

The Doctrine of the «Void» and the Logic of the Essence

One who looks at Western philosophy not simply to study its theoretical development, but to understand what it may signify as a history of the Spirit, finds that it tends to the conquest of a new dimension of thought: « pure thought ». It is a path that through Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, and Italian idealism from Vico to Gentile, frees itself from the bonds of the old logic to express an essential value: the synthetic virtue of thought, condition of all logic. One may say that it issues from the domain of the ancient Platonic-Aristotelian metaphysic, to operate under a new metaphysic, that was begun, but not finished. And it has been as if a lofty undertaking of the spirit had failed.

Already Kant, although he had stopped at the « a priori synthesis » and at the « categories » in his search for the prime sources of knowing, intuited the possibility of a super-sensible perception. Developing the « Analytics of the Sublime », he observes: « That is sublime which, for the fact of even being able to think of it, attests a faculty of the soul superior to any measure of the senses » (¹). In German idealism, as in that Italian, which has an unmistakable originality, the need for pure thought is continually correlated to the complete vision of a pure being in which every determination goes to extinguish itself and there arises the idea of the void, or of « indetermination », in which thought itself has its source; but not ordinary thought, rather the essence-thought, or pure thought, whose development can no longer be formal logic, but the logic of the essence.

While for philosophy the reascending from conceptual determinations, judgements and categories, to « pure thought », or essence-thought that already holds every synthesis in itself, has been viewed as the possibility of « pure reason » or « concrete logos », from the point of view of the history of the spirit, on the other hand, it signifies that to which the process of Western philosophy effectively tended. Comparison with an analogous possibility that has been realized by the East, if in another form, may illuminate the sense of that which is still thought's most elevated possibility at a time when philosophy faces the danger of falling back not only into a « realistic » logic but into the still more abstract form of the « logic of discourse », or symbolical logic: this is not only the crisis of philosophy, but that of human thought itself in the universal sense, of that which, despite its scientific apprenticeship, is continually becoming verbal and rhetorically systematic formalism, which seizes only the weight, measure and movement of experience, and tends to reduce the universe to those terms (²).

Taking as touchstone the notion of the *void* given in the form of images by Taoism, but also as a doctrine articulated in pure intellectual form by Mahayanic Buddhism, one might not only observe that metaphysical value to which the process of Western thought really tended, but understand as well that from which the conscience of a man of the present civilization would have to free itself, did it intend to rediscover that state of purity, or of essential relationship with being, suggested for

example by E. Husserl in his « phenomenology » and prospected in terms of a precise asceticism by J. Krishnamurti, and lastly by E. Jünger.

That which European philosophy effectively wished to be must be understood. Let us look, for example, at the « pure being » of Hegel: an Italian thinker, Bertrando Spaventa, may be listed among the very few who have grasped its meaning. After having observed how the search for the « truly existing being » already present in the image of the *congressus* in Protagoras, becomes the exigence of the « essential » knowledge in Trendelenburg, Herbart, Kant, Rosmini, he expressed himself in this way: « Hegel believes that one must go even further back, even deeper, to the original truth, to that which presupposes nothing behind or below itself, and which is presupposed by everything, and which movement, being synthesis, presupposes: to the absolute *minimum*, to that which, when removed, leaves nothing behind, everything fallen, except — and this is the necessity of thinking — that which has taken it all away » (3).

In effet, the entire *Wissenschaft der Logik* of Hegel may be summed up in a single idea: that the rising thought, the thought still undetermined in concepts, or pure thought, presupposes the void. Logic is not Hegel's point of arrival, as has been too commonly thought, but that which it presupposes. One may recall, as an example, the theme of being as « the undetermined immediate »: « Being, pure being, without any other determination. In its undetermined immediacy, it is similar only to itself and yet not dissimilar before another; it has no diversity either in itself or externally. With some determination or content, different in itself, or through which it were put as different from another, being would not be fixed in its purity. It is the pure indetermination and the pure *void* » (4). Identical is the indetermination of the nothing: « Nothing, pure nothing. It is a simple resemblance to itself, complete emptiness, absence of determination and of content: indistinction in itself ». Thus he may arrive at the affirmation that interests us as regards the theme we have discussed: « Thus nothing is the same indetermination or, better still, absence of determination, and yet in general the same as pure being » (5).

