May 2018

JEAN GEBSER Foreword to Eastern Wisdom and Western Thought: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN THE MODERN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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The Trend Towards Integration in Modern Science
and its Counterpart in the Ancient Wisdom of the East

Safer is, as geniuses usually are, a philosopher who seeks Integration. Integration here means the inclusion of those factors which enable us to gain awareness of a thing in its totality. As applied to modern science it often means the inclusion of the spiritual dimension. For instance, people in general are still under the impression that the West lays particular emphasis on the rational function. During the last decades, however, the way was prepared for a decisive change. It stands in a reciprocal relation to the commencement of the Eastern turning towards the rational and technical. From this it becomes clear that East and West are by no means opposites, but correspondences. This distinction is of importance because it constitutes the basis for the encounter of East and West. Opposites are mutually hostile elements, whereas correspondences complement each other. Therefore a genuine meeting can only take place where there is a correspondence between the encountering elements, where they are complementary poles. This is true of East and West today, more than ever before.

From the Western point of view, this possibility of a genuine encounter is due to what one may call the circuitous European route. This roundabout way consisted of the West temporarily renouncing emphasis on the spiritual impetus. Instead it overstressed the intellectual, the rational, by the development of science, through which technology and industrialization became possible. This renunciation involved a loss which one can also call sacrifice - at all events, an unconscious sacrifice. Yet all the same, whether sacrifice or loss, the consequence common to both was unexpected gain. Surprisingly enough, it is rational science which has disclosed spirituality anew to the West. Taking a circuitous route via knowledge, it turned faith into certainty. This process is the result of what one may describe as the spiritual dimension of science. In reality, it was effectively disclosed only in the last decade. Here the term spiritual should be understood to mean that region which, from the human point of view, is closest to (atman; on the other hand it by no means refers to the psychic-irrational...
and intellectual-rational possibilities of man. What the word atman really means is explained by Saher with unequalled lucidity in this book.

Western science proceeded from Aristotelean logic and Euclidean geometry. Both were supplemented, that is to say they both were partially surmounted, when laws were discovered by Gauss and subsequently by Riemann, which led to a non-Euclidean geometry. The latter was the starting point for Einstein's theories of relativity. Aristotelean logic was questioned by Max Planck's quantum theory. However, the inferences from this questioning were drawn only by the representatives of the generation succeeding Planck. In the German-speaking countries they were, above all, Werner Heisenberg and Carl-Friedrich von Weizsaecker. Both had the courage to acknowledge that by virtue of the discoveries of the new nuclear physics, the principal axiom of Aristotelean logic becomes untenable. This axiom stated that there is only an ëeither - orí. It was formulated in the famous tenet: tertium non datur (there is no third). In other words, either something is or it is not; there is no other possibility.

The Aristotelean system of logic seams narrow compared with the Seven Possibilities of Mahavira, or even more so, with Shankara's system of logic; but it was precisely this restrictedness and exclusiveness that made science possible as such. Planck's quantum theory and Einstein's theory of relativity led to the Aristotelean ëeither - orí being questioned. The result of the first was that the axiom, natura non facit saltus (nature makes no leaps), became untenable. As a consequence of the quantum theory, we know today that nature is very capable of making such leaps. This was the first intrusion into the Aristotelean ëeither - orí. It gained support from biology, on the one hand through de Vries's mutation theory, from nuclear physics, and on the other hand, through Heisenberg's principle of indetermination and de Broglie's wave theory. Einstein's theory of relativity preceded the last two. By virtue of their work, we know today that matter is not merely a spatial element but also a temporal one. It is corpuscular as well as wave-like, so that both are merely different aspects of the same thing. In ëthis as well as thatí lies the decisive impetus which has led to questioning the Aristotelean ëeither - orí.

