psychologically as an average Englishman. Once again, we cite this or that language or people by way of examples, for what we say applies to translations generally, whatever be the languages confronted; mutatis mutandis.

After all, it is appropriate to count on the good will of the reader, and thus on a certain tolerance on his part; nothing is more irritating than the falsifications due to a concern for "adaptation," or for "editing" as it is called in English; too often it amounts to taking the reader either to be feeble-minded or for a fanatic of the national mentality. A thought ought to maintain its level: a book addressed to readers that are intelligent does not have to be "adapted" for foreign readers who are not.

We have said above that a translation ought to be as literal as possible; for the least change risks falsifying or eliminating a shade of meaning. When a French expression or turn of phrase can be conveyed as such into English — for example — it should never be conveyed by another one that exists in French; for if the French author had wished to utilize that other figure of speech he would have done so.\footnote{\textsuperscript{122} It goes without saying that in speaking of "French" authors we mean all French-speaking authors regardless of their ethnic origin. Every language comprises ways of thinking and feeling; every man who possesses it assimilates them, at least on the plane of expression if not in depth. Let us note at this point that one meets in every people — and by this we mean a real people and not some political entity — well-known differences in mentality, but which do not leave the framework of the ethnic collectivity in question; the German of the South, for example, can be more "Latin" than the German of the North, and the latter more "Scandinavian" than the former, but both have in common the soul that the German language
Doubtless there are linguistic differences that the translator cannot take into account: for example, words of Latin origin express notions, they intend to be definitions and nothing more, at least a priori, whereas Germanic words call to mind images and experiences. Latin words are ideograms as it were, and Germanic words are rather onomatopoeic; the ancient Romans having been logicians, and the ancient Germans, symbolists, roughly speaking.

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Another point to take into consideration is the following: depending upon the case, the long sentence is as legitimate as the short one; thus a number of clauses should not without hesitation be replaced by short formulations the contours of which might be arbitrary, for then one risks violating logical concatenations; besides, the psychology of the man who by preference uses the long sentence is necessarily different, in some respects, from that of the man who prefers the more or less lapidary phrase. For the former, the sentence is a message comprising several branches and various degrees of importance; for the latter, the sentence conveys a fact or an idea, a single aspect of something complex; in other words, he isolates the constitutive elements of the thought and does not subdivide it in one and the same discourse. It follows that the message of the short sentence ought to be at once whole and homogeneous: the sentence must not contain half of a thought and it must not, moreover, contain two thoughts at once, except when this duality is a bipolarity, in which case unity prevails over duality. Finally, there must be a balance between the sentences: one cannot, in one complex sentence, define the course of a famous man's life, and then, in a short sentence, give the date and place of his death; this information must be put into the complex sentence, or the complex sentence should be subdivided into several independent sentences, in order to be consistent.

manifests, precisely; the phenomenon of dialects changes nothing in all this.
From the standpoint of the art of translation, it goes without saying that in translating, one cannot transform a text made up of long sentences into one of short sentences, even though in certain cases one has to find a middle way. Whatever the value of the short sentence as such — or in a monosyllabic language such as Chinese — it is undeniable that the barbarism of our time prefers the shortened sentence, whereas ancient intellectuality — or even up until the nineteenth century — readily expresses itself by the long and complex sentence with the exception of lapidary sayings, the very content of which requires brevity. These observations are necessarily approximate, for not every barbarian prefers the short sentence nor is every man who does a barbarian; and other reservations of the kind.

* * *

Every language is a soul, said Aristotle; that is to say a psychic or mental dimension. There are languages that are parallel, such as French and Italian, as there are those that are complementary, such as French and German; it could also be said that there are linguistic families, hence genera, that on the one hand include and on the other exclude. Necessarily, the possession of complementary languages is more enriching than that of parallel languages: Meister Eckhart, in his writings and thus in his soul, happily combined the symbolic and imaginative power of the Germanic with the clear rationality and precision of the Latin. This amounts to saying that every man — since mankind is one — bears within himself the virtuality of all languages and thus all souls.

