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# 8. About an Intellectual Reform*

One of the main traits of these times is the *disoccultation of esoteric teachings* and their popularization among a growing and interested public. In fact, in today's Western world, access to the different traditions, which in the middle of the twentieth century were still only known to a restricted number of specialists, is available to everyone. The appearance of an increasing quantity of translations, commentaries and documents suddenly revealed in the face of official reductionism, some doctrines, methods and approaches susceptible to completely casting a new light on a unilateral and belittling vision of the world. The disclosure of initiatory teachings brings around another way of questioning, destroys the numerous apriorisms, answers the metaphysical interrogations on which religious exotericisms as well as profane philosophies remained silent for centuries. It supplies the lost keys concerning both qualified time and the doctrine of cycles, the subtle make-up of the human being and his posthumous destiny, the multiple states of being, the tripartition of the worlds, the notions of "eternal *Avatara*" and "supreme Identity," the fundamental unity of the traditions and the significance of universal symbols. Within the darkness of the *Kali Yuga*, we probably don't realize how lucky we are, and how envied we would be by previous eras, for having such easy access to these teachings. We need to read the sign of the times in the fact that the Spirit allows itself to be so profaned, that the law of silence has been broken, that the seals of Knowledge have been removed everywhere. It's up to us to make the most of our good fortune. This crop of texts that were unknown or inaccessible up until now must seem to be the necessary compensation for the monstrosities of the times, a veritable blessing over the field of the ruins of intelligence. Didn't the Bible announce that "at the time of the end, knowledge shall increase"? This knowledge might correspond to the "human sciences," whose development is intensifying, but it also concerns the rediscovery of the "sacred sciences." Another sign of the times is when the oldest past must resurface at the end of the cycle in order to guarantee the recapitulation and to serve as the starting point for the elaboration

* From *Passports for New Times*, II, 2.

of the next cycle. Only esoteric teachings carry enough weight to counterbalance the destructive theories, to the fore but condemned to discredit, just like the rigid and dying scholastic of the sixteenth century was gradually replaced by a humanism vitalized by antiquity. It could be said that our era is going through a similar Renaissance from Eastern sources this time, but a Renaissance that, more than at the basic intellectual level, is located at the psychic and spiritual level, and that instead of exalting the mental and moral man to the detriment of the rest, returns man to his proper place, in his deepest relationships with himself, with the world and with God. Only such teachings restore intelligence with its cardinal function, which is the discernment between the Real and the illusory, the Permanent and ephemeral, the Essential and the accidents, and its possibility of making use of the means that allow for the realization of the "one thing necessary." As soon as this new direction is taken, hope for rediscovering the spiritual ways returns. The fearful, ignorant or irresponsible minds, teaching everywhere that the eternal is outdated, can from then on be considered outdated.

Certainly, this multiplication of information in fields that had been reserved up until then, entails the risk of mixing impurities, of inciting tendencies, of altering truth, and of adding to the confusion of ideas instead of making them clearer. And this will occur each time that intelligence does not discriminate enough. No doubt as well, it can be recovered by the insatiable European mental state, finding here a new pretext for dissipation without giving any thought to the least experimental verification; unless certain poorly or unguided attempts at putting it into practice lead to the worst failures and destroy rather than build the being with their improvisations. It is nonetheless true that the pearls have been spread and that as the vice of materialism tightens, the sources of adamantine truth spring forth more intensely.

In this rediscovery of esoteric doctrines, there is little need to recall the importance of the East, without however forgetting that Western thinking also carries Eastern aspects that, as neglected as they may be at times, are still part of our patrimony or come from the East themselves.[1]

[1] Among these Eastern aspects, reference can be made first to the pre-Socratics and

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We would like to mention at least three of the most likely contributions to the mental restructuring that we are dealing with: the notion of "points of view"—the *darshana*s in Hinduism—, the critical elements of certain philosophical clichés, the priority of the practical over the speculative.

