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ORIENS AND OCCIDENS (I)

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

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

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

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

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

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

René Guénon wrote:

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

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

² In fact, there is no symmetry between these two terms.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶ These five Years correspond to the five “suns” of the Aztecs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴ About the paradisiacal utopia in relation to “the New World” see Mircea Eliade, **La nostalgie des origines**, Gallimard, 1978, pp. 169 ff.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

to be continued

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



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

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

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

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

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

² See *The Everlasting Sacred Kernel*, p. 36.

Oriens and Occidens (part II)

The Devil couldn't restrain itself from imitating and profaning the number seven and the symbolism of the tower. In 1927, William B. Seabrook published a curious book¹ in which he described his journey among the Arabs and Muslims, and he has a special chapter about the "Towers of Shaitan" (p. 316). Seabrook made comments on a legend, widely known in the Middle-East, about the existence of the fabulous "Seven Towers" or "Power Houses" of the Devil (p. 289), a chain of towers stretching across Asia, from Northern Manchuria, through Tibet, west through Persia, and ending in Kurdistan. In each of these towers, a priest of Satan, by "broadcasting" occult vibrations, controls the evil in the world (p. 290). Seabrook confessed that he did not believe this legend for a moment, which seemed as mythical as the Chinese "subterranean kingdom" or the caves of Sinbad, yet arriving among the Yezidees, north of Baghdad, he saw one of the Towers (p. 316). René Guénon examined Seabrook's information in a note of *Études Traditionnelles*, confirming the existence of the "Seven Towers." He also, in some private letters, considered the towers to be in a direct relation with counter-initiation²; yet Guénon underlined as well that such towers, more or less important, can be found in the West too, and explained that the agents of counter-initiation use the Western pseudo-initiation. This last statement has to be understood not only as a corporeal link between these two, but also as a subtle and invisible channel, which means that we have to be careful when guessing where these "counter-initiation" centers are located.

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

¹ William B. Seabrook, *Adventures in Arabia*, Paragon House, 1991.

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

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

Oriens and Occidens (part II)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Oriens and Occidens (part II)

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

Julius Evola, in his article **René Guénon, Orient and Occident** (1954), tried, like many others, to argue that what Guénon was saying about a “traditional civilization” still existing in Orient is not valid anymore². Evola affirmed:

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

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

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

² Julius Evola, **Orient et Occident**, Archè, 1982, pp. 40 ff.

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

Oriens and Occidens (part II)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Sophia Perennis, Perennial Wisdom Series.

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that today we cannot talk anymore about an “immutable Orient” (as Gilis does), since this “immutable Orient” has disappeared and the entire world is facing decadence¹. And he ended the article pointing out the case of Islam: this part of the Orient decayed very fast so that “there are not too many real initiates left in the exterior world.” Let us say it again: the “immutable Orient” (an equivalent of *Oriens*) cannot disappear. It is known that Satan’s greatest ruse is to make the world think that it doesn’t exist. Yet another ruse is also very efficiently used: the one which makes the people believe that there is no more Tradition, sacred and initiation in this world. In fact, if the world still has a degree of reality that is because the divine presence is among us. A profane domain does not have reality; there is only a profane viewpoint. And even if this world will decay completely and disappear, the sacred kernel, this “immutable Orient,” will live forever².

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

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