



The Union of Complements

René Guénon

We must now turn to consider, at least summarily, another aspect of the symbolism of the cross, which is perhaps the one most generally known, although, at first sight at least, it may not seem to have much direct bearing on all that has gone before: we refer to the cross regarded as a symbol of the union of complements. For this purpose it suffices to envisage the cross in the most usual manner, that is to say in its two-dimensional form; to return from that to the three-dimensional form, however, one need only remember that the single horizontal line can be considered as the projection of the entire horizontal plane upon the vertical plane in which the figure is traced. In the present context the vertical line can be taken as representing the active principle, and the horizontal line the passive one. These principles are also respectively designated as masculine and feminine, by analogy with the human order; if they are considered in their widest sense, namely in relation to universal manifestation in its totality, they are then the principles that the Hindu doctrine calls *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. It is not material here to recapitulate or develop the considerations arising out of the relationship between these two principles, but merely to show that despite appearances there is a certain connection between this significance of the cross and what has been called its metaphysical significance.

In the first place, while reserving the right to return to the point more explicitly later, we would say that this connection follows from the relationship between the vertical axis and the horizontal plane in the metaphysical signification of the cross. It should be clearly appreciated that terms such as active and passive, or their equivalents, have no meaning except in relation to each other, for complementarism is essentially a correlation between two terms. This being so, it is clear that a complementarism such as that of active and passive can be regarded at different levels, so that one and the same term may play an active or a passive role, according to what it is being placed in correlation with; but in every case it can always be said that in such a relationship the active term is, in its own order, the analogue of *Purusha* and the passive one that of *Prakriti*. Now, it will be seen later that the vertical axis, which connects together all the states of the being by passing through their respective centers, is the locus of manifestation of what the Far-Eastern tradition calls the “Activity of Heaven”; and this is precisely the “actionless” activity of *Purusha*, which determines in *Prakriti* the productions that correspond to all the possibilities of manifestation. As for the horizontal plane, it will be seen that this forms a “plane of reflection,” symbolically represented as the “surface of the waters,” and it is well known that in all traditions the “waters” are a symbol of *Prakriti* or of “universal passivity.” To be strictly accurate, as this plane represents a certain degree of Existence

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(and any one of the horizontal planes that correspond to the indefinite multitude of the states of manifestation could be similarly regarded), it is not identified with *Prakriti* itself, but only with something that is already determined by a certain set of special conditions of existence (those which define a world), and that plays the part of *Prakriti* in a relative sense, at a certain level in the scale of universal manifestation.

Another point, which is directly connected with the notion of “Universal Man,” also calls for explanation. We spoke earlier of the latter as being constituted by the couple “Adam-Eve,” and it has been pointed out elsewhere that the couple *Purusha-Prakriti*, either in respect of all manifestation, or more particularly in respect of a given state of being, can be regarded as equivalent to “Universal Man.” From this point of view, the union of complements must be regarded as constituting the primordial Androgyne of which all traditions speak. Without dwelling further on this point, it can be said that in the totalization of the being, the complements must in fact be in perfect equilibrium, with no predominance of one over the other. Again, it should be noted that the form as a rule symbolically assigned to the Androgyne is the spherical one, which is the least differentiated of all, since it extends equally in all directions, being regarded by the Pythagoreans, for example, as the most perfect form and as the figure of universal totality. In order to represent the idea of totality in this way, it is further necessary, as was said before, that the sphere shall be indefinite in extent, as are the axes that form the cross, which are three perpendicular diameters of this sphere. In other words, as the sphere is constituted by the radiation proceeding from its center, it is never closed, since this radiation is indefinite and fills the whole extent by a series of concentric waves, each of which reproduces the original vibration’s two phases of concentration and expansion. These two phases, moreover, are themselves an expression of complementarism; if we depart from the special conditions inherent in manifestation (in successive mode), and consider them in simultaneity, they balance each other, so that their combination is really equivalent to the principal immutability, just as the sum of the partial disequilibria by which all manifestation is realized always and invariably constitutes the total equilibrium.

There is one further point that must be mentioned. It was said just now that as the terms active and passive merely express a relationship, they may be applied at different levels; it follows that if we consider the three-dimensional cross, in which the vertical axis and the horizontal plane stand in this active-passive relationship, the same relationship can again be envisaged as between the two horizontal axes, or between what they respectively represent. In this case, in order to preserve the symbolical correspondence established in the first place, and although these axes are both actually horizontal, it is possible to say that one of them - the one that plays the active part - is relatively vertical in respect of the other. For example, if these two axes are regarded as being the solstitial and the equinoctial axis respectively, in accordance with the symbolism of the annual cycle, then the solstitial axis can be described as relatively vertical in relation to the equinoctial, so that in the horizontal plane it plays analogically the part of the polar axis (North-South), and the equinoctial will then play the part of equatorial axis (East-West). Thus in its own plane the horizontal cross reproduces relationships analogous to those expressed by the vertical cross. To return at this point to the metaphysical symbolism, which remains the essentially important one, it can thus be said that the integration of the human state, represented by the horizontal cross, is in its own order of existence a kind of image of the actual totalization of the being, as represented by the vertical cross.