But there are not only neutral differences, there are also qualitative differences: the ancient languages are qualitatively equivalent, not in the sense that they do not each possess their distinctive qualities, but in the sense that all possess a general quality allowing them to serve as a liturgical language, which precisely is not the case with modern languages; and it is a great pity that all too many theologians are unaware of this, in the Greek Church as well as in the Latin Church. In a certain sense, all the
ancient languages are sacred, for the simple reason that language is so, at least a priori; the profanity of language is a specifically modern phenomenon, whose causes coincide with those of modernity as such. This is to say that modern languages lack universality and primordiality because they are marked by individualism and all the hypertrophies and atrophies resulting from it; which does not mean that they are unable to express the highest truths, at least with respect to logic if not in respect to sacred climate. Unquestionably, the languages marked by humanism excel in expressing psychological subtleties, but that is a kind of abuse, since these subtleties all too often have not even the right to exist and in any case ought not to be taken into consideration.

It may be objected that there are also so-called "primitive" languages not fixed in writing; doubtless they are very unequal, but what matters here is that they have never undergone the influence of antimetaphysical and profaning ideologies; even the most disinherited peoples have kept the sense of the sacred.

As for the European languages, there are in summary three degrees to consider: firstly the degree of Greek, Latin, Gothic, Slavonic, which is almost that of sacred languages; secondly the degree of the Italian of Dante or the German of Meister Eckhart, which is at the boundary of liturgically utilizable languages; and thirdly the degree of the European languages after the seventeenth or eighteenth century more or less, which no longer fulfill the requisite conditions for liturgical usage.

All these distinctions do not prevent human language as such from being, by definition, something sacred; thus it is a real loss to neglect it or even to push it into the abyss, as is cheerfully done in our times. One of man's first duties is to speak and write correctly, hence also in a noble fashion, always keeping one's gaze fixed on tradition, which represents and canalizes the divine origin; even profane languages, which are our own, have in themselves maintained that essential element — basically natural to man — that is dignity. The same is not true for demagogic jargons forced upon us in the name of a sincerism inspired by the real or supposed vulgarity of the masses, and in any case propagated by the mass

123 It may be that the boundary line is sometimes uncertain.
media. On the one hand, it is decided that the people are trivial — forgetting that there are people and people — and on the other hand triviality is forced upon them, it being considered as the human norm, whereas in fact it results from irreligion, hence from the loss of the sense of the sacred.

As we have noted above, it is appropriate to distinguish carefully, in the domain of language as well as in others, between evolution and degeneration; in the Mediterranean countries, for example, the Christian religion on the one hand and the influence of the Germanic element on the other, have determined, starting from a basis of Italic and pagan Latin, a certain necessary and providential evolution, so much so that the language of Dante presents itself legitimately as a new language. And this has no connection with the popular negligence characteristic of dialects, nor still less with the systematic destruction of languages.

Thus our interest for the least linguistic matters is explained by the connection between language and spiritual factors. Language is man, and it is therefore our deiformity; to speak is to be "made in the image of God," and "noblesse oblige." Man's first word was a prayer, and could not but be one; the creature is a mirror of the Creator. We could also say that the first word uttered by man was the Name of the Eternal, in answer to the creative Word that projected a divine image into the world.

124 This evil affects English and German much more than the Latin languages. In German, trivialization goes hand in hand with the abolition of the Gothic script, the only one adapted to the imaginative character of this language, but "anachronistic" from the standpoint of the internationalist barbarism of our time. In French, the perfectly unnecessary introduction of English expressions denotes the same tendencies.

125 This epithet means that the flattening of Roman religion necessarily influenced the quality of the language.

126 What Dante termed il dolce stil nuovo, "the sweet new style." Sweet because more melodious, more full of imagery and also closer to religious and contemplative sensibility than that language of logicians, jurists, administrators, military men and chroniclers which is Latin; without forgetting that every correct language becomes spiritualized through its content.
Dress, like language and vertical posture, is one of the prerogatives of man; although doubtless much less important than the two other prerogatives mentioned, it is not less characteristic of *homo faber*. Man is made of intelligence, will and sensibility; he needs a congenial physical ambience; to begin with, a framework for the person he is: Dwelling, tools and then art objects properly so called. Without doubt, the notion of dress is both relative and complex; the quasi-nudity of certain human groups — be they “civilized” or nor — pertains to that same notion to the extent that the vestimentary minima as well ornaments respond to the need of framing the bodily form, the “garment” having as a function either to veil the body or on the contrary to accentuate its symbolism or beauty.

