



The Traditional Mentality

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Despite contemporary Free-Masonry having conserved the expression “royal art” (*ars regia*) to describe the Masonic Art, preserving the “letter” and forgetting the “spirit” became the crucial problem of this organization, a problem which is directly related to the serious distortion and deterioration characterising the present mentality.

The English word “mentality” came into use, it seems, at the end of the 17th Century, when the profane point of view was in full advance,¹ in concert with the fact that, in Occident, the complete and final rupture with the traditional way coincided with the treaties of Westphalia, which in 1648 ended the Thirty Years War.² In a genuine traditional civilization, there was no need for such a term as “mentality,” since there was no way of thinking other than the sacred way, and only when the profane viewpoint took advantage of the decline of the cycle did it become necessary to introduce such a syntagm as “traditional mentality” in comparison to the “modern mentality” (or “profane mentality”).

The word “mentality” is close related to “man,” where “man” should be understood as Sanskrit *mānava* “a mental being,” image of Hindu *Manu*, the Lord of the World; *Manu* is not so much a mythological or historical character, but represents a principle, called the “cosmic intelligence” that reflects the spiritual and pure Light,³ which means that a normal, “traditional” mind is the one subordinated and connected to the divine Intellect and to the Principle, while a “modern” and “profane” mind is the one that has broken this bond and, with an obtuse arrogance, sees itself as independent and suzerain.⁴

¹ “Ce qui est tout à fait extraordinaire, c’est la rapidité avec laquelle la civilisation du moyen âge tomba dans le plus complet oubli ; les hommes du XVII^e siècle n’en avaient plus la moindre notion, et les monuments qui en subsistaient ne représentaient plus rien à leurs yeux” (René Guénon, *La Crise du monde moderne*, Gallimard, 1975, p. 30).

² At that time, it is said, the last genuine Rose-Cross retired to Orient, wherever this “Orient” might be. See René Guénon, *Le Roi du Monde*, Gallimard, 1981, p. 71; Sédar, *Histoire et Doctrines des Rose-Croix*, Bibliothèque des Amitiés Spirituelles, 1932, p. 40.

³ Guénon, *Le Roi*, p. 13. Fabre d’Olivet, *Histoire philosophique du genre humain*, Éd. Trad., Paris, 1991, I, p. 238.

⁴ We see the similarity with the Luciferian revolt. From the Church Fathers’ perspective, the “fall” of man represented the revolt of the reason against *nous* [the Intellect and not the mind as sometimes this one is confused with], and the separation of *nous* from God makes man a devil or a beast [here we have to understand *nous* as becoming hidden and the mind separated, apparently, from God] (Hierotheos, *The Illness and Cure of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition*, Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 2004, pp. 62, 70).

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As we said before, the devils are not so much the physical appetites, but the psychical ones, and all the spiritual methods stress the importance of pacifying the mind. The mental waves, the elusive, turbulent thoughts, imagination¹ and the emotions are the biggest enemies of spiritual realization: these are the temptations, the sirens' songs, and the devils.² The mind is the fanatical sustainer of duality that permits the Devil to feel legitimated: "As in dream the mind acts through Mâyâ presenting the appearance of duality, so also in the waking state the mind acts, through Mâyâ [the art of illusion], presenting the appearance of duality" and only in the "deep sleep" state the mind ceases to act and "becomes identical with fearless Brahma."³ An untamed mind, unsubordinated to the divine Intellect, independent and arrogant, maintains the illusion of reality; that is why the Christian tradition states: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."⁴

The mind is a powerful "tool," and we may assume that, even if contaminated by the modern environment, it has the capability to grasp the qualities of the "traditional mentality"; however, a modern mind is seriously damaged and distorted, which makes the task of understanding different states of mind, and especially sacred states of mind, almost impossible or at least particularly faulty⁵; in a similar way, the faith of a modern religious person⁶ is different, and often extremely different, from the faith of the traditional medieval Christians or of the primeval Christians, for this modern faith is disturbingly limited and lame, and therefore incapable of provoking miracles.⁷ Consequently, even for people with the *sattvic* vocation passing from a merely theoretical and rational understanding to a realization of the "traditional mentality" is in many cases impossible; and the theoretical understanding itself is commonly deficient and inadequate.