While for Western logic it is impossible to accept as true two contrary propositions, these will only have a subjective and pragmatic value for Eastern logic. They are not necessarily true in every case and other ways of looking at the same question exist that are just as justifiable and in no way inferior. For the West, A cannot be both identical to and different from B; for the East, A can be identical to B, different from B, identical to and different from B, neither identical to nor different from B. Counter to an analytical, separating, unilateral, incomplete thinking, sensitive to dualities and dichotomies, and as such, the source of conflicts and never ending oppositions, the East brings a synthesized, encompassing, unitive thinking, reconciling and going beyond pairs of contrasts. For it, the different "points of view" are relatively true. They are more complementary than contradictory.[2] To renounce a firm hold on an acquired stance that is inevitably rigid, stubborn and transitory, to fade with one's own thinking in perpetual renewal, "to value no opinion," according to the Zen precept, to be with Lao-tzu in the middle of the ring of contradictions without answering them, and by staying linked to the sole reality that is hidden behind arbitrary delimitations is what the Eastern attitude advises. It knows all too well the relativity of good and evil, of true and false, of free-will and

the Greek Tragedy, the stories of the Round Table, Shakespearian theater, initiatory works such as *The Romance of the Rose*, *The Divine Comedy*, *Don Quixote*, *Faust*. Diverse Eastern elements circulate through Rabelais, Nerval, Whitman, Eliot, Blake, Rilke, Novalis, Hesse. The hermetist movement must also be included: Paracelsus, Eckartshausen, Boëhme, Lull, and the "Christian Kabbalists," Martinez de Pasqually, Fabre d'Olivet, as well as the mystic movement (in the best sense of the word): Meister Eckhart, Ruysbroeck, Nicolas of Cusa, the Greek Fathers: Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Palamas, Denys the Areopagite, and Maximus the Confessor.

[2] When asked who was right, those who pretended that God exists or those who pretended that He didn't, Ramana Maharshi replied: "Look for what the two propositions have in common."

necessity, of action and contemplation, of the consistency and inconsistency in the world, of life and death. With each loss of a point of view, progress is made towards a higher truth; man does not progress from error to truth, but passes from the truth of a certain level to the one of a superior level, until that time when the most diverging points of view are harmonized in a transcendent synthesis.[3] Such an attitude of the mind especially explains the Easterner's tolerance in philosophical and religious matters; each system describes more specially this or that facet of the Divine, which neither excludes nor invalidates the others.[4]

One guesses that this way of looking at so many "problems" could be useful and salutary for the West at the level of intellectual relations. Only admitting one's own truth by putting it in the wide range of truths, only admitting it by simultaneously admitting the possibility of its contrary would greatly contribute to the rehabilitation of the mental climate and human relations.[5] It would put an end to or slow down the endless debates that lead to nothing, exasperate passions, widen gaps, accentuate differences, stir up apocalyptic incandescence; it would help politicians, sociologists, economists, teachers, theologians to understand that, each intelligence being finite, it can only apprehend a minute part of the whole truth, that there are several ways to consider a question and to resolve it, that there is an art of "thinking without thinking," just as there is one of "taking action by taking none," where the "middle road" has no middle.[6] By revealing the existence of the "points of view," esotericism brings us back to the distinctions between simple

[3] Something from this reasoning can be found episodically in Western thinking. Thus, the dispute between physicists over the composition of light (wave trains for some, photons for the others), was partially resolved by Louis de Broglie's wave mechanics, which reconciles the emission theory of light with the wave theory. Likewise, modern science has stopped opposing Matter and Mind by distinguishing in the first one a plurality of planes in permanent interaction, a density scale going from the most compact to the most subtle, just as it has stopped opposing time and space, which it has replaced with the space-time continuum.

[4] Who hasn't heard the parable about the elephant told by Jalal ad-Din Rumi (*Mathnawi*, III, 1259 and following)? The men who touch the elephant in the dark each give a different description of it: a water pipe, a fan, a pillar, a throne.

[5] The West is not systematically unfamiliar with this mentality, but is, one might say, Eastern in flashes. Pascal, who deplored that a river separated error from truth, was careful to remark in his *Pensées*: "Error comes from forgetting the opposite truth."

