



Metaphysical Symbolism of the Cross

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Most traditional doctrines symbolize the realization of 'Universal Man' by a sign that is everywhere the same, because, as was said at the outset, it is one of those directly attached to the primordial tradition. That sign is the sign of the cross, which very clearly represents the manner of achievement of this realization by the perfect communion of all the states of the being, harmoniously and conformably ranked, in integral expansion, in the double sense of 'amplitude' and 'exaltation'! In fact, this double expansion of the being may be regarded as taking place horizontally on the one hand, that is, at a certain given level or degree of existence, and vertically on the other, that is, in the hierarchical superimposition of all the degrees. Thus, the horizontal direction represents 'amplitude' or integral extension of the individuality taken as basis for realization, an extension that consists in the indefinite development of a given group of possibilities subject to certain special conditions of manifestation; and it should be clearly understood that in the case of the human being this extension is in no way confined to the corporeal part of *the individuality*, but includes all its modalities, of which the corporeal state is properly only one. The vertical direction represents the hierarchy, likewise and *a fortiori* indefinite, of the multiple states, each of which, when similarly considered in its integrality, is one of those groups of possibilities corresponding to one of the 'worlds' or degrees, which are included in the total synthesis of 'Universal Man'. In this cruciform representation, the horizontal expansion therefore corresponds to the indefinitude of possible modalities of one and the same state of the being regarded integrally, and the vertical super-imposition to the indefinite series of states of the total being.

Furthermore, it need hardly be said that the state whose development is depicted by the horizontal line may be any state whatsoever; in fact, it will be the state in which the being that realizes 'Universal Man' is situated in respect of its manifestation, and that state is for such a being the starting-point and the support or basis for this realization. Any and every state can furnish a being with such a basis, as will appear more clearly in what follows; if in this respect more special consideration is accorded to the human state, the reason is that it is our own state and thus concerns us more directly, so that the case we have particularly to deal with is that of beings who start from this state in order to carry out the realization in question; but it should be clearly understood that from the point of view of pure metaphysics this case is in no wise a privileged one.

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It may be observed here that the effective totalization of the being, since it is beyond all conditions, corresponds to what the Hindu doctrine calls 'Deliverance' (*Moksha*), and to what Islamic esotericism calls the 'Supreme Identity'. Moreover, according to the latter traditional form, 'Universal Man', insofar as he is represented by the couple 'Adam-Eve', has the same number as Allah, which may be taken as a means of expressing the 'Supreme Identity'. This calls for a word of explanation, since it might be objected that the designation 'Adam-Eve', though assuredly capable of transposition, nevertheless applies in its proper sense to the primordial human state alone. Yet if the 'Supreme Identity' is effectively realized only in the totalization of the multiple states, it can still be described as in some sense already virtually realized at the 'Edenic' stage, in the integration of the human being when brought back to his original center, which, as will be shown later, is also the point of direct communication with the other states.

Again, it may be said that the integration of the human state, or of any other state, represents in its own order and degree the actual totalization of the being, as will be made plain by means of the geometrical symbolism that we are about to expound. If this be so, the reason is that it is possible to discover in everything, in individual man for example, or more particularly in corporeal man, a symbol and as it were a figuration of 'Universal Man', since each part of the Universe, whether it be a world or a particular being, is always and everywhere analogous to the whole. Thus a philosopher such as Leibnitz was undoubtedly correct in saying that every 'individual substance' (with the reservations we have made earlier as to the value of this expression) must contain in itself an integral representation of the Universe, and this is a correct application of the analogy between the 'macrocosm' and the 'microcosm'; but in confining himself to the consideration of 'individual substance' and in seeking to equate it with the being itself (a complete and closed being that is to say, lacking any effective communication with anything that transcends it) he debarred himself from passing from the direction of 'amplitude' to that of 'exaltation', and thus deprived his theory of any true metaphysical scope? It is no part of our present intention to enter into the examination of philosophical notions of any kind, or of anything else equally referable to the 'profane' sphere; but the above example came quite naturally to mind as an almost immediate application of what has just been said about the two directions in which the expansion of the total being is carried out.

To return to the symbolism of the cross, it must also be noted that apart from the metaphysical and principal significance so far exclusively spoken of, the cross possesses several other meanings that are more or less secondary and contingent; this is quite normal, following what has been said in general about the plurality of meanings comprised in every symbol. Before developing the geometrical representation of the being and its multiple states, as synthetically contained in the sign of the cross, and before going into details of this symbolism-a rather complex one if developed to its fullest extent-we shall say something about those other meanings; for although the questions connected with them may seem somewhat remote from the real subject of this book, all these things are nevertheless linked together in a certain way, and sometimes even more closely than one might be inclined to suppose, always by reason of that law of correspondence which, as explained at the outset, lies at the very foundation of all symbolism.