

from the Spiritual Authority, Might from Right, Action from Contemplation.'

After which, nothing remains but to repeat the aspiration of the traditional Sanskrit text: 'Where the Priesthood and the Kingship move together in one accord, that holy world I fain would know.'

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## PHILOSOPHY IN EAST AND WEST

Until recently most Europeans imagined that 'history of thought' and 'development of Western civilisation' were almost the same thing. The development of Western thought was seen as a coherent whole and as the only one that mattered both for the present and the future. Hence Western scholars quite naively judged Indian and Chinese thought by their own standards.

Eastern achievements in religion and philosophy appeared on the horizon of our spiritual world as strange, attractive phenomena. To see a Chinese work of art is, indeed, an exciting experience. But, in our culture, art has a place apart; we can enjoy these astonishing creations without identifying ourselves with the particular feeling for life which is embodied in them. In the same way some ancient Eastern religious and philosophical writings appealed to moderns who, though rather sceptical in matters of religious creed and dogmas, yet regarded mystical experience of the Infinite as the core of religion. The documents of early Indian metaphysics—the so-called Upanishads—were interpreted in this romantic way as remnants of 'a far off, ancient household of the soul.' Of the rich philosophical literature of China one book has become popular in Western Europe since it was discovered in the last century: the so-called Tao Te ching, the title indicating that its subject is both the Absolute and absolute, or perfect, action. This short but great book, composed about the end of the creative period of ancient Chinese philosophy (3rd century B.C.), was accepted as the embodiment of a primæval metaphysic that could be regarded as mysticism. Translated again and again in nearly all Western languages, it has obtained a definite place in what is called 'World Literature.'

Besides these rather amateurish approaches to the Eastern world, there arose the truly scholarly interest of thinkers who concerned themselves with the universal history of thought. It was inevitable

that, in the long run, more detailed knowledge of this remote world would shake our feeling of unique superiority in our Western traditions. People became curious to discover how Buddhism had influenced early Christianity. They wondered too how it was that printing had been used in China for six hundred years before the European invention of typography. But it was not yet realised in Europe that Buddhism had been destined to fulfil in the Far East a mission similar to that of Christianity in our world; that in China too barbarian peoples, invading a highly cultured empire, had, for some four centuries (3rd to 6th centuries A.D.), interrupted the continuity of its ancient, classical civilisation but without uprooting it; and that the Chinese had not only anticipated the invention of printing, of gunpowder and of the compass (the significance of which in the growth of the modern world during the Renaissance has often been emphasised), but had also made these discoveries in an era of new cultural advance analogous to the European Renaissance.

The philosophers who produced a synthetic view of the history of religious, moral and philosophical ideas were content to place Indian and Chinese thought among the first forms of highly developed civilisation originating in the East from primitive culture. The Indians and Chinese were thus seen to belong to 'the first generation of cultured peoples,' together with the Egyptians, Babylonians and Iranians, who preceded the 'Classical peoples' of the Mediterranean, the founders of our civilisation and, with it, of the 'civilisation of the world.'

The development of thought was conceived as a more or less straight line, with the rising and falling civilisations handing on the torch to one another. Typical wise men of India or the Far East were seen, in the traditional calm of their pose, as representatives of an ancient culture, still surviving but stagnant for countless ages. In contrast with this way of life there stood out the progressive activity of Western man, never content to rest on any one plane of spiritual life, but exhausting one stable form of life after another and discarding its glories.



In the present crisis we are prepared to consider the spiritual world of the Orientals on the same level as Western thought, and to try to understand their inter-relations without doing injustice to the significance of either. We cannot assess these relations from the standpoint of any one culture. We are forced to take a wider view if we accept the principles voiced in the face of the 'intellectual

anarchy' of the nineteenth century by a representative of Catholic traditionalism '*La vérité réunit, l'erreur sépare.*' Nor is it enough to say that an Oriental, 'even one from the Far East,' and a Western share a common humanity. Only the whole variety of the manifestations of this humanity in the course of history will reveal its potentialities. This variety however, is not merely a set of disconnected forms of life; the *historical world is a whole* and, as such, it has its own structure with its own typical variations. It is to this point that we must look.