[6] According to one *hadith*, it is true that the theological divergences are a "sign of

individual and discursive reason, source of subject-object dualism, combat area of hypotheses and contradictory axioms, and metaphysical intuition, the transcendent intellect, of an informal order, capable of reaching the supreme Principle where opposites are abolished.[7] The *intellectus* is this "organ" of the spirit that moves in the order of a unity and a supra-individual and supra-rational continuity, and corresponds to the inner certitude of the causes preceding all experience. Its own metaphysical perspective escapes the relativity of reason, implies a certain inexpressible certainty with regards to which opinions are simply gossiping and cacophony; it is the special spot where "one is what one knows." Only the atrophy of the superior faculties of the being, correlative to the development of the inferior elements, leads to the dispersion and exclusiveness of unassimilated "points of view," that is to say the inability of reaching the Truth, and consequently, to the frantic desire to deny it.

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The revelation of esotericism will be sure to take a closer look at many of the undiscussed points of the few philosophies taught to millions of young people today who only adhere to them out of ignorance of arguments to the contrary, which are either caricatured or silently passed over. Subjecting these philosophies to esoteric screening would fill an entire book, at the end of which, only the straw of the very limited *darshana* they represent would remain. As an example, we will just isolate here some of the axioms for which the refutation in the light of esoteric teachings can only lead to ruin, and afterwards, that of the philosophies based on them.

The *cogito, ergo sum* of Descartes.—The Eastern doctrines will first reveal that the thinking organ is only one of the vibratory centers existing among other forms of the conscious, and that subject to

Divine Compassion," but precisely inasmuch as the destiny of the antinomies is to be exceeded. The best way to avoid the antithetical sectarianisms of uniformity is to harmonize the different aspects of Unity.

[7] Note that the reasoning reason, or the faculty of thinking, corresponds to the *manas* in Hinduism, the transcendent intellect to the *buddhi*. Also corresponding to it are the "Eye of the Heart,"—*Ayn al-qalb*—from Muslim esotericism, and the *aliquid increatum et increabile* from Eckhart, leading to direct and illuminating certitude.

continuous variations, it cannot be confused with the unaltered independent conscious of the *Purusa* that lies behind it, and which Descartes did not sense. Next, they will show us that the "I" is only an ever-changing, elusive, evanescent and unreal aggregate composed of habits, faculties, dispositions and tendencies without fixedness. Finally they will show that thinking is only an attribute of the being, and that the *conscious* of being cannot be subordinate to the *experience* of thinking. By reversing the order of its terms, the all too famous "I think, therefore I am," may be able to express a truth much closer to the Truth.

"Religion is the opium of the masses," according to Marx.—For the author of *Das Kapital*, religion perpetuates the relationship of the dominant and the dominated, by promising the people an illusory happiness in the beyond, and by beguiling them, keeping them unaware of their miserable condition. Recall first of all that as far as religions go, Marx only knew Western Christianity, too often subservient, it must be said, to established powers. But he ignored that in Hinduism, for example, the men belonging to the highest castes were equally those who were subject to the greatest duty and most devotedly served the vow of poverty.[8] Concerning an illusory happiness promised to people in the beyond, Marx ignored likewise that the beyond is not necessarily contemplated in religious conduct,—as such, for certain forms of Buddhism,—and that Hell and Heaven are first found within us, during our terrestrial sojourn. Finally, far from wanting to desensitize, religion offers an awakening to a higher degree of consciousness. Due to simple spiritual inability for the most part or by falling into routine, the goal is rarely attained; religion should not be incriminated for all that.