The existence of princely and priestly garments proves that clothing confers a personality upon man, that it expresses or manifests a function which may transcend or ennoble the individual. By manifesting a function, the garment represents its corresponding qualities; to be sure, costume does not change man *ex opere operato*, yet in the normally predisposed person — in him who is sensitive to duties and moral qualities — it actualizes a given awareness of the norm and a given conformity to the archetype, thus to primordiality and universality.\(^\text{127}\) It goes without saying that man should only put on a garment to which he is entitled; usurpation is as demeaning as vanity, and “noblesse oblige.”

The following remark is imperative: the forms bearing witness to an ethnic genius and to a religious perspective always surpass the average of those who are the vehicles for them; the proof of this is that almost all peoples underestimate — effective or virtually — their traditional arts which they betray with a disconcerting facility. Howbeit, one would wish this world here below were like a museum wherein peoples would display

\(^{127}\) “If a French proverb says that ‘the habit does not make the monk,’ there exists a German proverb which says exactly the opposite: *Kleide machen Leute*, ‘clothes make the man’… Everyone can observe how the quality of a particular garment modifies our behavior; it is because the individual tends to efface himself before the function, so that he is as it were remodeled by the costume.” (Jean Hani: *La Divine Liturgie*, the chapter “Dramatis Personae.”)
their beauties only, but this would already be the celestial world. It is nevertheless a kind of realism and also of nobleness to cling first of all to the perception of the archetypal and quasi-divine intentions of things. In certain respects, the dream of the poet and the realism of the wise man meet: the aesthete — if this intelligence shields him from a certain shortsightedness — is always more realistic than a man who is trivial, ungrateful and blasé.

Clothing in itself may represent that which veils, thus exoterism, but it becomes interiorized and “esoterized” through its symbolic elements, its sacerdotal language, precisely. In this case, the garment it its turn represents the soul or the spirit, hence the inward, the body then signifying our material and terrestrial existence only; this it does implicitly and by comparison — not in itself and viewed outside a vestimentary context — for the spiritual primacy of a given garment derives from a more contingent and “later” viewpoint that the spiritual primacy of the body.

According to some, the celestial Virgin who brought the Calumet to the Red Indians was clad in white; according to others she was naked; the white color and nudity both refer to purity, primordiality and essentiality, hence to universality.

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Our intention here is to speak about a vestimentary style almost unknown and insufficiently appreciated, but quite expressive and even fascinating: that of the Indians of the North American Plains; in doing this, we do not have the feeling of enclosing ourselves within too restricted a subject, since to speak about a given art is always to speak about art as such; moreover this subject opens in fact onto considerations of general interest.

When we stand in the midst of a plain, three things strike one's vision: the immense circle of the horizon; the immense vault of the sky; the four cardinal points. It is these elements which primordially determine
the spirit and soul of the Indians; one could say that the entire metaphysics or cosmology is based upon these initial motifs. The son of the famous Black Elk explained to us that the entire religion of the Indians can be represented by a cross inscribed in a circle; the Great Spirit always works in circles, his father had said, and the cross is the well-known doctrine of the four directions of space, upon which is founded the rite of the Calumet. Circle of the Earth, circle of the Sky; East, South, West, North.

The art of the Plains Indians make extensive use of these symbols. We are thinking here a priori of two particularly important motifs: the large sun, whose rays are eagle feathers, and which may be composed of several concentric circles, and the rosette embroidered with porcupine quills which often adorns the garments. These quills in themselves symbolize the rays of the sun, which adds to the solar pattern one more magical quality. The designs of these rosettes consist of a combination of circles and radii, and are thus always an image of the sun or the cosmos; in this last case, the cruciform diagram represents both the four directions of space and the four phases of time: of the day, the year, of life and the cosmic cycle. And let us recall that the concentric circles and the centrifugal radii, in the embroidered rosettes as well as in the feathered suns, respectively represent the ontological or cosmic relationships of discontinuity and continuity, transcendence and immanence.