In a normal and coherent world, not only the word "mentality," but the syntagm "traditional mentality" would be superfluous, because, on the one hand, a civilization is the product and the expression of a certain mentality, and on the other hand, tradition and

¹ "Nous rappellerons encore que, dès lors qu'il s'agit de questions d'ordre initiatique, on ne saurait trop se défier de l'imagination" (René Guénon, *Initiation et réalisation spirituelle*, Éd. Trad., 1980, p. 57).

² Ananda K. Coomaraswamy wisely proved that *anima* (the soul, mentality and sentiment, the "tempter") represents Hell and the devils. This soul has to be "lost" in order to be saved; this soul has to be "killed" and "tamed" in the Holy War (*jihâd*). As Rûmî said, "this soul is hell" and "the soul and Shaitân are both one being." The killing of this soul is his redemption, when the fallen angels, Lucifer, Phosphorus or Scintilla, become again what they were before, the light of the supernal Sun.

³ *Mândûkya Up.* III.29-35.

⁴ *Matthew* 5:3. Here, "poor in spirit" means precisely to have a "weak mind," that is, a tamed mind, and not being "high-spirited" (with all its profane significances).

⁵ "What an illiterate Indian or American Indian peasant knows and understands would be entirely beyond the comprehension of the compulsorily educated product of the American public schools" (Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Traditional Art and Symbolism*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1986, p. 287).

⁶ We could say "man" instead of "person" since we consider "man" a generic name for the human being, male or female, "man" being etymological related to "mind" and "moon." We have to stress right away that the "politically correct" concept belongs to the modern mentality and, like this mentality, is volatile and manipulated by adverse forces.

⁷ We refer here to Christianity since our concern is primarily with the traditional Free-Masonry.

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civilization are almost interchangeable terms,¹ which makes “traditional civilization” also a tautological expression. However, we are forced to use this adjective “traditional” to qualify a society, a doctrine, a mentality, gestures and thoughts that developed from what was transmitted uninterruptedly from the origin of this cycle, allowing the perpetuation of a “non-human” element, without which we cannot talk about “tradition,” the lack of any divine blessing (*barakah*) characterizing the present modern society and mentality.² Furthermore, we could say that at the same time with the *barakah* there is an intellectual light or ray penetrating and sustaining the traditional civilization and the “traditional mentality,” this light providing the tradition or the doctrine with an intellectual essence,³ where “intellectual” has to be understood not as something “rational” but as a “supra-rational” principle.⁴

As *barakah* or the spiritual influence descends by countless degrees so does the intellectual ray⁵; moreover, for the same state of being there are various intensities of the divine “vibrations” in concert with the quality of the “receptor.”⁶ In the medieval Christian society, where traditional organizations like Free-Masonry and the Order of the Temple flourished, the Occidental mentality was carved by the Judaic and Greco-Roman chisels,⁷ where the shaped material was mainly composed of Anglo-German peoples⁸; accordingly, this mentality was less prepared for the highest intellectual activity (the metaphysical level)⁹ and for pure contemplation, even though there were eminent exceptions.¹⁰

¹ René Guénon, *Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues*, Les Éditions Vêga, 1932, pp. 74-5.

² The “non-human” element is the spiritual influence carried by rites, their completion involving “the action of an influence belonging to a superior order, which can be properly called ‘non-human,’ both in the case of the initiatory rites and of the religious ones” (René Guénon, *Aperçus sur l'initiation*, Éd. Trad., 1992, p. 54).

³ See the first volume of our work *Free-Masonry: A Traditional Organization*, p. 39.

⁴ The modern mentality is very unstable and, consequently, the language and the meaning of the words change drastically (Guénon, *Introduction générale*, 1932, p. 49), which imposes caution in comprehending some important terms (like “intellect,” “tradition,” “metaphysics,” “cult,” etc.).

⁵ In the Hindu tradition, this spiritual influence is sometimes called “food,” a food that can be eaten in all the worlds, in all the beings, and in all the selves (*Chândogya Upanishad* 5.18.1).

⁶ The parable of the sower is a good illustration: “Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away...” (*Matthew* 13:3-6).

⁷ René Guénon, *Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues*, Guy Trédaniel, 1987, p. 11.

⁸ Goths, Franks, Saxons, Vandals, Angles, Lombards, Suebi, Burgundians, etc. On the other hand, the Near West (*Occidens Proximus*) had the Slavic peoples as carving material.