The "Oedipus complex" of Freud.—For the founder of psychoanalysis, the belief in an all-powerful God would only be the revelation, at the age of the adult, of a child's perception of his parents. In this way, the adult would be rebuilt with a protective Father by a sublimatory mode; religion would be an infantile fixation, neurosis, illusion. In supposing that Freud's explanations can be applied to monotheistic religions of a patriarchal type, the only ones he knew,

[8] It must be noted that poverty had not always been considered in the same way in the hierarchy of values, and the voluntary and ascetic quest for the limitation of consumer goods had nothing to do with the pauperism stemming from the industrial civilization of the nineteenth century.

how could they pertain to the case of spiritualities whose principle is the Divine Mother, or better yet, a neutral entity above and beyond all sexual specification, such as the supreme Brahman or Tao? How, in the case of polytheisms where gods designate all the possible archetypes, all the human and cosmic energies? Even if these gods are illusory, Hinduism recognizes the psychological reality and therapeutic value of illusion; all illusion has a truth as its original basis. Likewise, if God is an idea invented by man, one may wonder where this idea came from. If the idea of God, and therefore God himself did not exist before man, how could he have pieced together God's existence?

"Man is condemned to be free" according to Sartre.—The Sartrian man is not free to accept or refuse being free. He cannot withdraw himself from his freedom. The East denounces the inanity of this attitude: a perfectly free being would be God. Yet, the human being, limited by the movement of forms and the condition of his existence, cannot enjoy total freedom: he is neither born nor dies when he wishes; he is subject to heredity, a slave to conditioning, who could only be emancipated by the techniques of spiritual awakening refused by Sartre. Man is only free to remain or not in his slavery, to choose or refuse God.[9] The Sartrian existence is freed overall of any transcendental principle or value. The East teaches us that "existence" is nothing if it does not serve "being," reaching for something that is more than life, by activating within ourselves all the possibilities of transfiguration. The slow exploration of within shows that Hell is not "the others," but ourselves and the others in us; the awakening to the sentiment of love (which guarantees the only authentic freedom because it leaves us free to choose or refuse God), reveals that our Hell is the suffering of others until the end of the world. Undoubtedly, Sartre detected the "fundamental suffering" (the Buddhist *dukkha*), but by revolting against it instead of sharing it, he made himself a slave to his revolt. The traditional sage, on the contrary, will look for the cause of this suffering; he will find it in the "ego" and will scientifically envisage the inner means of overcoming it. As for the nihilism that Sartre comes to, it can only be, in these conditions, the reversed reflection of the superessential "Non-Being."

[9] Recall the patristic adage: "God has all the powers, except that of forcing man to love Him."

With their irresistible temptation for the seediest kind of thinking, their way of proclaiming the human being without referring to anything else, before denying him by their refusal and their inability to provide any means of inner liberation, with their success at totalitarian forms of teaching, society and political regimes, these philosophies despair without consoling, destroy without replacing, accelerate the fall into chaos, diffuse the gospel for twilight terrors. They are very much those of the lowest castes, which are those of the final hand of cards; they are very much the cornerstone and drive of the great breakdown. The far reaches of their extreme limits sign the end of Western metaphysics. Only replacing them with their contraries would constitute the element susceptible to help escape from the *Kali Yuga*, or insure the safe crossing of it, or yet, its take over. For that matter, it's possible that this limit prepares the pendulum's return to the other pole at the same time; that this auto-destruction carries the seeds of a reviviscence, as long as the mental conversion we're talking about occurs, and as a result of a complete reversal of the situation, "existentialism" gives way to "essentialism." The doctrines of the "death of God" and the "death of man" may well lead to the transpersonal "Non-Being." For that, it is enough that "nothingness" is integrated into the Universal and reversed in the perspective of metaphysical Non-Dualism, due to the inspiration of "eternal Philosophy."

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Another Eastern contribution susceptible to contributing to this conversion: the priority given to the practice and experimentation on theoretical speculation. The hypertrophy of the Western brain corresponds to an imbalance that is accepted today. All of thought's arabesques, no matter how imperious and remarkable they may be, translate or dissimulate a worried or anguished state that is trying to exorcise itself with the help of discursive reasoning. It is even easier at this level to deny the possibilities of the human being's metaphysical realization as they are denied to him, since putting this into practice is excluded and replaced by the sole exercise of conceptual oppositions. The obligation to think, not correctly, but as much as possible, indicates an all-quantitative conception of "culture," full of voluntarily abstract jargon and academic scholarship. Endless dis-