The eagle feather, like the eagle itself, represents the Great Spirit in general and the divine presence in particular, as we learned from the Sioux; thus it is plausible that the rays of the sun, itself the image of the Great Spirit, be symbolized by feathers. But these very stylized feathers forming the sun of concentric circles also represent the cocoon, symbol of vital potentiality; now life and solar radiation coincide for obvious reasons.

One of the most powerful symbols of the sun is the majestic headdress made of eagle feathers; he who wears it is identified with the solar orb, and it is easy to understand that not everyone is qualified to wear it; its splendor — unique of its kind among all traditional headdress in the world — suggests both royal and priestly dignity, thus the radiance of the

128 In the 19th century, glass beads imported from Europe were used more and more for the embroideries; which gave rise to a new style but not to the detriment of authenticity.
hero and the sage.\textsuperscript{129}

The garb of the chief or the hero suggests the eagle soaring towards the sun: the nature of the eagle is to fly upwards, hence also to see things from afar, from “above” precisely: the eagle soars and then circles in a luminous solitude. The Sun Dance realizes the ascension of the royal bird towards the solar luminary; which evokes the Hindu \textit{deva-yāna} and the Islamic \textit{sirāt al-mustaqīm}. When the Indian prays, he extends his arms upwards, like a bird taking wing.

According to an almost universal tradition, the eagle itself symbolizes the sun, which precisely is expressed by the eagle-feather bonnet. Formerly, each feather had to be earned: the identification of man with the solar orb demands a heroic drama. This is demonstrated by the Sun Dance which implies a multiple victory over the inferior \textit{māyā}, that of the world and that of the ego, spiritually speaking.

In this context one may think of the Hindu \textit{Garuda}, the eagle messenger of the gods, the mount of Vishnu; \textit{Garuda} is the first of the worshippers of this Archangel-God,\textsuperscript{130} he is like the eagle soaring towards the sun. He is also called \textit{Amritā-harana}, “he who has appropriated the Nectar (Amrita) for himself;: \textit{Gaganeshwara}, “Lord of Heaven” and \textit{Nāgāntaka}, “Destroyer of the serpents,” the victor over terrestrial \textit{māyā} in all its aspects. With the Greeks, Hermes has an analogous meaning, which is indicated by the wings adorning his shoulders, his feet and his hat; he is the Mercury of the Romans, who gave his name to the planet nearest the sun.

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\textsuperscript{129} According to the French authors Thévenin and Coze it is “the most majestic headdress ever conceived by the human genius” (\textit{Moeurs et Histoire des Indiens Peaux-Rouges}). Sometimes the feather bonnet is adorned with the horns of the buffalo, which adds to it a pontifical symbol. The feathered spear — the solar ray — prolongs the headdress in a dynamic and combative mode.

\textsuperscript{130} The “Triple Manifestation” (\textit{Trimūrti}) is indeed situated at the archangelical degree; the “White Buffalo Woman” who is the equivalent of Lakshmi, belongs to the same celestial domain. We heard, on the part of Christian Indians, that the White Buffalo Woman is identified with the Virgin Mary, a remark which in itself does not lack profundity.
A very typical element of Indian dress is fringe; they first of all recall rain, which is already a very important image since rain is a message from heaven to earth. But the fringes also symbolize the spiritual fluid of the human person — his orenda, as the Iroquois would say, or his barakah, as would say the Arabs. This observation is all the more plausible when one thinks that instead of the fringes shirts are often decorated with horsehair or with scalps;\textsuperscript{131} now hair, as is well known, hair is the vehicle a magical power, an orenda precisely. We could also say that the fringes are derived from the feathers of a bird, of the eagle above all: arms adorned with fringes are "magically" and spiritually equivalent to the wings of an eagle. Sometimes ermine skins are added to the fringes, thus conferring upon them a quasi-royal symbolism, the ermine being everywhere considered as a sign of majesty.