⁹ There is a fundamental difference between activity and action.

¹⁰ “... dans l'Europe du moyen âge, ... la métaphysique n'y a jamais été dégagée aussi nettement qu'elle devrait l'être de la théologie, c'est-à-dire, en somme, de son application spéciale à la pensée religieuse, et que, d'autre part, ce qui s'y trouve de proprement métaphysique n'est pas complet, demeurant soumis à certaines limitations qui semblent inhérentes à toute l'intellectualité occidentale ; sans doute faut-il voir dans ces deux imperfections une conséquence du double héritage de la mentalité judaïque et de la mentalité grecque” (Guénon, *Introduction générale*, 1932, p. 76).

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The modern mentality, driven unwittingly by a peculiar “inspiration,” has a strong tendency for generalization and idealization, for labels and categories, while absolute formulas like “everybody (or *nobody*) knows that ...,” “you *always* say ...,” or “the men *never* do ...” are very common today; also, for a particular event an entire community is blamed, instead just an individual: “the Christians,” not a specific Christian, “the Muslims,” not a specific Muslim, “the Jews,” not a specific Jew,¹ or general judgments are uttered, like “the Catholic priests are impious,” not a specific priest, and “I am not going to the church because the Orthodox priests are boorish,” not a specific priest, and so on. Of course, in an ideal society, all the priests should be saints and all the teachers (διδάσκαλοι) sages and masters, but we must not confuse the individual with the function, especially at the end of the *Kali-yuga* when the disarray is so intense. Therefore, the human factor has to be taken into account, as we already underlined in a previous volume,² especially when we envision the traditional societies of the last two millennia, which explains why we prefer to name *Oriens* and *Occidens* as limits of René Guénon’s comparison between the Occident and the Orient, since he described on purpose an ideal picture. Referring back to the medieval Christian society, which was not at all a perfect traditional civilization, it is safe to say that the human factor played a substantial role in its relative rapid decline; moreover, even though we can define medieval Christianity as a traditional civilization, and a sacred one as a whole, we have to accept some imperfections, not of its mentality, but of its humanity. The French king Philip the Fair is a good example, since he was known as a very pious man, but he destroyed the Order of the Temple³; also, the authors of various medieval chronicles transmitted prejudiced information,⁴ but a “traditional mentality” did not mean a lack of human opinions, narrow-mindedness and partiality, which indicates why the “historical method” is not the best way to study a traditional society.

The “traditional mentality” was kept alive and unbroken not by the multitude, by the people at large, by the quantity, which, despite its *prakritian* inertia, was very sensitive to the human factor’s vacillation, but by the intellectual elite, by the quality, by the spiritual authority (exoteric and esoteric)⁵ - the human factor could provoke accidents and local disturbances, but could not change or desecrate the fundamental state of mind and

¹ Evidently, this has nothing to do with the situations involving doctrinal perspectives, when the Muslims are all infidels (from a Christian viewpoint), or the Christians are all infidels (from a Islamic standpoint), or when all the Christians are considered “execution victims” from the beginning (from the Roman imperial perspective, see Henri Daniel-Rops, *The Church of Apostles and Martyrs*, Image Books, 1962, vol. I, p. 205); not to say that any traditional society, by definition, had to regard itself as the one and only keeper of the truth, and, consequently, all the others were heresies.

² We should specify that the human factor is not always just human.

³ Let us not forget that the early *Cosa Nostra* members were also very pious.

⁴ It is hard today, almost impossible to understand the Templars’ state of mind, yet even their contemporaries who wrote about them could not grasp it because of the interference of the human factor.

⁵ Therefore, any restoration of the disabled mentality must be inspired from above and would be doomed to failure if orchestrated from here down-below.

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orientation towards God¹; only when the elite became disabled or even disappeared, was the diabolic inspiration able to manipulate the human factor to defile the mentality.