cussion of the exact date of birth of Christ or the apocryphal nature of any verse will never force the doors of Beatitude. Any answer to a question is simply one answer among others, momentarily acceptable, but destined to revision or rejection; any answer is already a potential question that will in turn require an answer. The solution does not resolve the problem, it dims it, deadens it, foments new ones. Taking interest in spiritual ideas does not result in any change of consciousness. Even spiritual questions are all arborescent and parasitic creations of the mental state. All the traditions teach that intellectual reflection, like ignorance, is part of the "stains" and is useless for "salvation" or "deliverance." Metaphysical discussions only lead to further torment.[10] One might even maintain that a huge part of spiritual literature only serves to disperse and divert the mental attitude: the experiments are passionate, as long as someone else is performing them!

All true knowledge is primarily lived and integrated rather than being thought. The processing comes later, with the risk of hindering, complicating, deforming the initial enunciations, whose ineffable character never gains by a translation into a cerebral language. The East is here to remind us that the only way of knowing Truth is by becoming it. The only proof we have of the Absolute, although decisive and definitive, is by experience, which risked sinking into madness or death. Experience is essentially the detachment from and the surpassing of the limitations of the mental state, its volitions, its continual encroachments; it is the supreme illustration that we become what we know, and that we only know authentically what we are.[11] At this level of realization, all dialectic or search for "proof" evaporates: we ourselves are the proof we're looking for, we demonstrate it to ourselves. Even if in the *Kali Yuga*, this passage from the *discursive* to the *operative* is a complete success for only a few individuals,[12] this should not be a pretext for not attempting

[10] This justifies Buddha's attitude of refusing to broach them. As he explains to Malunkyaputta, the questions concerning Deliverance and *Nirvana*, irrelevant to the renouncement of and the destruction of passions, are useless for obtaining Deliverance and *Nirvana*. Yet, reaching it is the point. The lack of explanations that Christ gives for the same type of questions tends to prove a similar attitude.

[11] When the *Maitri Upanishad*, VI, 34, declares "one becomes what one thinks," we must understand: not what we think with the *manas*, but with the *buddhi*.

[12] *Bhagavad Gita*, VII, 3: "Among those who strive for perfection and attain it, only one here and there knows Me in all the principles of My existence." This comes close to Matt. 7:14: "Few there be that find the way which leadeth unto life."

the venture: doesn't Islam recall that giving a dog one drink will do for joining the cohort of "those brought nigh"? This small number of men testifies that a priori, any man can make a leap into the Infinite, that for any man, so long as he is prepared to pay the price and truly wants it—which can mean wanting nothing—this intuitive Seizure where the manifestation coincides with its principle is possible, that for any man, the immediate and instantaneous Evidence, pulverizing the opaqueness that separates us from a Divine that is closer to us than we are to ourselves, is possible.[13]

Thus, to the aforementioned reforms,—rectification of errors and prejudices, broadening of thought by the rediscovery of other fields of knowledge, acquisition of complementary rather than opposing "points of view," giving priority to practice over theory,—a final one will be added: *the suspension of intellectual activity*. Therefore, in the face of reputedly difficult or insolvable "problems," one will no longer be satisfied by simply wondering if the questions were poorly or correctly asked, if the separated elements were really separate, even if the different aspects had been examined and integrated; one discovers that the so called "problems" were only secreted by a mental state in upheaval and that they only existed there.[14]

Two preliminary attitudes will efficiently help the suspension of thought: avoid pointless discussions, work on mental silence.

We can quickly assess the uselessness of discussing spiritual questions with those who are deliberately hostile to them. Such discussions steal a great deal of energy and time without persuading the opponents who know that any intellectual argument can be confronted with another. Besides that, they force truths to be lowered from a superior level to the grasp of minds that are not mature enough to receive them or who have even decided not to receive them. This *prostitution* harms at the same time these truths, to the extent that we are forced to distort or betray them to make them

[13] "God is closer to man than his jugular vein" (Koran, 50:15).