The most diverse objects may be adorned with embroideries and fringes; one of the most important is the bag containing the “peace pipe” and the ritual tobacco, the function of the latter being to sacrifice itself by burning and to rise towards the Great Spirit. This bag was brought to the Indians, together with the pipe, by the “White Buffalo Woman” (Pté-San-Win) in Lakota; it is she — or rather her celestial prototype, Wohpé — who makes the smoke and our prayers rise towards Heaven.

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Pictorial art in the widest sense — we mean by this the animation of surfaces by means of colors, be it by paintings properly so called, by drawings, engravings or embroideries — implies essentially two dimensions or modes, the figurative and the decorative, both occurring occasionally in the vestimentary art of the Indians as well as in the decoration of their tents. The first mode is executed by the men, the second by the women, which is full of meaning: in effect, the figurative.

\textsuperscript{131} As is proven by history, the sense of the sacred does not exclude ferocity, with the Red Indians any less than with the Zenist Samurai or with our very Christian knights of the Middle Ages.
art refers to what is determined — or central in certain sense — and the decorative art to what is indetermined and spacious or to all-possibility; and this independently of the particular meanings that either the figurative drawings or the geometrical motifs may have. Or again: the figurative art expresses the content of our consciousness, the decorative art our substance; thus it is that man represents an idea whereas woman embodies a manner of being, an existential materia in which the idea may fix itself and expand; it is the complementarity between Truth and Virtue.

Art is in a general way both a means of expression and a means of assimilation: expression of our qualitative — not arbitrary and chaotic — personality, and assimilation of the archetypes thus projected; it is therefore a movement from ourselves to ourselves, or from the immanent Self to transcendent Being, and conversely; a purely empirical “ourselves” means nothing, all values being rooted in the Absolute.

Doubtless, our Indians have no sacred art properly so called apart from that ritual object of primary importance which is the Calumet; nonetheless, they possess to the highest degree the sense of the sacred, and they replace the element “sacred art” with what we could call a “liturgy” of virgin Nature.

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Plains Indian attire “humanizes” virgin Nature, it transmits something of the immensity of the prairies, the depth of the forests, the violence of the wind and other affinities of the kind. It would be wrong to object — as professional “demystifiers” like to do — that Indian dress

132 Neither did Shintoism have a figurative art before the arrival of Buddhism.
133 The vestimentary art of the Forests was analogous — not quite similar — to that of the Plains, but it was rapidly modified upon contact with the whites; without doubt, it is to the white influence that are dues the floral motifs which characterize the embroidery of the Forest Indians and even of some tribes of the Plains Indians. It should not be forgotten that many of the latter had come from the Forests and established themselves in the prairies relatively lately.
had only a limited social and practical bearing, that not all individuals
drew on it, all the more so since for the Red Indians nudity too had a value
both practical and symbolical. What matters here is not the fluctuation of
the modalities, but rather the ethnic genius which, if it exteriorizes in
various ways, remains always true to itself and to its fundamental
message.

It is a curious fact that many people love the Indians but do not dare
admit it, or admit it with fashionable reservations while ostentatiously
disidentifying themselves from Rousseau’s “good savage” as well as from
Cooper’s “noble savage,” and above all from any kind of “romanticism” or
“aestheticism”; without forgetting the preoccupations with not being taken
for a child. As for the “noble savage,” he is not altogether “drawn out of
thin air,” if only for the simple reason that all martial peoples who
habitually and by vocation confront suffering and death and who have a
cult of self-mastery and dignity, possess nobleness and grandeur by the
very nature of things. Such peoples — or such castes — distinguish
themselves also by their fundamental qualities which compensates their
warlike aggressiveness. The Indian of heroic times was not only
 hospitable, he also loved to give and sometimes gave almost everything he
possessed; the “give-aways,” where gifts are exchanged with greatest
generosity, are still being practiced nowadays.

The prestige enjoyed by the Indians in the most diverse milieus and
countries is explained by the truly fascinating coincidence of moral and
aesthetic qualities, but the combination of a both stoic and intrepid courage
and the extraordinary expressiveness of their physiognomies, garments
and implements. The fact that the Indian is perpetuated in children’s
games all over the world and sometimes in adult games, could not be an
accident devoid of meaning; it indicates a cultural message of powerful
originality, a message which cannot die and which survives, or rather
radiates, as best it can.