The distinct type of the Western man has been formed in an historical process beginning in ancient Greece or, more exactly, in post-Homeric Greece. Now, if we go back to those beginnings which are marked by the appearance of philosophy in Greece about 600 B.C., we meet with a striking historical phenomenon. A wave of spiritual movements swept over the Near and the Middle East. Zoroaster, the founder of Iranian religion, lived probably about 800 B.C. To the same epoch belong the Prophets of Israel who appeared at the end of the eighth century. The founder of Buddhism, Gautama Sidartha, called Buddha, i.e. the Illuminated, lived, probably, about 500 B.C. This date indicates a later stage in the evolution of Indian thought. Buddhism was not a beginning but a result—the result of a long period of metaphysical speculation which it replaced by a religion with mystical tendencies. The year 500 B.C. also marks the appearance of Confucius, whose teaching represents the rise of philosophy in China, and, in a certain sense, Chinese philosophy as a whole. For in the course of history Confucianism won a predominant position as the most powerful spiritual force in Chinese society. This happened after a period of three centuries marked by the growth of rationalism in Chinese thought, the end of which coincided roughly with the unification of all China in the Empire founded in 221 B.C. The Master's teaching became the inspiration of the Chinese Empire founded originally by force; it formed the image of the typical man for the Far East, as Greek philosophy did for the Mediterranean when it became absorbed in the Roman Empire.

Apart from his date and from the immense effectiveness of his tradition, we know little about the great Chinese teacher. The origins of Chinese philosophy are not directly accessible to us, for there are no genuine texts that go back far enough. Yet we can form a fairly accurate picture of the complex civilisation that preceded the philosophic movement by some five centuries. In this courtly civilisation we meet with a distinct kind of monotheism con-

ceived in harmony with the moral and political ideas of the large, centralised, feudal state of the Middle Kingdom. Confucius deliberately connected his philosophic conception of human morals with the Chou culture in order to elicit the ideal content of an historical form of life, which even then was passing away.

Wherever in the course of history philosophy emerges, either as an original movement or as a renaissance, it is always at a time when an old, hitherto accepted, culture is being shattered and ethical standards are dissolving ; at a time of social ferment, political struggle, religious crises ; a time when the sap of life is mounting dangerously, and institutions explode at a touch. Such a situation may, though it *need not*, give birth to philosophy.

At the time of which we speak, the Eastern peoples, who possessed a still vital ancient culture, and the youthful Greek civilization achieved with wonderful simultaneity (probably due to mutual stimulation), a sense of their position in a world-view of their own ; they achieved great views of deity, man and the world. Yet at only a few points—India and China—in that world of the ancient cultures, and again among the advance guard of the Greeks that had settled on the coast of Asia Minor, at the very circumference of Oriental civilisation—did man set out on that path of spiritual release to which we give the Greek name of ‘ philosophy.’ It was an historical event, not an inevitable phase.

Philosophy is not an ordinary flower on the tree of culture, naturally blossoming as soon as the right season provides the proper condition for its full development. It is an historical product, and yet accords with life’s intentions. In taking the step from life to philosophy, the Indians, the Chinese, the Greeks, realized each at a definite point in history, a fundamental potentiality of human nature. In this dynamic response to a need of the spirit a common humanity revealed itself in all of them.

While thus affirming the ideal relationship between Eastern and Western thought we remain aware of their individual historic characters. If we consider the races with their differences of environment and native culture we might think that they had been chosen to illustrate the variety which is an essential characteristic of human history. Indeed, as philosophy made its appearance at different points of the earth’s surface, a difference not only of cultural background, but one of subject matter, is revealed.

The Greeks inquired into the nature of everything in the world, man included, presupposing that nature was everywhere one and the same, in spite of variety and change. The Greek word for nature

is *physis*, from which our 'physics' is derived. *Physis* is not a common conception in a rational comprehension of the world, but one peculiar to the Greek. It indicates their way of looking at things, the way of 'theory' which enabled this people to create natural science. Another word expressive of the Greeks' aesthetic-rational comprehension of the world, is *cosmos*. This word originally meant 'ornament,' and so portrays the world as a body, complete, and beautifully ordered.