This is a paradox the acceptance of which may lead to the discovery of a spiritual dimension which may help towards the understanding of nirvana in the West. By the removal of the ëeither - orí limitation the world or rather the universe has been transformed into a transparent or open one. In 1960 I mentioned this to Werner Heisenberg; for the open world, by the removal of rational restriction, reveals an unexpected wealth of relations. Since ëeither - orí means giving up previous systematization, some people fear that they may lose all support and reliability, for they are faced with nothingness, with nada (in so far as nothingness can be an opposite). Here lies the root of the temporary Western nihilism, as for instance in existentialism. Werner Heisenberg confirmed that the transparent world is one of wealth and on no account a world of void even though it seems to appear void. If I am well informed, nirvana is both fullness and void where the void has no nihilistic emphasis. The West can become conscious of this conception of nirvana as a result of research in nuclear physics.

The ëeither - orí belongs to the rational sphere of the mind ó to that of strictly dualistic differentiation. The ëthis as well as thatí belongs to the mythical-irrational sphere, within which polarity and not the opposites are valid. One therefore reflects whether cognitional acknowledgement of the validity of
both spheres — the irrational as well as the rational — is not in itself a step towards something which can be defined as a-rationality. This makes the spiritual dimension of science evident for the first time.

This spiritual dimension of science comes even more strongly to light in another result of nuclear research, our present knowledge of atomic structure. We know today that the elementary particles of which the divisible atomic nucleus is composed are so minute that we can no longer speak of them in terms of spatially perceptible matter. In other words, the basic elements of matter — the elementary particles of which atoms are constituted — are ultimately of non-material derivation. As a result, the atoms which form matter are themselves of non-material origin. But the non-material is at the same time the spiritual: it is at least a quality or characteristic of the spiritual. For the West, the world of material phenomena now becomes equivalent to *maya*. However, the West does not consider this world of phenomena to be an illusion, but an aspect of the non-material, that is to say, of the spiritual, which one has to accept as a reality despite its unreal origin. It should be obvious that this way of looking at phenomena has nothing to do with materialism any more. This is further confirmed by the fact that neither pragmatism nor Marxist materialism recognizes this spiritual dimension, although it is a logical consequence of the scientifically investigated nature of matter.

Today a new consciousness is rising in the West. Or rather, a new kind of consciousness which forces its way towards an awakening, makes perceptions possible in the West today through which reality can be apprehended in an entirely new manner. It may be presumed that to the same extent and there are Indian witnesses for this, as for example Sri Aurobindo — a new consciousness is arising in Asia today, which is called forth by the compulsion and the will to integrate technology and industrialization. It would be a serious mistake to see in Saher just one more great philosopher carrying on the good work of East-West understanding started by Max Müller, Radhakrishnan and others. Like Aurobindo, he is the living proof of that new (integral) consciousness in the dawn of which mankind is now living. It is that certain something which Teilhard de Chardin refers to as 'Superman' for want of a better name. The label 'Superman' is liable to be seriously misunderstood. Let me, therefore, illustrate what I mean. Evolution is mankind's progress towards a higher form of consciousness. This higher consciousness is beyond the understanding of those in whom it is still in the potential stage. Thus beings in whom this higher consciousness has developed appear to us to possess powers so extraordinary that the word genius is too feeble to describe them. We have examples in East and West of such marvellous occurrences. Take the case of Srinivasan Alyangar Ramanujam (1887-1920). At the age of fifteen, while fetching a book called *A Synopsis of Elementary Results in Pure and Applied Mathematics* from the town library in Madras, his mind was suddenly illuminated by the new (integral) consciousness. Effortlessly he could solve the six thousand mathematical equations in that book. In 1913 he got in touch with the Cambridge mathematician Professor G. H. Hardy, who invited him to England. Later he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and held the chair of mathematics at Trinity College. His achievements in this field were such that mere intellectual efforts would not have sufficed. A higher consciousness used him as its instrument. Then we have in the United States the case of Edgar Cayce who died in 1945. With no knowledge of medicine, Cayce when in trance could diagnose all diseases and prescribe their correct treatment. In order to guard against fraud he had to submit to a check-up by the American Medical Association and the Federal authorities who cleared him. The former even gave him permission to practise without a medical degree.
From the correspondence of Dr Samuel Johnson and of Voltaire we know the case of Boskowitsch (1711-87), also a Fellow of the Royal Society (June 26, 1760) and one in whom the new consciousness had arisen as it will one day through the process of evolution in all mankind. Boskowitsch not only anticipated modern scientific discoveries (particularly Planck's constant and Einstein's relativity theories) but also those of several decades to come. The scientific world is not yet equipped well enough to test all his theories. Thus the Superman is only one in whom this new (integral) consciousness has burst forth before its time; he is a herald sent that we may know what evolution has in store for us. I have shown from the above examples that a Superman (in this legitimate sense of the word) may be born anywhere; in Asia, America or Europe. It is to be assumed that Asia and the West will mutually assist one another in order to help awaken this new consciousness. Seen from the viewpoint of man, only this new consciousness has the power to guarantee the continuation of human existence.