A “traditional mentality” was instituted in the child’s mind from the beginning, and even in more recent centuries the fairy tales that a mother told her child were reminiscent of better ages, when human life was not just some result of economic and materialistic conditions, of filthy greed for social or political “power,” but part of a sacred perspective where all activities, gestures, words, functions, métiers, etc. were sacred, directly related to the divine archetypes, supported by spiritual influences and supervised by gods.² As long as this sacred perspective and the divine inspiration were active, all the human “accidents,” driven by ignorance, arrogance, thirst for power (that prospered along the centuries as the most diabolic vice), lust, stupidity, etc. could be mended; a traditional society, Christian, Islamic or Hindu, was not “paradise on earth,” which explains why it can be expected that the gluttonous, the unjust, the dishonest or the avaricious one is to be found in such a society; even the “Golden Age” (*Satya-yuga*, the “age of truth”) was not perfect and “revolts” took place.³ We mentioned that even the medieval chronicles were affected by partisanship or misunderstandings with regard to their own traditional society; so much the more will modern man, enchained by his mentality, take into consideration only these “accidents,” since they are somehow familiar and in concert with his way of thinking, foolishly disregarding the essence of a traditional civilization.⁴ Therefore, the only sustainable position is René Guénon’s metaphysical rostrum from where it is possible to intellectually comprehend without error (and without erring) a “traditional mentality.”

In all his work, René Guénon condemned and exposed numerous times the modern mentality, but it is obvious that in this last half-century, after his death, the decline was replaced by an increasingly rapid and destructive fall, with an abandon and haste that only the end of times could induce, and therefore the signs of the times are submerging us like an avalanche of decay.

The modern mentality is completely anti-traditional,⁵ which means that it “escaped” its normal vassalage and has no more guidance from above and no more links with the spiritual center; it means that the mind devolved from the normal stage of reflecting the “supra-rational” intellect to the “Luciferian” stage (the “age of reason”), reaching now the “Satanic” stage of the “infra-rational,” which corresponds to an infantilized way of

¹ The vocation of the prophets Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, or of St. Paul, did not prevent them from living the life of their contemporaries (see Lucien Cerfaux, *The Christian in the Theology of St. Paul*, Herder and Herder, 1967, p. 104).

² See René Guénon, *Mélanges*, Gallimard, 1976, p. 72, where he said that in a traditional society, like the Islamic civilization or the medieval Christian civilization, even the most common acts had a religious character.

³ See our *Free-Masonry*, first volume, p. 268.

⁴ In fact, modern man is impotent and incapable of thinking otherwise, his mind being monstrously distorted and shrunken.

⁵ The real distinction between the modern and traditional mentalities is “one of sickness from health” (Coomaraswamy, *Ibid.*, p. 293).

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thinking and the loss of the “art of memory.”¹ This “infra-rational” is illustrated by the final demagogic engorgement of the various “isms” (moralism, materialism, uniformism,² sentimentalism, evolutionism,³ globalism, naturalism, psychologism,⁴ empiricism, utilitarianism, aestheticism, museographic exhibitionism, informationism, “virtual realism”), the escalation of the “political correctness” bluff, of vulgarisation (everything “for dummies,” a general “popularism”⁵), of profane and individual beliefs,⁶ the ultimate spread of the lack of privacy, of chattering, of gossiping, of “twittering”, of broadcasting the most intimate and confidential details, in concert with the abhorrence of anything “secret”⁷; and everything is encased by “quantism.”⁸ Eventually, we should not forget another “ism,” the “traditionalism,” which is used successfully today by the adverse forces.⁹

¹ Hence the huge success of computer games and of “memory sticks.” The oral transmission, which was the main mode by which the tradition was conserved, implied an ample and active use of memory.

² “In the various kinds of proletarian government, on the other hand, we meet always with the intention to achieve a rigid and inflexible uniformity; all the forces of ‘education,’ for example, are directed to this end” (Coomaraswamy, *Ibid.*, p. 291); about “uniformism” see René Guénon, *Le règne de la quantité et les signes des temps*, Gallimard, 1970, pp. 71-8. This infrahuman “uniformism” is the opposite of the suprahuman “unanimism” of the traditional societies, where a “unanimous society” is based on order, hierarchy and vocation, and the members of this society unanimously participate to the unique sacred doctrine derived from the eternal principles.

³ The main “isms” became well established in the 18th Century, when the “grand dupery” was in full expansion (René Guénon, *Orient et Occident*, Guy Trédaniel, 1993, p. 24).

⁴ See Guénon, *Aperçus sur l’initiation*, p. 146.

⁵ See Guénon, *Introduction générale*, 1987, pp. 263-4.

