



# The Center of the World

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The center of the world or the supreme center of the present terrestrial humanity is called the Earthly Paradise, Agarththa, or Salem. It is the Temple of Peace (*salem*) and the House of Justice (*Beith-Din*), since the supreme center, or any other spiritual center, which is its image, could be described as a temple (the sacerdotal aspect, corresponding to Peace) and as a palace or tribunal (the royal aspect, corresponding to Justice).<sup>1</sup> This Center is an image of the Heavenly Center, not as a virtual image formed by a mirror, but having full reality; also, a spiritual center is the terrestrial and visible (to human senses) image of the true Center of the World and even if the sacred orientation is done with respect to the spiritual center, it is done symbolically towards the supreme Center.

There is nothing more important, so fundamental, more essential and more plenary for a sacred doctrine than symbolizing the center, given that without the Center there is nothing. As Guénon said, the Center is the origin, the source of everything, epitomized by the center of a circle, and representing the Principle's image,<sup>2</sup> which explains why all the genuine traditions and rites are so concerned with the symbolism of the center. God, through His Word, turns into the Center of the World.<sup>3</sup>

Meister Eckhart, in his sermon *Ez was âbent des tages* (**John** 20:19), mentions the patriarch Jacob, who, "when he reached a certain place he passed the night there, since the sun had set" (**Genesis** 28:11). Jacob said – Meister Eckhart stresses – "a certain place," without naming it; this place is God, the divine Being who gives life and place, being and order, to everything. In this place, the soul rests in the highest and most hidden place. This place, as Meister Eckhart suggested, is at the same time Center and God.

The Center of the World is the Principle's "location" and, in an absolute sense, there is no difference between the Center and the Principle. For example, the Lord of the World, who is, in his highest significance, a principle, identical to Manu of the Hindu tradition, personifying the cosmic Intelligence that reflects the pure spiritual Light and formulates the Law for a world or a cycle, operates and manifests his presence through the spiritual

<sup>1</sup> See René Guénon, **Le Roi du Monde**, Gallimard, Paris, 1981, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> René Guénon, **Écrits pour Regnabit**, Archè, Milano, 1999, pp. 71-79.

<sup>3</sup> Guénon, **Écrits**, p. 103, René Guénon, **Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée**, Gallimard, Paris, 1980, p. 110, René Guénon, **Le symbolisme de la croix**, Guy Trédaniel / Véga, Paris, 1989, p. 33.

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center settled in the terrestrial world.<sup>4</sup> The Center is *el-maqâmul-ilâhi*, the divine station where all the oppositions are solved and united, Plato's "righteous middle," the Chinese *Zhong Yong* where the Heavenly Activity operates, the "World's Navel," Aristotle's immovable mover, and, in its ultimate significance, it is indeed the very Principle, the Hindu *antaryâmi* that produces the initial impulse and then, governs and regulates the world.

The Center is the beginning, the middle and the end, where the middle is an obvious equivalent for "center" as stated in the Far-Eastern tradition (*Zhong Yong*, "the invariable middle"), but it also describes the point of equilibrium and harmony, of peace and immutability, obtained only as pivot of the weighing scale – the "jade balance" that represents the *Ursa Major* constellation in the Chinese tradition and is called *Tulâ* in Sanskrit.<sup>5</sup>

It is "the Pivot of the Rule" (*Dao Shu*), sheltering, like in an ark or chest, the Three Worlds (the ideogram *qu*) within the *Axis Mundi* (the ideogram *mu*).<sup>6</sup> As pivot, the Center is the Pole, but also the completion, the final point where all beings return; it is Alpha and Omega. Nicholas of Cusa said the same thing about God, who is identical to the Center: "God, absolute maximum, is all at once the author of all his works, the only one who knows them, and their end, since everything is in him and nothing is outside of him, who is the principle (origin), the middle and the end of everything, center and circumference of the universe"<sup>7</sup>; and: "the poles of the sphere coincide with the center, since the center is nothing else but the pole, that is, God."<sup>8</sup>

The supreme Center, like the Principle itself, has no name, no limits, escapes any definition, and it can be conceived only in a symbolic manner, as a *principlial* point, without form or dimension, invisible – the image of the supreme One,<sup>9</sup> which point becomes the center of a circle, or the center of a three-dimensional cross, or the center of a *swastika* – the sign of the Pole, or the hub of the wheel (the wheel of life, the wheel of law, the zodiac wheel), or the center of a flower (lotus, rose, lily, the golden sun in the center of the forget-me-not flower).

From a microcosmical perspective, the Earthly Paradise is the center of the human state, as a point generated by the intersection of the *Axis Mundi* with the domain of human possibilities, a reflected image of the universal Center. This point, identical to the Inner Palace of the Judaic Kabbalah, after producing or realizing the space, makes itself the center of this space, but remains "non-located,"<sup>10</sup> which prompts René Guénon to refute Pascal's definition of space, "a sphere with the center everywhere and the circumference

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<sup>4</sup> Guénon, **Le Roi**, p. 13. Fabre d'Olivet already said that "Manu is the legislative Intelligence, which presides on Earth from a flood to another" (**Histoire philosophique du genre humain**, Éditions Traditionnelles, Paris, 1991, p. 238).

<sup>5</sup> Guénon, **Le Roi**, p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> Léon Wiegner, **Caractères chinois**, Kuangchi Cultural Group, 2004, pp. 183, 276, 581.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolas de Cusa, **De la docte Ignorance**, Guy Trédaniel, Paris, 1979, p. 166.