In this connection Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, said: "The process of thinking has to be changed. And this process we believe means what has been called here the formation of the new consciousness. For without the foundation of a new consciousness a new way and process of thinking are not possible.

This new consciousness, which is a-rational and therefore integral and so extending beyond the modes of consciousness of the merely prerational-irrational as well as the rational, does not manifest today only in the nuclear physics of the West. In order to be really effective, it must make itself felt in all spheres of life. That is the case: in everyday life as well as in the arts, in the epochal new way of thinking of the Christian churches, as well as, perhaps, in the spiritual dimension which Western science today attempts to realize. It may, however, be emphasized here that our references to Eastern terms like nirvana, atman, and maya are an attempt to explain the spiritual climax of the discoveries of Western science. Since it is commonly known that these discoveries were further advanced by the prominent scientists of Asia, mention will only be made of Japan's great contribution to nuclear physics and of Jagdish Chandra Bose who has proved by his experiments the untenability of the dualistic interpretation of nature, organic on the one hand and inorganic on the other.

This reference to Eastern terms should not be taken to imply that Western science will adopt the Eastern way of thinking. There is always the possibility of a mutual understanding. Still one should not forget the factor which is opposed to such an interpretation. For the Eastern way of thinking sometimes inclines towards the èneither - norî which is complementary to the Western èeither - orî and just as bad. On the other hand this èeither - orî is supplemented today by the more enlightened acknowledgement of the èthis as well as thatî In particular this way of thinking could help towards a mutual understanding of East and West as èthis as well as thatî is no longer strange to the scientific thinking of the West.

The spiritual dimension under discussion, however, does not manifest itself only in nuclear physics. It is also being attained in all the other sciences; biology, psychology, even the study of history and law are examples. In the West, in all branches of learning there are references to the spiritual dimension which, as such, is a characteristic of The new consciousness. Everywhere representatives of the above-mentioned arts and sciences are to be found, whose manner of thinking already corresponds to the demands of the new consciousness. Moreover, almost all of them have an international reputation,
so that their statements are typical of that new consciousness which makes itself known in the
spiritual dimension of the sciences.

In biology it is Adolf Portmann in Basle who takes account of the spiritual dimension. He originated
the concept of the undirected appearance, by so defining the result of a research which has been
confirmed in other quarters. It consists of his proof that the inferences hitherto drawn from the
behaviour of creatures are only of secondary value. He demonstrated that what he calls the directed
appearance — for instance the camouflage colours and typical calls of animals — are special cases
within a much more generalized category. This category, the undirected appearance, is an appearance
which, to a certain extent, is purposeless. The undirected self-representation of the living, resulting
therefrom, is non-material and so a clear example of the spiritual dimension which is now accepted
by biology. Sir Julian Huxley is another example of a great scientist showing us the spiritual
dimension in biology.