As far as the properly spiritual message is concerned — which is
remotely akin to the shamanism of the Far East, including Shinto — it
survives in that universal prayer that is the rite of the Calumet and in the
Sun Dance, the sacrificial rite for the renewal of man and the world. One
should also mention a rite of purification, the “sweat lodge,” which
resembles the Finnish sauna, and then too, and above all, the solitary invocation atop a hill; or the occasional wordless prayer of the naked Indian who, with his arms raised towards the sky, bathes in the infinitude of the Great Spirit.

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After all these considerations on various aspects of the Red Indian culture, it does not seem inappropriate to present a few reflections on the tragic destiny of this ethnic group. Taking everything into account, what caused the ruin of the red race and its tradition in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, was the abrupt alternative between the two notions of the “civilized” and the “savage,” each term being taken as an absolute; this made it possible to attribute every value to the white man and leave nothing to the red man, so much so that, according to this perspective, the latter no longer had the right to exist, and this was exactly the conclusion needed. The “noble Red Man” has been much derided, and it still goes on; whereas this notion is the only one that counteracts the stupid and criminal alternative pointed out above, and this proves in a certain way the correctness of the notion in question. In fact, nobleness is a value which is totally foreign to this alternative and which reminds us that a man is man before being either “civilized” or “savage,” and that, consequently, any normal and normative human category possesses the dignity of man, with all the possibilities of value and greatness this dignity implies.

When reducing the difference between the “civilized” and the “savage” to normal proportions, one arrives at the complementarity — and equilibrium — between the “city dweller” and the “nomad” about which Ibn Khaldun has spoken with much insight, attributing to each of the two societies a positive function in the economy of human possibilities. And this also applies to a case like America where, quite obviously, each ethnic group would have had something to learn from the other, a fact that the whites certainly were not ready to admit. On the side of the Red Indians,
the difficulty did not come from a principal prejudice, it came on the one hand from the fact that “civilization” ill-treated them, and on the other, from the fact that the civilized values were — and are — to a great extent compromised by the modern deviation; the whites, all too preoccupied with “things,” have forgotten what man is — while being “humanists”; but it is for that very reason that they have forgotten it.

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It could also be said that the red man — in reality a Mongol emigrated from Siberia more than ten thousand years ago — has been a victim of the democratic system and its blind mechanism. Democracy is practically the tyranny of the majority; the white majority, in America, had no interest in the existence of the red minority, and therefore the army, which in certain cases should have defended the rights of the Indians — rights solemnly guaranteed by treaties — defended the interests of the whites contrary to these agreements. He who says democracy, says demagogy; in such a climate a popular de facto criminality becomes a governmental de jure criminality, at least when the victim is situated outside the collectivity included in a given democratic legality. Of course, the Red Indians were not “citizens,” but they were “compatriots,” to say the least; their status would have in any case been specified juridically on the basis of this definition. A monarch — or, quite paradoxically, a military dictator — could have seen to interracial justice, a democratic president could not; even a man as profoundly noble and morally courageous as Lincoln would have been paralyzed, in this respect, if time had been left for him to take care of the Indians as he had intended.

Besides, if it is absurd to call an unmistakable and organized genocide a “fatality of history,” it is equally absurd to accuse the “Americans” — and them alone — of having killed the red man, for there are no “Americans”; the inhabitants of the New World are European immigrants, no more no less, and it is not these immigrants who invented “civilizationism” and democracy. The Indian, inasmuch as he embodies
virgin Nature, had been killed in Europe, in the minds of men, independently of the conquest of the new continent; and if the Indian had his defenders and friends in Europe, he has had them well before in America itself.
Concerning a Question of Astronomy

One cannot legitimately confront Ptolemy's astronomy with that of Copernicus without taking account a priori of their respective foundations and intentions. The geocentric system, including the cosmological and spiritual speculations connected with it, is based on natural — and profoundly providential — appearances and on symbolism. The heliocentric system, for its part, is based on physical facts and on the desire to know. The first system is inseparable from integral anthropology; the second proposes to remain independent of all human subjectivity and to concern itself solely with objective reality.