Retracing the thread of Western philosophy, and that of mystical literature, one might find the same idea of the void in diverse expres-

sions. For example, the *àphèle pànta* of Plotinus or the *vacare Deo* of Saint Bernard: one recalls the « do not think of anything and not even of God » of Saint Bonaventura [*Non ibi oportet cogitare res de creaturis, nec de Angelis, nec de Trinitate* (6)]: just to hint at experiences that are distinct, but analogous as regards the need for an « emptying » of the soul. We have no intention of dwelling on metaphysical analogies between East and West, already sufficiently treated. [See the comparative study by Swami Siddheswarananda on *The Dark Night* of Saint John of the Cross and the *Astamgayoga* of Patāñjali (7)]; we are more interested, for the aims of the present article, in distinguishing the precise form in which, from the XI to the XII to the XIII centuries A.D., an experience of this type was re-proposed by the School of Chartres through the admirable teaching of Peter of Compostella and of grandiose figures such as Bernardus of Chartres, Alanus ab Insulis, Bernardus Sylvestris and John Salisbury, whose metaphysical level was followed in Italy by that luminous thinker-ascetic that was Gioacchino da Fiore. They found their vision of « living nature » on the interior perception of the empty essence of being. The void is seen by the Masters of Chartres as the « supercelestial ». Alanus ab Insulis, taking up the motive of the *Superessentialis Usia* by Eriugena, expresses himself in this way in the *Regula II: In supercaelesti unitas, in caelesti alteritas, in subcaelesti pluralitas*. The authentic force of the School of Chartres is in effect Alanus of Lille, *doctor universalis*, whose strength consists in expressing ancient wisdom in a new form; this is not only Platonism, but mysteric doctrine of pre-Platonic origin, to which, however, the doctrine of the incarnated Logos and Aristotelian dialectic evidently give new force (8).

An image whose contemplation helps the disciple to gradually transfer the center of himself to being independent from the body, is given to the disciples of Chartres in the following expression: « the Quiet of the Hierarchies ». The Hierarchies operate in the various grades of manifestation, starting from a foundation that is the Absolute; they themselves, in their very being, are the Absolute, not inasmuch as they are identical to it, but inasmuch as they express it without mediation, as a continual principle actuated in relation to their function. In this sense, their action has the character of absolute security: they repose in

the depths of themselves, joined to the foundation. But this action itself, their flowing as a metaphysical force of the being, arises from an endless quietude, unknown to man.

Meditation is a way of gathering the «sense» of the « profound quiet », permanent in the tissue of the action of these beings who support the motion of the stars. In expressing themselves, in substance, they express their principle, which is the Absolute. Thus their movement comes from the profound quiet: it is unalterability in creation, instantaneousness in act and at the same time transcendent immobility: secret repose in the essence. One should imagine the bursting forth of the thunderbolt as a manifestation of this immobility.

The image calls forth in the mediator the pure life of the will, active beyond the conscience in the sphere of the conscience, not willed, but indirectly evoked. The essence of will is identical to that basilarly to the « Quiet of the Hierarchies »: power of immobility that motivates every process to which it does not alter itself. There is possible, in fact, a transcendent identification which is to be one with the being that one knows, remaining unaltered and identical to oneself, and there is an inferior identification which is to unify oneself with an obscure becoming in which one loses awareness of the beginning and alters one's own nature. This last is the case of human experience in corporeal form; the interior forces are absorbed by physical life, so that man may look out at the exterior world, but this absorption is lost by the conscience, a forgetfulness, up to a certain limit, that is the appearance of the individual conscience.

If one thinks of man, therefore, his contradiction is recognizable in the absence of a foundation, in that he appears based dynamically on the physical being; this is not the foundation, but the reflection of the spiritual in the corporeal. It is the illusory foundation that diminishes whenever one truly seeks, led on by meditation or sorrow. The illusory must dwindle, so that the true may be discovered.

When the illusory foundation may be abandoned, even for short moments — while for essential meditation or for the overcoming of sorrow, in some way a transparent form of the will, a kind of incorporeal courage, arises — then one begins to sense another foundation, the original one. And one knows that it must be wished for; one draws from it the flow of pure will, decision that must continually renew itself in order to be true. In reality, one had

never been cut off from it, but rather had lost awareness of it. The reconquest of this is the act of willing.