Let us take another case: Portmann proved that the songs of birds are not, as one believed hitherto,
most beautiful and rich in modulations during mating time but only after the mating time. In other
words, at a time when they are sung without purpose and are undirected (when they are not directed
towards an object but are just an expression of abundance). Through an analysis of the smallest living
beings of the deep sea Portmann further explained that their wealth of shapes and colours is not
purposeful, for no living eye has so far been able to see this wealth. It is to a certain extent an
undirected appearance in which the wealth of the spiritual comes to light.

In psychology C. G. Jung made the spiritual dimension accessible to the West as far as that is possible
through psychological procedures. He prevailed over Sigmund Freud, who was bound to the
instinctive factors, by not only taking the sexual-material impulse into consideration, but by also
making the irrational-religious impulse valid again, even for science.

The following consideration shows the spiritual importance of C. G. Jung's psychological findings. A
clear separation of the psychic sphere from the magical-instinctive-vital on the one hand and from the
intellectual-rational on the other is only possible through these findings. This is at least true of those
Westerners who do not remain within the limits of psychology (for example by seeing everything
from the psychological point of view). The way to experimental realization of the spiritual dimension
is thereby opened. Thus we notice the great controversy over Aldous Huxley's experiments.

In the field of history Professor J. R. von Salis from Zurich was the first to overcome the old Western
conception. History had been pictured as a stream, as a one-way movement from a beginning to an
end — that is to say as purposive and material. Instead he presented it as a kind of network. By so
doing he lifted the conception of history out of the dualistic material system of thought and placed it
in the richness of that relative abundance which is the property of the whole, and which also includes the spiritual. Arnold Toynbee is another such spiritual historian.

What does this network-image mean? It is the acknowledgement that so-called reality is not a mere
time-sequence but a complex process. A network is no system (which as such always fixes limits) but
an expression of a texture of relations (and of the abundant possibilities suited to the network). In
other words, historical realities are not, as thought hitherto, events succeeding each other.
consequentially, but are constellated by the interplay of many factors, the invisible among them. The meshes are the expression of the invisible in the structure of events; this form of the void, of the invisible, takes part in the abundance and wealth of the respective historical constellation. They are, so to speak, fragments of that nirvana-like void which is creative fullness. Thus our conception of history surpasses the merely materialistic-causative conditionality which, in the Aristotelean manner, we projected into historical reality; and it opens the view to the wealth of the spiritual dimension. The network-image thus shows that the despair of nothingness can be overcome by the recognition of possible structures of consciousness yet to evolve.

In jurisprudence, besides Professor W. F. Burgi, the vice-chancellor of the Law School at St. Gallen, Hans Marti, Professor of Constitutional Law in Berne, takes the decisive step in the spiritual dimension. His demand that the law should give a picture of the entire world matches his demonstration that in the interpretation of a legal maxim something joins in always, which lies outside the merely judicial-political and completely outside every purposive consideration. A maxim is not an isolated condition but always the creation of the whole man. That is why attitudes of mind pertaining to magic and myth find their necessary expression in law. At the beginning of the proceedings when the judge rises from his seat, he reproduces a magical image. He also repeats a magical spell while pronouncing a sentence of exile on the criminal. Every maxim is connected with the facts of a case and cannot be understood without their knowledge. Hence very often the whole reality is reflected in the law. Preambles to the constitution are the typical example of what should not only be interpreted rationally but examined on the basis of their whole contents. Similarly, a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental principles of the constitutional, criminal and matrimonial laws demands in particular the inclusion of all mental attitudes to reality, which only then appears as a comprehensive, legal reality. In the works of Burgi and Marti too there is a turning away from merely rational-material thinking towards the spiritual.

The new orientation of Western science and art illustrated by the examples just mentioned make, perhaps, a decisive Western contribution to the promotion of the encounter of East and West.

This spiritual dimension of science which has hitherto remained almost unnoticed indicates the new consciousness arising today. It is perhaps the most important contribution of the West to the growth of this new consciousness amongst mankind.

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