⁶ René Guénon sufficiently explained how extremely anti-traditional “individualism” is, which includes “originality,” “authorship,” private ideas and doctrines; and, as modern mentality would have it, when it was necessary to explain the origins of the traditional scriptures, arts, métiers, and rites, this sort of “individualism” became “collectivism.” “In a normal society, one no more ‘thinks for oneself’ than one has a private arithmetic. In a proletarian culture, one does not think at all, but only entertains a variety of prejudices [the “political correctness”], for the most part of journalistic and propagandistic origin, though treasured as one’s ‘own opinions.’ ... most men live as though they possessed a private intelligence of their own (Heracleitus, *Fragment 92*)” (Coomaraswamy, *Ibid.*, p. 294).

⁷ “En fait, l’intention défavorable qu’on y attache communément procède uniquement de ce trait caractéristique de la mentalité moderne que nous avons défini ailleurs comme la « haine du secret » sous toutes ses formes (*Le Règne de la Quantité et les Signes des Temps*, ch. XII)” (Guénon, *Aperçus sur l’initiation*, p. 79).

⁸ We understand by this somehow barbaric neologism “quantism” everything related to analytic, digital, number, quantity, quantifying (Latin *quantificare*: *quantus*, “how much” + *facere*, “to make”).

⁹ See René Guénon, *Articles et Comptes rendus I*, Éd. Trad., 2002, p. 55 and *Le règne*, p. 277. Let us give two examples regarding a traditional institution that still exists in Occident: the Christian Orthodox Church. It seems that the traditional mentality is still alive in this Church, but, in fact, the modern way of thinking cunningly and subversively infected it. Archimandrite Hierotheos Vlachos of Nafpaktos defended in his writings the traditional way of Hesychasm and exposed the errors of the modern world, including the fact that today the “psychologism” is a “psychology without a soul” (Hierotheos, *The Illness and Cure of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition*, Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 2004, p. 46); however, he becomes excessively involved with the idea of “therapy” (of the soul), concluding that the only definition for Orthodoxy is: “Orthodoxy is a therapeutic science and treatment” (*Ibid.*, p. 51), which is a modern and disturbing way of thinking, since right now the words “therapy” and “science” have profane meanings, and furthermore they limit the Orthodox tradition in an unacceptable way. René Guénon said about the error to consider Yoga a “therapy,” physical or psychical: “le Yoga n’est pas plus

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In view of all that, the modern mentality is an obstacle and an adversary which makes the study of traditional doctrines and societies an almost impossible task¹; and we could relate the expression “narrow minded” to this mentality, considering its veritable and profound significance, which is in utter opposition to what the modern people are manipulated to acknowledge: it means a limited and restricted way of thinking,² directed downwards only, since the *sattvic* path became forbidden and is blocked by the solid crust that now envelopes the world.³

Nonetheless, this indisputable and increasing limitation was concealed by developing “unlimited” skills in the “art” of deceiving, of fantasising, of empty talking, of distorting the truth, of changing the meaning of historical events, and so on. Thus it was possible to depict the epoch of medieval traditional civilization as the “dark ages” and to promote the Renaissance and the Reformation as illuminating movements, when, in fact, the Renaissance was the executioner of many traditional elements and the mutilator of the intellectual perception, which with amazingly speed⁴ was replaced with the “age of reason.”⁵

From a principal perspective though, this return to Greek antiquity, correlated with deceptive and mischievous efforts to sink the medieval times into oblivion, are all part of a heritage naturally established many Ages ago, when a caste-like partition occurred, in

une thérapeutique psychique qu’il n’est une thérapeutique corporelle; ses procédés ne sont en aucune façon ni à aucun degré un traitement pour des déséquilibres quelconques ; bien loin de là, ils s’adressent au contraire exclusivement à des êtres qui, pour pouvoir réaliser le développement spirituel qui en est l’unique raison d’être, doivent être déjà, du fait de leurs seules dispositions naturelles, aussi parfaitement équilibrés que possible ; il y a là des conditions qui, comme on le comprendra sans peine, rentrent strictement dans la question des qualifications initiatiques” (Guénon, *Articles et Comptes rendus I*, p. 88), and, similarly, the Orthodox Tradition is much more than a “therapy.” The second example has to do with the Sunday’s sermons in Orthodox churches; the relatively young priests, even though full of enthusiasm and good intentions, try to validate and explain the Gospels using illustrations from modern science, such as “scientific evidence” about the location of Paradise (somewhere in Iran, etc.), or the location of the soul: this type of discourse is total heresy.