The quiet of the foundation is given whenever it is absolutely desired above every dissipation of the ego, and then every time it is newly sought, recognized, actuated, not for itself, but as the inalienable climate for knowledge. To think that it may be a goal in itself, sought in order to be « felt » or enjoyed — this can never be — is a mistake. It is the immovable base, instigator of all movement. To join oneself to it, to touch its immobility which is not immobility conceivable to thought conditioned by the senses, is the possibility of action that is strenuous and impetuous, even if calm, decided even as to the roots of life, such as to assume the radical condition of living, or of that process for which death is inevitable.

The foundation that is the « Quiet of the Hierarchies » is, for the disciple of Chartres, will in its essence. But it is the moment of liberty that one actuates, in that one ceases to be conditioned by the foundation furnished by nature: a moment analogous to that in which, in the Buddhist metaphysic, the Bodhisattva rises to « another plane », thanks to the « revolution of the support », *āśraya parāvṛtti* ⁽⁹⁾. With the support which is necessity, condition, taken away, the foundation arises; but it is clear that, while for the Hierarchy to operate according to the foundation is spontaneity, for man it can only be auto-determination opposed to his own existence and wilful resolution of the « modes » of his own being ⁽¹⁰⁾. Man must do something beyond that which he is, summoning to himself a more powerful will than that which ties him to the form of his existence, that is, to the necessity of the life for which death is inevitable. Which has different ways of presenting itself even during life.

But the contemplation of the « Quiet of the Hierarchies » solicits the foundation, in substance, and therefore the repose in the foundation, not because it has the power to actuate that which is contemplated as a possibility, but because the supersensible character of its content, meditatively perceived, gives for a moment independence from the support. The realization of the « grade » must be distinguished from the contemplation of it, which, as a superior moment of thought, gives a sense of independence from the support, an independence that is certainly not for the

« ego » but for the extinction of the ego and its whims. It is the initial experience of the void. We have precise and convincing images of its nature in those forms of the Tradition that reflect the need for the « void » as for an element of resolution or revolution, as for a beginning of renewal, requested by the conditions of the *kaliyuga*: images that are undoubtedly useful for understanding the meaning of the void, but that for the actual experimenter may simply be motives of meditation during the research; they cannot constitute the « object » of the research itself. To act as if they were the objects of the research would be to fall once again into a « metaphysical realism » and prevent oneself from actuating their final sense; this would be an error of thought, or lack of knowledge of the ideative process capable of ideating the void: a process, therefore, that is not the void, but, in being aware of it, the true beginning for the experience of the void.

One must say that the act of the thought-freed-from-the-senses is possible in that the essential void of the soul may already in some way be solicited behind the screen of the conscience. And it is the spirit. The possibility of extinguishing the thought-free-from-the-senses itself could be the first conscious experience of the void.

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When one speaks of the metaphysical foundation, of the foundation whence arises the « Quiet of the Hierarchies », substantially one always wishes to allude to an essence in which the reality of the world begins: that conceivable only on condition that it extinguish exterior form and its space, both the time that is necessary for its becoming in sensible experience, and the very perception of the sensible, and again the world of impulses and sentiments, and finally the thoughts, that have worked towards that extinction. Extinction that may be known through pure thought, when it still may not be possible to realize it as a superior grade of the conscience, that which is achieved by virtue of Initiation or of the cessation of physical life.

But the « void » is a similar essence, to which the traditional texts allude with images technically precise and rich in poetic content, that have the power to call forth in the mind of the meditator an authentic orientation, on condition that he be fully capable of understanding that some attributes of those images

are not the beginning of the « void » but a moment of « pure thought », or of thought unchained for a moment thanks to the meditative content, and that therefore the operation should be continued in that imaginative interior motion, or living thought.

According to the *Kulārṇava-tantra*, the void is more than a « non-being ». Unsubstantial and informal, it is the cause of every form; metaphysical foundation of the being, *śūnya* is of an adamantine essence, therefore it is called *vajra*. The *ātman-brahman* equivalence of the Upaniṣads reflowers as the vision of the identity of the individual principle with the cosmic principle, in the essential state of the void that, besides, recalls the Brahman of the Vedānta as transcendent unity of the being. Since the void is the essence of nature and of beings, the *vajrayāna* implies the possibility of a flashing experience, annihilator of the illusory forms through which nature binds the interior man, who can liberate himself just because of the absolute and unbinding experience of that which binds him.