[14] Some Westerners rediscover this way of "overcoming the question," especially at the psychological level. Wittgenstein notes in *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, VI: "The solution to the problem of life is in the disappearance of the problem." Jung writes in his *Commentary on the Secret of the Golden Flower*: "The most serious and important vital problems are all, in the end, insoluble, and they should be, because they express the necessary polarity that is immanent in any system of self-regulation. They can never be resolved, but only overcome."

acceptable; these unprepared minds, uselessly troubled and sometimes pushed to an excess of blasphemous words they would not have expressed without our intervention; and lastly ourselves, when, in the heat of the debate, we get carried away with passion, the desire to convince, and arrogance. We also won't forget that we are rarely as noble as the doctrines we are pretending to expound: to what degree have we really assimilated what we would like to teach others? Not only do such discussions lead nowhere, but they trigger and exasperate hostile vibrations that only add to those already present in the fabric of the era, and succeed at leaving deep incisions in the unconscious: the achieved goal is the opposite of the desired goal. In all truth, the viewing (*darshan*) of one sage is more effective on souls than all the unfurling and artifice of eloquence hoping to be persuasive.

The second attitude consists of the daily practicing of mental silence, of attempting to establish a state of peace with oneself and by that, with others, by remembering that "the remedy to all illness is to calm the mental state."[15] On this point we can only refer to the instructions given by the supporters of *dhyana* or *zazen*, concerning in particular the most favorable moments and places for meditation, the postures and exercises that should be regular and disinterested, the means of controlling thoughts and breathing. The Westerner should not try to achieve supreme ecstasy—*nirvikalpa samadhi*; he should stop if he feels troubling symptoms. "Meditation about the Without-Form" will be less recommended to him than "meditation with attributes." The most important point is that once his appropriate path has been found, he should stay on it without losing sight of his goal: first slow down, then cure the hypermentalization which does him so much harm.

Such a practice will make clear the future necessity of "burning books": as necessary, in fact, as they are at the beginning of the course to inform and stimulate, they prove to be an obstacle when one holds onto them without surpassing the uniquely theoretical

[15] Ma Ananda Moyi, *Enseignement*, I "Therefore, all will be physically and psychologically in harmony." This will be related to Confucius speaking about a state of happiness where "the ten thousand beings evolve without harming each other, where the contrary doctrines are practiced without clashing" (*Chong-Yong*, XXX, 2). Thus, the soul is in the "happy medium." This will also be related to "the poverty of the spirit" of Meister Eckhart, introducing the notion of Emptiness, already evoked.

plane they represent.[16] Finally, what counts is nothing other than the reversal of our being with the recovery and exercise of this "princess faculty," the most fundamental and innate in us, that which mental activity has buried to the point of forgetting its existence, and that allows us to rebecome what we never ceased being.

The Hindu tradition presents six brahman students entering the hermitage of the sage Pippalada. He bids them to meditate and be silent with him for one year; only afterwards, each one of them may ask him one question. This is to say how much the modern Westerner must, even more so, learn to unlearn, stop thinking-for-the-sake-of-thinking, open up to the inner emptiness, receptacle of all fulfillment; how much he must convince himself that no science is of value if its purpose is not for liberating man, "otherwise," the *Upanishads* repeat, "nothing is worth knowing." But first, he will have to discover that this "nescience" is not written in any book, is not found in any program. It spurts forth at the most unexpected times in life—those that nakedly expose our true nature, the extreme and incomprehensible situations, on the edge of which reason and its pretensions stagger, flashing wounds in the face of which logic flees. It rips the thick clouds blocking our horizon, dissipates with the swipe of a sword the opaqueness of the mental state and the self, illuminates solitude, like a burst of laughter over a cup of tea.

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[16] In its History, China is shown to be an expert at this type of periodical "purification." So, in 213 B.C.E., Li Si, Prime Minister of Qin Shi Huang, had all the commentaries that were considered subjective and useless, all of the basic works, destroyed. One will take care not to confuse this type of destruction with the one resulting from wars or barbaric outbursts, as was the case for the fire at Alexandria's library that contained 700,000 volumes, or at the time of the Maoist Cultural Revolution with much more prejudicial damage.