¹ Guénon, *Introduction générale*, 1987, p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³ There is today a very well organized public system to shape the younger generations’ mind towards an infra-human way of thinking; this subject needs a volume to illustrate how such a “Mephistophelian” system works, and its accord with modern “psychologism.”

⁴ Guénon considered this rapid change one of the significant enigmas of history (“ce qui est étonnant, c’est la rapidité avec laquelle est venue cette incompréhension, si frappante chez les écrivains du XVII^e siècle; cette coupure radicale entre la mentalité du moyen âge et celle des temps modernes n’est certes pas une des moindres énigmes de l’histoire,” *Aperçus sur l’initiation*, p. 190); the solution for this enigma is related to the “collective suggestion” that deformed the mentality, since, as Guénon said, it is not possible to think that suddenly some madness hit an entire continent (Guénon, *Orient et Occident*, pp. 26, 45, *Le règne*, p. 278, *La crise*, p. 114). René Guénon gave an accurate definition of the modern mentality in an article called *Tradition et Traditionalisme* (published in 1936, in *Études Traditionnelles*, and incorporated in *Le règne*, p. 277 and reprinted in *Articles et Comptes rendus I*, Éd. Trad., 2002, p. 55): “la mentalité moderne elle-même, dans tout ce qui la caractérise spécifiquement comme telle, n’est en somme que le produit d’une vaste suggestion collective, qui, s’exerçant continuellement au cours de plusieurs siècles, a déterminé la formation et le développement progressif de l’esprit antitraditionnel, en lequel se résume en définitive tout l’ensemble des traits distinctifs de cette mentalité.”

⁵ Guénon, *Introduction générale*, 1987, p. 19.

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accord with the mental constitution of various peoples, and we could say that such a mental inaptitude regarding the pure intellectuality¹ and the innate ability for practical and material accomplishments and progress (since we cannot deny this type of progress²) were not so much consciously acquired but imposed by the Master Puppeteer's laws.³ This variety of mentalities is a consequence of the infinity of the Universal Possibility,⁴ and also of the law of manifestation: the universal manifestation exists only if the undifferentiated equilibrium of the three *gunas* is broken, which means that the immutable harmony is broken and an indefinite number of disharmonies come to existence.

The Master Puppeteer's laws influence the mind in two major ways: on the one hand, at the same moment of the cycle, there is a hierarchy of mental aptitudes, differentiated by an increasingly narrow-mindedness and limitation from top to bottom, even though the mentality as a whole could be traditional; on the other hand, with the descending course of the cycle, the human mentality inevitably declines, but, before losing any traditional characteristics, it continues to maintain its orthodoxy as long as the tradition is able to adapt to the new conditions of the cycle that determine the new mentality; this adaptation is done, usually, to the detriment of traditional purity and of the "traditional consciousness," when man becomes less and less conscious of the sacred domain and its intellectuality, of his participation in it, and of the active correlation between the cosmic and human orders, reaching in the end, together with a modern mentality, a "moral conscience," and a profane point of view.⁵

The reality of this variety of mentalities implies an impossibility of communication between people with incompatible mentalities, and therefore someone with a modern mentality cannot comprehend a traditional civilization,⁶ even if the various events and activities of that civilization seem to be the same as those found in the present *Occidens*; "history repeats itself" is a treacherous slogan, used to excuse the modern methods of

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 26, 75.

² The obscuration of the intellectual light is somehow proportional with the decadence of the castes and the expansion of sentimentalism and of materialistic progress (see, for example, Guénon, *Orient et Occident*, p. 87). Today, we see an advanced "intellectual myopia" (Guénon, *Le règne*, p. 65) or "intellectual atrophy" (René Guénon, *Initiation et réalisation spirituelle*, Éd. Trad., 1980, p. 43); and Guénon underlined that, with the evolving of the cycle, the entire cosmic manifestation, and the human mentality, which is included in this manifestation, will follow a descendent course (*Ibid.*, p. 155).