The way of Tantric Yoga, which involves a liberation not evasive from the world but fulfilling itself in the very tissue of existence, there where original power assumes the garb of appearance, represents a « new » and in some ways anti-traditional direction in the vast picture of the esoteric currents, of intellectual, mystical, or pragmatic, or at least soteriological, type, of Hinduism. Zen will present various resemblances to that way, in its possibility of evoking the presence of the original principle in the various forms of acting: the non-acting proper to the void in that apparent action that the world requires. But it is important to observe how such possibilities of rediscovering within traditions and systems a dynamic relationship to the world, appear in the era that marks the end of the ancient world, in the era in which something seems changed in the « aura » of the earth. It is the dawn of individualistic experience, whose forms were to be varied: that naturalistic and physical, that rationalistic and philosophical, and that esoteric. In the Orient, Mahayanic Buddhism, Tantrism, Zen, Vedānta and, in more recent times, the « way » of Ramakrishna which will then pass through the « modern » experience of Vivekananda and will be crowned by the organic and luminous work of Shri Aurobindo — certainly not tied to tradition — may be regarded as the expression of an eternal principle that is reborn with new mean-

ing in a world whose metaphysical splendor is consumed; and this meaning is the formation of self-consciousness, not yet as « synthesis » but as construction of the terms from which it will take form. Equally in the Occident, the way of the Grail, the School of Chartres, the vocation of the « Fedeli d'Amore » (Faithful to Love), the mission of the Templars, the hermetic- alchemistic way, combined with the evolution of thought converging on the philosophy of the « I », cooperate in the interior formation of the human type that will affront the materialistic experience. This formation, operating metaphysically through the superior centres of the conscience, prepares the intellectual instrument of liberty. A possible liberty, possible as either affirmation or abnegation of the self; however, positive possibility of an interior type that already holds in itself, in the form of principles of self-consciousness, those results that are the object of Zen, Vajrayāna and Tantrism. The notion of reincarnation and of *karma* should be able to suggest to the investigator the idea through which one may conceive of the reappearance of the initiatic theme in an ulterior human type, according to the level reached, and as the capacity for a more radical earthly experience, pertinent to the conclusive meaning of the *kaliyuga*.

In effect, in the epoch of the original « revelations » — which were later to be reflected in the *śruti* — man still did not perceive the « I »; his relationship to the sensible was suscitated by transcendental powers and, in successive epochs, by guides or ascetics, thus by a way of teaching wherein the original communion with the supersensible, by then entrusted to the memory, *smṛti*, will be expressed by means of texts which man will have to study, recite and meditate. Substantially, the « I » takes increasingly onto itself the relationship with being, with the world, originally entrusted to God and to « masters »; it is individual conscience, for whose birth the efforts of all schools and all currents will cooperate, until the event of self-consciousness in the West. Thus one who contemplates in a larger sense might see the preparation of modern individuality not only as a process that begins with Greek philosophy, but that is elaborated at the same time in Asia, and particularly with Indian speculation.

The researcher may notice, in the spiritual history of the East during the Christian era, a unified sense of the various metaphysical and

religious currents, above all in Buddhism, from the time when the great Nāgārjuna, starting from the *pratītyasamutpāda*, dissolves the world of sensible appearances in the « void » that is equally beyond being and non-being⁽¹¹⁾, but at the same time puts thought as a function of liberation from the conceptual activity in which it is ordinarily determined. In reality, nothing of original Buddhism is denied; rather, one may say that it is articulated in forms of knowledge possible precisely because of the presence of a new impulse that is the volitive way to self-consciousness, certainly recognizable even when the great dialectical dispute between Buddhism and the principal schools of Hinduism takes place, from the VII to the IX century. A controversy whose value it will be of help to ascertain, beyond the dialectical forms in which it develops: it is the evolution of individual thought in regard to the dominant themes of being and knowing. Even when this thought arrives at forms of negation and scepticism, it still manifests a force, on whose nature it is well to focus our attention, since its interior element, which we have mentioned, is new, and flowers both as pure gnoseological vocation and as metaphysical event fulfilling itself in the interiority of some noble figures of the Great Vehicle: in fact, Buddha's revelation is inexhaustible in time, with his manifesting himself in « paradises or empyreans to which the elect mentally ascend in the contemplation of ecstasy »⁽¹²⁾.