In ancient Chinese philosophy we also meet with an expression for ornament that has been given a philosophic meaning, but this Chinese word (*wen*) means Culture. This usage indicates that the concern of Far Eastern thinkers was with the human, social and historical world. The Chinese expression for World—*t'ien hia*, literally 'what is under heaven'—also means the Kingdom or Empire as representative of the civilised world. The task of the early Confucians was to achieve a rational foundation for human morals which should assure the cultured man of the dignity of his personality and provide a basis for an ethical attitude towards politics. The ancient Chinese thinkers, whether they relied on culture or were opposed to it, sought the way leading men to unite, and become possessed of this world as an outcome of the possession of one's self. In the words of Mr. Arthur Waley: 'All Chinese philosophy is essentially the study of how men can best be helped to live together in harmony and good order.' Indian metaphysics on the other hand took the opposite course from that of the Greeks. Concerned with the individual soul, the Masters of the Upanishads directed the subject's gaze to the innermost reality of the Self. To search for one's Self meant for them going beyond the knowable, named and shaped objects of thought to the unknowable, unshaped *subject* of knowledge, the subject that embraces all things as 'the seer of sights, the thinker of thought.'

One may well inquire if the one name 'philosophy' should be applied to all of these different early attempts. Such historical scepticism is characteristic of the 'tough minded' empiricists of our time. The truth is that the historical facts, so soon as they are properly understood, demonstrate the essential connection in human strivings between the individual and the universal. To recognise this we must alter our point of view. Instead of concentrating on the *subjects* of philosophical enquiry, we must go back to the philosophising activity itself, which operates upon these different subject matters.

What Plato called the 'wondering' of the philosopher—the

wonder with which he turns to contemplate Life and the world—differs from the inquiring doubt of the critical intellect anxious to free itself from prejudices. It is not the *result* of reflection but has a claim to be considered as the *basis* of all reflection. In its essential meaning, it is one ; but it contains within itself the relationship of our human life, which sets us questioning, to the inscrutable, life-sustaining power, about which we question. Apart from this relationship its expression would be everywhere the same, a monotonous repetition that to be aware of the Unknowable is the zenith of human knowledge. But because of this relationship the metaphysical attraction towards the root of all things varies in respect both of the question posed and of the answering knowledge. The beginning of philosophy is contrapuntal, the principal parts having been assigned to different peoples.

Thus the different problems which were considered from the outset of philosophy are connected with one another in the same way as the three basic factors of human thought—the Self, the relation of the individual Self with other Selves, and man's common relation to the world of objects. It is not by chance that different cultures have laid stress in their philosophy on one or other of these three life-factors. This choice was historically conditioned by the fact that in each of these cultures in which philosophy originated, the form and features of everyday life were dominated by one or other of them.

In India, where religion is the overwhelming, all-absorbing reality, philosophy is the work of priestly thinkers, for whom all problems of life are concentrated in the problem of the soul, and the path of the soul towards absolute self-fulfilment or immortality. In China, where the great reality of the State orders the daily life of men, where wise men are bent upon serving the State, the metaphysical gaze is focussed primarily upon the ties that hold the community together. In Greece, where neither religion nor the might of the State is the one dominating reality, the original creators of philosophy are neither priests nor officials but individual men, active in the rough and tumble of existence, drawn from various classes within petty communities, each engaged alone in working out the problems of life. The great reality is here a dynamic one—the marvel of the world in its relation to the independent creative personality of the individual, who looks out open-eyed upon it. For the Greeks, man realizes his own full humanity in his relation to the world when he takes his stand upon the earth and, in free contemplation, recognizes over him the divine order of the heavens.

We moderns with our highly differentiated culture, in which religion, art and science have made themselves independent of one another and of philosophy, we modern Westerners need to search for an underlying unity. It was within that underlying unity, before the divisions were made, that the birth and the whole of the first movement of philosophy took place. Of necessity, all the motives are present in the beginnings of each, but one or other of them predominates, and sets the course along which each unique historical effort of creation moves. In this way one may tell the part each particular approach has played in fashioning philosophy as a whole.

'The wondrous family resemblance of all Indian, Greek and German philosophy is easy to explain,' said Nietzsche. He explained it by affinity of language and racial conditions. Consequently he asserted that Chinese philosophers were unlikely to be found on paths of thought similar to those of the Indo-Europeans. The truth, however, is that Chinese philosophy is more akin to Western thought than is Indian speculation. Thus the naturalistic, racial theory of the spiritual world is confuted by the historical facts.

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