Unquestionably, the geocentric system is right from the standpoint of its own foundations: the appearance of the sun rising in the east and setting in the west, or that of the stellar vault describing the same movement, is habitual to man to the point of being part of his nature; it cannot be due to change any more than man is, and that is why it can serve as the basis for a science which is "exact" within its order, and just as complex as the human microcosm. But it is obvious that this does not mean that the heliocentric system is false; besides, the desire to know and therefore to explore is no less natural to man; it is met with in all traditional climates, although with often quite questionable results. The desire to explore is legitimate as long as it is not accompanied by abusive speculations and does not become involved in paths which exceed de facto the average psychological as well as intellectual human capacities; conversely, the standpoint of man relying on "ancestral" and "traditional" natural appearances is legitimate as long as it does not set its face absurdly against empirical evidence.

By force of circumstances, the sacred Scriptures — and with them the traditional mentality — have always made common cause with geocentrism, but this does not mean that they are intrinsically contrary to the facts discovered by profane science and that consequently, these facts

134 For the most ancient Greeks as for the Vedic Hindus, the earth was a disk; later, with Pythagoras, Aristotle, and Anaximander, the prevailing image was that of a spherical earth, but always central and immobile. The heliocentrism of Aristarchus had no success and it was the cosmography of Ptolemy which dominated men's minds up to Copernicus.
must be rejected in the name of tradition and the sacred; for it is a question here of conditional, not absolute, solidarity. If the Scriptures are geocentric, that is because God is only interested in what is for man's real and ultimate good;\(^{135}\) God cannot be interested in cosmic facts that man cannot observe under "normal" conditions and that if discovered thanks to "abnormal" circumstances, he is incapable of reconciling with spiritual symbolisms and of assimilating without plunging into the inhuman; we are speaking here of the average man, for man as such can know all that is knowable, and consequently all that is. The inhuman coincides with the false because man's reason for being is perception, not of every possible phenomenon of course, but of the essential real.

Scientific curiosity has always existed, we repeat; but, under normal conditions, it has been delimited by much more important and more realistic interests, namely, metaphysical science and religion, pure intellection and saving faith. It has been said that the data of modern astronomy favor atheism; which is true de facto, not through any fault of this data — no one is obliged to become an atheist because he understands that the earth turns around the sun — but through the fault of men who are incapable of situating this data correctly; of integrating it into a metaphysical perspective that combines the message of geocentric symbolism with the facts — likewise symbolical in their fashion — observed by an astronomy armed with telescopes. It should be noted, moreover, that the great astronomers of the Renaissance were sincere believers; and so, too, prior to them, were the Moslem astronomers.

An argument in favor of geocentrism could be the fact that the earth is the dwelling place of man — of the summit-creature whose spirit is "central" and therefore total — and that consequently our planet takes precedence over other celestial bodies. It would thus be logical for those bodies to revolve around the earth; the real astronomical situation would merely be the mechanism — a priori hidden — of a superior reality which God offers to man. All this is true in its own order,\(^ {136}\) but it does not

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135 Whence the "noble naivety" (die edle Einfalt) of holy Scripture, according to an expression of Schiller.

136 It should not be forgotten, however, that other planets — possibly situated in other "solar" systems — may be inhabited by beings analogous to man, which weakens considerably the argument in question.
abolish the reality of the "mechanism" nor the fact that this mechanism in turn inevitably manifests a cosmological and metaphysical situation, since all that exists is a message of truths. In this connection man is merely a neutral witness of a materialized ontology; the majesty of the object takes precedence over that of the subject.

All that we have just said shows that it is aberrant to wish to make of the Ptolemaic system an astronomy in the sense of the so-called exact physical science — which it is from the standpoint of the registering of perceptible phenomena — and to wish to oppose thus the geocentrism of the ancients, de facto inevitably "traditional," to the heliocentrism of the moderns. The concept of a sun revolving around the earth is absurd because it is inconceivable that a mass-energy so relatively immense as the sun should revolve around a globe so small as the earth; it is absurd ontologically as well as physically. To be sure, the ancients could not know this disproportion; they could not measure either the expanse of the terrestrial "plain," or the size of the sun in relation to this expanse, any more than they could conceive of the physical consequences of the real situation. But they compensated for this ignorance by metaphysical knowledge which, precisely, is totally lacking in the moderns and which obviously takes precedence over knowledge of physical facts.