It is evident that this new interior element converges on the awareness of the « void » and is then linked to the Third Vehicle, or Adamantine Vehicle; it is the vocation of Vasubandhu and Asaṅga. According to their biography written by Paramārtha⁽¹³⁾, the three brothers, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Virincivasta, belonged initially to the Sarvastivādin school, which is the « realism » of the Small Vehicle, but this doctrine did not suffice for Asaṅga, who elevated himself by virtue of meditation to the Tuṣita heaven, where he received from the Buddha Maitreya the teaching that he then proclaimed in the writings consecrated to the doctrine of the « nothing else but conscience » (*viññaptimātra*). However, linked to the doctrine of the two schools, Madhyamaka, founded by Nāgārjuna, and Yogācāra, founded by Māitreya-Asaṅga, Tibetan gnostic tradition informs us that the two groups of masters cultivated secret teachings that successively converged (in the VII century, with Indrabūti,

magician-king of Uḍḍiyāna) in the Vajrayāna: in fact, both Nāgārjuna and Aśaṅga are regularly cited in the *sampradāya* of the various texts of the Adamantine Vehicle. Aśaṅga is even considered the inspired formulator of the Guhyasamāja, which in practice relates the unearthly discourse of the Buddha-archetype (*Adi-Buddha*) to the crowd of Bodhisattva, reflecting itself then on the earth as teaching of the Vajrayāna ⁽¹⁴⁾.

At a given moment the cult-followers of Tantrism find Brahmanic and Vedic tradition as no longer responding to the needs of the « new times »: man no longer has the immediacy of supersensible experience. He must be able to « go upstream » with the spirit ⁽¹⁵⁾ through a will that operates at the root of the vital functions. Thus the Vajrayāna is substantially a further revelation of the wisdom of Buddha, which takes into account the diminished interior possibilities of man ⁽¹⁶⁾. In the *Kālachakra-tantra* we read that Buddha, when King Suchandra asks him what yoga can save men from the « dark age », reveals that the cosmos is by now closed in the body of man and can therefore only be rediscovered through the interior penetration of the functions of nature.

These new paths have almost the air of heresy, because they contemplate the atī-dharmic possibility, putting forth the theme of an individual initiative, resting on itself, and therefore working for the transmutation of the contingent aspect of individuality. The task consists of descending by virtue of interior independence into the profundity of corporeal nature, assuming and rectifying its forms, which are divergences from the « original light »; the power of the « void » sustains such a possibility and realizes it at the very roots of life. In effect, the technique of the Vajrayāna has as presupposition the experience of the void; since things are void and the « void » is the a-dimensional place of the Spirit, the void and the full coincide, Nirvāṇa and Saṃsāra are identical. But the meaning of this identity is the possibility of re-awakening in the lower nature the more elevated forces involuted as instincts and as passions. Thus Aryadeva in the *Citta-vishuddi-prakarāna* says that « passion renders the world evil; only passion frees it ». Nothing of that which appears as *saṃsāra* or as *māyā* may still object to constituting duality; if one descends into the depths of being, everything exhausts itself in the void. That which ordinarily presents itself as passion or

instinct is reborn as superior life, even more, it is the substance of resurrection because, placing itself as limit, it is the limit to extinguish in every form in which it represents itself, even in that spiritual: this is to actuate the « void » in its profundity, which is its a-dimensionality.

Fear, that which is wished or prohibited, and still limits egoistically, is the diaphragm that indicates the distance of the interior life from the essence that is the void. The experience of the void is therefore the same way as the « diamond brilliance ». In the *Advayavajra* we read that « the void, nucleus of all things, like the diamond, can neither be broken by sword-blows, nor crack nor burn, nor destroy itself ».

What the Great Vehicle conceives of as meaning of the void is clarified by Candrakīrti in the *Prasannapadā*. In substance, vacuity, śūnyatā, is itself a void. « Vacuity is the elimination of all the illusions provoked by the opinions. The cessation of these illusions is not, to be sure, a real entity, standing by itself. There is, for us, no way to respond to those who believe that vacuity itself is a real thing. They will never be able to attain liberation, which according to our teaching demands just the elimination of every mental construction. Let us suppose, in fact, that someone, upon being asked for a given product, answers: « I shall not give you any product »; if he who is answered thus insists and says, « then give me this product called not any », there is no longer any way of making him understand that this product is not at his disposition. The same thing happens as regards the void. Really, how can this belief that even vacuity is a positive reality be eliminated? » ⁽¹⁷⁾.