<sup>8</sup> Cusa, **De la docte Ignorance**, p. 152.

<sup>9</sup> Guénon, **Symboles fondamentaux**, p. 84.

<sup>10</sup> Guénon, **Écrits**, pp. 173-9.

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nowhere.”<sup>11</sup> Since the central point is essentially non-located (it has no location in manifestation), the *principal* center is, in fact, nowhere, and the circumference, or all manifested and produced beings,<sup>12</sup> is everywhere.<sup>13</sup>

Guénon refers to the absolute Center and not to its substitutes; with respect to the manifestation, Nicholas of Cusa stated: “the world machine will have, one might say, its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere.”<sup>14</sup> Applying the metaphysical principles to our world, Cusanus highlighted the error of geocentrism and explained that Earth is not the center of the universe, that any celestial body is, apparently, the center of the world for its inhabitants, and so, the manifested world has the center everywhere, since a universe that changes continuously could not have a fixed and immobile center.<sup>15</sup> In the same manner, any secondary genuine and orthodox tradition, regularly<sup>16</sup> derived from the primordial Tradition, considers its spiritual center as “the center.”

“The hidden point” – the immutable Center, the immovable mover (*to prôton kinoun akinêton on*), the pivot – does not belong to the universal manifestation, as it is the principle of the universe “beyond” the universe, and therefore non-manifested. The *principal* point’s “modes” are the ones located in manifestation, which “modes” are the worldly knots, “the vital centers” vibrating by reflection the primeval vibration.

On the other hand, the circumference, as the World’s limit, is nowhere, considering how the universal manifestation, for our human mind, extends indefinitely. Such an interpretation fails to see beyond the *prakritian* perspective,<sup>17</sup> but Nicholas of Cusa, fortunately, does not stop here. Cusanus, in fact, has revitalized a twelve century hermetic adage, which stated that God is a circle with the center everywhere and the circumference nowhere, and Pascal, resuming Cusanus’ formula, two centuries later, condemned it to the level of the world, which, obviously, pleased modern mentality. From a metaphysical point of view, as we have already mentioned, Guénon explained how the formula should be rewritten according to inverse analogy and based on a Daoist text, transmitted by Zhuang Zi: “The point, which is the Pivot of the Rule (*Dao Shu*), is the immovable center of a circumference on which all the contingencies, distinctions and individualities rotate.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> René Guénon, **Le symbolisme de la croix**, p. 148. This definition is used by the ritual of *The Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem* (See W. L. Wilmshurst, **The Meaning of Masonry**, Gramercy Books, New York, 1980, p. 74).

<sup>12</sup> We relate “being” with “to be.”

<sup>13</sup> Guénon, **Le symbolisme de la croix**, p. 151.

<sup>14</sup> Cusa, **De la docte Ignorance**, p. 155.

<sup>15</sup> “It is impossible for the world machine to have this sensible earth, air, fire, or anything else for a fixed and immovable center. For in motion there is simply no minimum, such as a fixed center. (...) And although the world is not Infinite, it cannot be conceived of as finite, since it lacks boundaries within which it is enclosed. (...) Therefore, just as the earth is not the center of the world, so the sphere of fixed stars is not its circumference” (Cusa, **De la docte Ignorance**, pp. 150-151).

<sup>16</sup> That is, following the sacred rules or regulations.

<sup>17</sup> See our work, **About the Yi Jing**, Rose-Cross Books, Toronto, 2006, p. 96.

<sup>18</sup> Léon Wiegner, **Les pères du système taoïste**, Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1950, p. 219 (Tchoang-tzeu, chap. 2, C).

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Similarly, a circle could symbolize the biblical syntagm “The Being is the Being” (*Eheieh asher Eheieh*),<sup>19</sup> in which case the central point is the Logos and the circumference is the manifested world and the geometrical locus of the *principal* point’s “modes” – the worldly knots. In such a representation, the circumference’s ubiquity designates, obviously, the universal Existence (the circumference is everywhere), which appears as a worldly reflection of the *principal* omnipresence, of the hidden point, of the Center that does not belong to the universal manifestation (the center is nowhere), or, in Nicholas of Cusa’s language, we could say that God is everywhere as explication and nowhere as complication.

Anticipating the equivocal effect, Cusanus added a remarkable clarification to the formula: “Therefore, the world machine will have, one might say, its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere, for its circumference and center is God, who is everywhere and nowhere.”<sup>20</sup> To illustrate this fundamental statement, Nicholas of Cusa uses the mathematical theory of limits, introducing the two “infinities” (which Pascal hijacked and distorted later), and applies the concept of movement – a basic characteristic of the universe, since only the Principle is the immovable mover – to the geometrical diagram mentioned above, marking the limits or the extremes: the movement’s minimum in the immovable center (“the infinitely small”) and the maximum on the circumference (“the infinitely large”), extremes that coincide “at infinity,” namely “beyond” the universal manifestation, which reveals God – the One and only “located” at infinity – as maximum and minimum, center and circumference, since only in God the two infinities coincide.

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<sup>19</sup> Guénon, **Le symbolisme de la croix**, p. 102, and related to Cusa’s statement, “God is” (**De la docte Ignorance**, p. 148).

<sup>20</sup> Cusa, **De la docte Ignorance**, p. 155.