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Eminent scholars, it appears, have observed that, all things considered, it is not possible to say which of the two, Ptolemy or Copernicus, is right. We can well imagine that the effort to penetrate to the limits of space, of matter, of energy — we will not discuss the bearing of these notions — could give rise to a "vertigo" allowing one to think that there is no center anywhere and that no thing can be said to revolve around anything else. But the subtleties of the theory of relativity — plausible or not as the case may be — remain outside the question at issue here, given that our planetary system, or even the entire galaxy, represents a cosmos in which the relation of a center and a periphery exists.
Thus, so-called "exact" profane science has its efficacy and therefore its rights; an entirely different question is that of philosophical and ostentatious scientism. The "classical" vices of the latter are, first of all metaphysical ignorance and then, by way of consequence, empiricism and materialism, the one just as exclusive as the other; it is thus that modern science, through prejudice, is ignorant of the principle of cosmic cycles on the one hand, and of the degrees of universal manifestation on the other; it does not know the fact that the universe is the equivalent of a sort of "divine respiration" — Hinduism is very explicit in this respect — and that matter is nothing but a shell that conceals cosmic substances more and more real in an ascending order. But this ignorance, we must insist, does not prevent the discoveries of astronomers from corresponding to realities in their own order, thus to symbols; unquestionably, the central position of the sun manifests the priority of the Supreme Principle.\footnote{As Kepler observed. We have read somewhere that the sun is not situated exactly at the center of the planetary trajectories, but this does not alter the fact that the position of the sun is definitely central.}

In other words: a cosmic degree — such as the physical world — is like a circle around a more "interior" — and ontologically superior — circle that determines it and can even determine it, incidentally, in a completely exceptional, "supernatural" and miraculous manner: this precisely is what escapes modern physicists; whence that ersatz which is transformist evolutionism. In a similar manner, a cosmic cycle is like a rotation around a more "interior" or more primordial rotation, each of the possible rotations being determined by a ray which emanates from the absolute Center and which decides the rhythms of the temporal phases. The system of concentric circles constituting the world — as well as the spiroidal movement of the cycles — is either projected or reabsorbed according to the archetypal intentions of the absolute Center; the intellect
makes it possible to conceive of it, but this obviously escapes investigations of a purely physical order.

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Returning now to the idea which was our point of departure, we would say the following: the comparison between the doctrine of Ptolemy and that of Aristarchus or of Copernicus teaches us that there are essentially two kinds of appearances, namely the appearance that corresponds to a substance and functions as a symbol, and the appearance that corresponds to an accident and is merely an illusion without any importance; thus, the rising of the sun represents a fundamental teaching, whereas a mirage in the desert amounts to a mere optical error. One could also turn to account the argument that the apparent movement of the sun and the starry heavens constitutes a divine message, whereas the movement of the earth around the sun is only the mechanism of this message, at least with respect to man. God cannot lie to us, which means — as we said above — that the earthly appearances habitual to man are providential and manifest a fundamental spiritual message; this is precisely what makes it possible to erect sciences using images of this sort. The language of Scripture and of myths bears witness to the same principle, and that is why it is futile to reproach the revealed texts for their naivety; symbolism takes precedence over the fact envisaged as such. It is nevertheless quite obvious that the symbolism in question could not be a closed system: the wall of appearances can be broken, either accidentally or by exploration, and what is thus discovered, far from belying the profound message of the appearances and thus their divine intention — even though there be formal antinomy — is in its turn the vehicle of a celestial message.

On the one hand, man is the measure of all things, and this is indeed his reason for being; it is what Genesis teaches us. On the other hand, man necessarily represents a specific subjectivity, thus a limitation: truth, while inscribed in our intellective substance, nevertheless exists outside and
above us. This means that man can be right in two ways, either by being perfectly himself, or on the contrary by disregarding his subjectivity altogether. The whole question is to know in what way or at what level we envisage either the subject or the object. What is most profoundly and authentically human rejoins the Divine by definition.