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One definitely tends to the void when one tends to the extinction of the « ego »: one empties oneself of the ego. An assumption, this, in regard to which many seekers of this time seem to be in agreement, and yet are so attached to the ego as to be able to introduce it as an inevitable and unknowingly limiting element in the world of their research, which thus is definitively adapted to the subtleties of the ego, as is generally evident in the modern and dilettantish interpretations of Yoga, Zen or Tantrism, as well as in the orthodox « traditionalism » of R. Guénon and of F.

Schuon, proposing a « metaphysical knowledge » independent of the act of knowing called however for that knowledge, which is our thinking, actual, outside of which no experience, neither physical nor metaphysical, is possible.

One who wished to have an idea of the void, might start from the representation of the void of the physical, then imagine that this is removed down to a « negative space », which is then itself taken away. One would then arrive at the idea of a spiritual space, annihilator of space and time, yet radical condition of every being existent in space and time. Here the void is not only essence, but the essence of the essence, whence the existent presents itself as its negation, naturally illusory, which it does not suffice to eliminate as a spatial image, that is, as « representation », but which must be extinguished, by means of a higher will, even as a temporal image; the temporal image being, however, the superior synthesis of all that is the becoming of a being in space, for example, Goethe's image of the *Urpflanze* ⁽¹⁸⁾.

Taking into account this double grade of inversion of original reality for its appearance as exterior reality, one can understand the sense of the Goethean image « the entire ephemeral is merely a symbol ». In every thing, in every being, one may observe the double overturning of the essence, and recognize in its « form » the symbol of the double negation of the void, so that it may be said that the void expresses itself in that form, if one is capable of contemplating its a-spatial and un-temporal value: which cannot be simply representation but above all perception, or supersensible experience, for which the technique of « pure observation », or « thought-freed-from-the-senses », is preparation.

The inversion of appearance is certainly not a fact, but an act that still at first cannot fulfill itself as such, directly or immediately. The mediation, as we have suggested, is « pure thought » which may be considered a fluid covering for a void in which the original spirit is present; this thought arises at a given moment as the vision of that which hides or expresses itself in the appearance.

The first form of the void, called the « trial by water » in Western hermetic-alechemistic tradition ⁽¹⁹⁾, is that in which one has the possibility of equilibrium when the support of the earth is lacking: a possibility whose symbol may be found in the image of the fish, which

balances without supporting itself, is silent, has its eyes always open, cold blood and the possibility of going through the waters, gliding. This image may be confronted with that of the « leap of the carp » in Zen literature. It is the phase in which the disciple takes from his own interior activity, or from « knowledge », the motives for action, no longer stimulated by terrestrial motives. It is thus pure action, emptied of ego.

The ulterior form of the void is the « trial by air », connected with the possibility of independence of physical breath to the point of its extinction: an event that cannot take place through the corporeal organism, even though it use it as conclusive support. For the « trial by air », the adamantine essence is awake in the soul, which tends to make it its transparency. Independence from the terrestrial is now the possibility of perception of the interior meaning of events and of their solution, in the form that, through another way, is possible only by the intense experience of sorrow, rendered luminous and changed into the force of love. The « trial by air » is basically possible at the level to which there corresponds the transmutation of the obscure world of human sorrow, in a radiant capacity for love. Now the essence-thought is not support, but object of contemplation for the « I », which has no need of supports; now it is its own foundation.

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The experience of « pure thought » is preparation for the knowledge of the « void » ⁽²⁰⁾; in fact, the first form of the void takes effect when this living thought-process is possessed to such a degree that it may be extinguished. Whatever brings about a similar possibility is a way towards the void. However, meditation on the void is the preparer of such an experience, the possibility of living its idea so intensely, of taking from it an active sense in the contemplation of the world and its processes. This is not an elimination of its reality, but a gathering in of its principle and thus of its action; whence comes a relationship of liberty to it.