³ The modern mentality has as one of its main characteristics the need of simplification, but, in fact, the axiom "Nature always tends to act in the simplest way," used by Johann Bernoulli, called the "principle of Leibniz" by D'Alembert and quoted by Guénon ("la nature agit toujours par les voies les plus simples," *Le règne*, p. 104), has nothing to do with worldly simplicity.

⁴ "Aussi toute limitation de la Possibilité universelle est-elle, au sens propre et rigoureux du mot, une impossibilité; ... Il est facile de voir, en outre, que ceci exclut toutes les théories plus ou moins 'réincarnationnistes' qui ont vu le jour dans l'Occident moderne, au même titre que le fameux 'retour éternel' de Nietzsche et autres conceptions similaires" (René Guénon, *Le symbolisme de la croix*, Guy Trédaniel, 1989, p. 92).

⁵ Guénon, *Initiation*, pp. 85-88, 96-7. The modern mentality generates the absurd and false impression that a profane domain has an authentic existence.

⁶ Guénon, *Introduction générale*, 1987, p. 32, *Le règne*, pp.174-5.

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studying the (dead or alive) traditional civilizations by extrapolating the researchers' way of thinking and profane viewpoint.

This extrapolation, as well as the depiction of the extraterrestrial worlds, is based on an increasingly vivacious imagination, which, as paradoxical as it seems, became a major ally of the mind (reason) in shaping the modern mentality. The word "imagination" is used here with its modern and common meaning,¹ which has nothing to do with what Coomaraswamy was saying about "the art of thinking in images" as the "linguistic of metaphysics."² We need to make a clear distinction between the traditional "image," which is a symbol of a higher reality, and the modern "visual effects," which are taking over any ideational activity today; in the modern world, as an upside-down world, the language of symbols (images) that defined the traditional way towards the supra-rational domain "descended to the verbal logic of 'philosophy,'"³ and then verbal communication was replaced with "visual language" leading towards the infra-rational domain.

We should not forget that, in a traditional society, spiritual teaching was aided by the "art of memory," which beneficially used "images" (Latin *imago*) as supports, while the imagination (understood as fantasy or utopian invention) was considered an enemy⁴; not to say that imagination made impossible any type of real intellectual contemplation, helping the natural inclination of the *Occidens* toward action and agitation.⁵ Furthermore, the imagination was successfully used to establish the modern anti-initiatory beliefs that defiled and reduced the genuine initiatory doctrines and organizations to all sorts of elements like "magic," "powers," "philosophies," and Free-Masonry is a well known example of how the profane imagination works⁶; and it is bizarre to see how this anti-initiatory imagination, normally a "creator" of non-corporeal worlds and events, instigated very materialistic fantasies to denigrate the initiatory organizations, a famous example being the reverie regarding the Templars' treasure.

A materialistic treasure is all that a modern mentality can comprehend, since today there is nothing else so important, so valuable, so yearned after, so attractive, so hypnotic, as money.

¹ This meaning started to gain ground after the "temporal barrier" represented by the 14th Century. See also Henri Corbin about *mundus imaginalis* ('*alam al-mithal*).

² Coomaraswamy, *Ibid.*, p. 296. See also, but with cautious, Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1991, pp. 17-20.

³ Coomaraswamy, *Ibid.*

⁴ "When constructs of the imagination are not allowed to enter the memory and mind, a man is not hindered" (see *On Cleaving to God*); see also the Hesychastic way, where the fantasies are considered a consequence of the fall; more hidden (obscured) becomes the *nous*, more vivacious appears the imagination; the imagination is a rational "creator" of God [it is a "creator" of idols] (Hierotheos, *Ibid.*, pp. 70-73, 123-125) (we should add that even the theological idea of "creation" instead of "manifestation" is an adaptation of a metaphysical concept to the Western mentality; see Guénon, *Introduction générale*, 1987, p. 113). The modern mentality replaced "conceiving" (Latin *concipere*) with "imagining" [or "concept" with "fantasy"] (*Ibid.*, p. 97).

⁵ The *Occidens* is very fond of exterior action, hating any contemplation; however, contemplation had an important role in the Holy Grail tales and also in the Orthodox Church (See Guénon, *Initiation*, pp. 200-1).

⁶ As Guénon said, you need a traditional mentality to understand the initiatory concepts and to acquire initiatory knowledge (*Aperçus sur l'initiation*, pp. 204, 210).