To empty the world of un-essence is to re-discover essence, but also manifestation as the garment of essence, which is no longer appearance. It is to rediscover the true world, that which is simultaneously in the individual and beyond his limits; but it is the same that

says: free the world from the « ego ». In the void that may be reached, one touches the Divine, for the Hierarchies operate directly in the « voids » of the being, that is, at the roots of existence, each « void » being a spiritual « fullness ». In the very self one touches a « void » when meditation is concentrated on one point, or when a subtle center (*chakra*) is vivified by interior light, or when an intense sorrow in the soul is rendered pure even to transparency; one has the extinction of the egoic-vital element, and there where for a moment a process of death of the ego is summoned, there is kindled in reality a superior form of life ⁽²¹⁾.

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Definitively, then, the logic of the essence can lead the Westerner to a superior experience of thought, and from this the pure idea of the « void » can arise. If one thinks that the whole world appears inasmuch as it has form, and that the form of every thing or being is idea, that sensory perception itself is in reality a non-sensory conjunction with the world, and finally that space itself is an idea (in fact, the physical points of space are perceived, but all relation between one point and another is already conceptual and the connection between these relationships is ideal, in that it is already abstracted from all physical reference and in substance is the third dimension, the first being that physical and the second that conceptual); then at a given moment the « void » may be understood as the essential reality of the all ⁽²²⁾.

Behind all existence, or rather, in place of all existence, in place of all formal value, reality is the « void ». And one who has followed these observations ought not to fear that there may be suggested the conception of an unreality or inexistence of the world that appears; these are supersensible experiences of him who perceives the metaphysical basis of the world, and previous to which appearance undoubtedly has its value and its truth. Just through appearance, in fact, one can rise from the contingent human plane to that causal and metaphysical. Rather, the experience that we have already proposed ⁽²³⁾ is the being able to go to meet the perceptions of the senses with the supersensible contents made to arise from the very world of the senses through pure conceptual activity. At a certain moment, the empty conscience itself may have

the real experience of the world, the world resulting unreal precisely when it is halted at its appearance and as such assumed, desired, organized and transformed into culture.

From the potency of the void one may feel the birth of the world which, as a system of appearances, begins to lose its fictitious consistency; extinguishing itself in the image of the void, it rises up again as value. The true « I », that for which one seeks so often, shows itself through the others in innumerable and enthralling ways of being, each true in itself, because each is seen connected to its foundation, identical to that where we ourselves are now. In presenting ours, we perceive it in the others. And with the others comes, unsought-for, a correlation that cannot be corrupted. That others may take away my « mantle » is illusory; let them even take my « tunic »; the important thing is that I feel that it, as a fact, is empty, but that as an interior act it is the true relationship to the other, which is definitely the bearer of the « I ». The relationship is that which, called forth in such a way, can operate on it from its foundation and transform its consciousness.

One advances towards zero, because all the charges of the impulses and sentiments connected with that which appeared, slowly calm down and tend to vanish. Effectively they do not vanish; this is a still-distant possibility, pertaining not to the idea of the void, to which we have hitherto referred, but to something more, to the actuation of the void as a state of consciousness, resolute of the interior constitution of the disciple, whose possibility of knowing now starts from a base radically different from the ordinary one, whence he is in reality *dvija*, « born two times ». But the living idea of the « void » is already a force functioning in the sense of a penetration of the essence, or of the void, of things and of an extinction of appearances ⁽²⁴⁾.

The disciple can operate meditatively on the animation of such an idea, drawing from it a power of incessant liberation from the deception of daily « facts » and from the siege of other states of mind, all the more stringent inasmuch as his interior work may be an effective aid for others.

A similar liberation from « facts » is not a renunciation of objective perception of the sensible, but an integration of its process into consciousness, whether with interior motives already called up in meditation, or with an empty vision of being, which responds to its

negative value, or to the value that is positive from the point of view of supersensible reality. As can be seen, the theme of the overthrow or inversion of the vision returns: not, let it be understood, an overthrow of a «realistic» type, or a rhetorical image of overthrow relative to the noted phenomenology of opposites — «contrary couples» — but a backwards assumption of the extro-versa *nóesis* in ordinary ontological vision. Then one can understand acting as non-acting, movement as immobility and the inexistence of movement in space; one sees in fact that which is moved in space, not that which moves it, which is never linked to space; through this one understands that true movement is the interior act that is therefore the active power of an intimate immobility, arising from every movement.

And this may be premise of a psychology of the future, to which the psyche may not be extraneous. The power of the «void» is present in the idea of the «void», if it may be realized through pure thought; through its virtue one may look at the scenery of the being, intuiting its internal value, independent of that through which human fancies, inclinations and evaluations awaken. Every thing, every being, every event, is in itself void. Its appearance is the limit, that is an ideal limit, beyond which the void is rediscovered in which the true being of the thing arises to conceal itself in every instant of manifestation. Truth is therefore the void, from which appearance gives access to a profound essentiality, annihilator of that impulse of the ego to feed its necessity for the fictitious. The world of vanities and rhetorical tensions, relative to the human idea of conquest on the physical plane — career, glory, wealth — does not awaken critical reactions or repulsions, but is penetrated by a power of intellection that gathers its unsubstantiality, *i.e.* its value, which is the last sense of the false placing of force in the process of extroversion; thus it is with all

aspects of pragmatistic presumption. Each image of earthly settings is extinguished before the ideative power of the void. The void makes itself thought. But the reality of thought is the void; the ways of pure thought, in fact, are ways of annihilation of processes of nature.

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NOTES

- (¹) I. KANT, *Critica del giudizio*, Italian transl., Bari, Laterza, 1960, p. 99.
- (²) See HAMELIN, *Le système du savoir*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1956, p. 85 ff.
- (³) B. SPAVENTA, Unedited fragment in G. GENTILE, *La riforma della dialettica hegeliana*, Florence, Sansoni, 1954, p. 42.
- (⁴) G. W. F. HEGEL, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, I, 72.
- (⁵) G. W. F. HEGEL, *Op. cit.*, I, 74.
- (⁶) SAINT BONAVENTURA, *Mystica Theologica*, p. II, p. 685.
- (⁷) SWAMI SIDDHESWARANANDA, *Le Raja-yoga de Saint Jean de la Croix*, in *Yoga, Science de l'Homme intégral*, Paris, Les Cahiers du Sud, 1953.
- (⁸) G. RAYNAUD DE LAGE, *Alain de Lille, poète du XII^e siècle*, Montreal-Paris, 1951, p. 112 ff.
- (⁹) G. TUCCI, *Ratnākaraśānti on Āśraya-parāvṛtti*, in «Asiatica», Festschrift für F. Weller, Leipzig, O. Harrassowitz, 1954, p. 765 ff.
- (¹⁰) H. FRITSCHÉ, *Il primogenito, Una immagine dell'Uomo*, Italian transl., Milano, Bompiani, 1946, p. 296 ff.
- (¹¹) G. TUCCI, *Storia della Filosofia indiana*, Bari, Laterza, 1957, pp. 80-81.
- (¹²) G. TUCCI, *Op. cit.*, p. 69.
- (¹³) J. TAKAKUSU, *The Life of Vasubandhu by Paramārtha*, etc. in T'oung Pao, V, (1904) p. 279.
- (¹⁴) See P. FILIPPANI RONCONI, *Il Buddhismo*, Napoli, R. Pironti, 1960, p. 61 ff.
- (¹⁵) *Mahā-nirvāṇa-tantra*, I, 20-29, 37-50.
- (¹⁶) M. ELIADE, *Le Yoga, Liberté et Immortalité*, Paris, Payot, 1954, p. 209.
- (¹⁷) CANDRAKĪRTI, *Prasannapādā*, pp. 247-8, cit. in *Civiltà dell'Oriente*, Vol. III, «Filosofia dell'India» by R. Gnoli.
- (¹⁸) R. STEINER, *Goethes naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, Dornach, 1938, p. 93 ff.
- (¹⁹) J. EVOLA, *La Tradizione ermetica*, Bari, Laterza, 1931, pp. 124-5.
- (²⁰) Cfr. E. UEHLI, *La nascita dell'individualità dal mito*, Italian transl., Milano, Bocca, 1939, p. 70 ff.
- (²¹) E. UEHLI, *Op. cit.*, p. 65 ff.
- (²²) As regards the ideal value of space and time and their constructive function in the universe and in human «corporality», cfr. G. WACHSMUTH, *Le forze plasmatrici eteriche, nel cosmo nella terra e nell'uomo*, Italian transl., Todi, «Atanor», 1929, p. 290 ff.
- (²³) M. SCALIGERO, *Avvento dell'Uomo interiore*, Firenze, Sansoni, 1960, p. 93, «L'osservazione pura».
- (²⁴) Cfr. Introduction by E. CONZE to *Selected Sayings from Perfection of Wisdom*, London, The Buddhist Society, 1955, pp. 21-22.

