

Preamble

In spite of our proud domination of nature, we are still her victims, for we have not even learned to control our own nature. ... Man today is painfully aware of the fact that neither his great religions nor his various philosophies seems to provide him with those powerful animating ideas that would give him the security he needs in face of the present conditions of the world.

Carl G. Jung¹

Man has become too powerful to ignore himself. And the world he has built wherein he is immersed already borrows too much from his own recklessness. How else could we interpret the coexistence of these two lists of events in recent history: one the one hand, *theory of relativity, quantum mechanics, information technology, Armstrong's walk on the moon, the human genome project*; on the other, the *Gulag, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Rwanda 9/11?*

The **human** proves as capable a creature as he is unwise, isolated from the wholeness of existence² by the **world** that evolves around him as a protective shield that disconnects simultaneously. Only thus could we perhaps explain the discrepancy between his understanding and mastery of the immediate world alongside the (already notorious) inability to understand himself and contemplate existence in its profound unity. His ability comes from the world that protects; his inability from the same world that disconnects. The following essays explore ways that could protect without disconnecting.

Many evils seem to stem from the disjointed and totally unfit image Man has developed about his mind, consciousness and conscience. Mental activities are not essentially regarded as integrated with existence, too much **dissociated** from the phenomenological plenitude. Apparent **distinctions** do not justify the excessive dissociation. Western civilization is strongly characterized by what could be termed *noetic dissociation*, the isolation of what relates to the mind from the remainder of our knowledge. Within this framework, quite a few have come to think that the inability to unify theories describing

¹ Jung '64, pg.101.

² At times, 'life' will be used in the English text as a replacement of 'existence'. Although – technically - the latter denotes instances of 'being' that are not part of 'the living', the substitution was made in limited instances to observe the more common English usage. (translator's note)

the separate different levels of existence is due to our inability to conceive an image (or perhaps only a theoretical construct) in the same 'locus' where quantum mechanics or general relativity evolved.

The confusion about the knowing mind also stems from the fact that it plays a more complex role than that which we became aware of and can utilize. We keep going between a view that looks at consciousness as a "*fascinating but elusive phenomenon*"³ and a belief that we "*are syntactic engines that can mimic the competence of semantic engines*"⁴. In other words, we are incapable of assuming integrating options that will not discard any part of our mysterious, fascinating and at the same time rationally approachable noetic existence manifest in human mentation.

This **dissociative** approach, which sees the mind and its functioning as either *phenomenon* or *engine*, detracts from that unity without which knowing is impossible. To that, we can add **lack of awareness** of the fact that Man is perhaps the most *unpredictable* part of existence - a direct result of his different levels of manifest consciousness. Thus, ignorance and dissociation have partially **dis-integrated**⁵ Man from existence by limiting his understanding of the meanings and the phenomena he can access through direct experience.

The consensual noetic reality gained ground at the expense of that which is non-consensual or trans-consensual. We spend too much time within the limits of what is accessed through formal structure: mathematical constructs, theoretical concepts, institutional rules, 'cultural' stereotypes, financial mimetism, and so on. Thus, individuality (which develops non-consensually) wilts, while the integrating trans-consensuality no longer finds a place.

Life in the western world has gradually acquired the rudimentary form of a *hierarchical* structure⁶. Indeed, it appears this way in a limited approach, when - for pragmatic reasons - we are content with this approximate image. But today's difficulty, resulting from a few centuries of efficient practice of exclusive rationalism and a few millennia of consciously assumed dissociation, is the inability of humans to sustain a behavior integrated with existence. How else to account for the co-existence in the same period of our history of Einstein, Jung, Turing or Wittgenstein, and Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot or Bin Laden? How do we explain our mastery of advanced technologies or our deep understanding of several domains of physical reality while we know next to nothing about our most intimated phenomenon, human consciousness? How could the Holocaust be possible in a place where Bach was fiercely interpreted and consumed, or Hoelderlin's poems passionately recited? It is apparent that rationalism becomes disjointed and useless when applied exclusively, while dissociations practiced in the extreme become frustrating or harmful.

³ Sutherland '89

⁴ Dennett '98

⁵ Throughout this essay, 'disintegration' will be spelled as 'dis-integration' to emphasize the contrast to our fundamental concept of 'integration'.

⁶ The Far East has meanwhile developed in isolation a holistic vision of the world which could eventually benefit the Western world as a result of globalization.

The dis-integrated Man cannot understand the world he created, cannot understand himself, and is no longer capable of articulating even mentally the plenitude of existence. Perhaps we need a new beginning, based on new ways of harmonizing the meaning of life and mankind's manifest behavior. To be authentic, this new beginning must start naturally, much like a vibration that - to be pure – must exist with no beginning.

This authentic vibration, that can drive our attempt at reintegrating life, is that desire in all of us to understand and react to the continuous flow of current events and activities. We can start with the *fluctuations* of our little failures or successes, trying to overcome the sterile agitation or inaction prompted by *routine* or *ecstasy*.

Ecstasy and routine: two limit states we can never actually reach because something essential – life's fluctuations – is in direct opposition. We are so obsessed with these unreachable extremes that we no longer perceive the evidence of the spontaneous play which keeps us normal. Our essays will speak to the pre-eminence of the ineffable and the illusion we hold over what we believe we already master.

Today, Man structures his discourse, attitudes and actions starting from irreconcilable dualities, ignoring the third term that could mediate integration. Sharing can bring individual and community together; expressivity lies between clarity and the mysterious; revelation and explanation do not exclude imagination; phenomena and structure also imply chaos; synchronicity and causality do not rule out spontaneity; unity and uniformity become more significant alongside the unique. Man's rationality and spirituality - seemingly irreconcilable face-to-face – are no longer opponents in the presence of the imaginary, 'communicating' and 'bringing together' what appeared incompatible.

Unity can thus be achieved through the triad that reconciles the intransigence of duality. Dual thinking is not only simplistic, it is also dissociative. It separates more than it simplifies, compounding matters unnecessarily. By adding a third term we can accomplish a simplification that draws us closer to the real complexity of things. Indeed, the world is much more complex than presented by the various dualisms, but it is ultimately simpler and more beneficial not to ignore its true complexity, no matter how large it may be.

We have often fooled ourselves trying to understand the world through elegant theories, seduced by their founding simplicity. It is worth trying a different approach with a more complex *beginning*. The *way* may become simpler.

The 'elegance' of logic, to give an example, comes from its *simplicity*⁷. It is fascinating to see its ability to build its own structure by manipulating only two variables at the start:

⁷ By its irreversible character (the conclusion does not have all the information of the premise, and cannot be reconstructed starting backwards from the conclusion), logic simplifies also through concealment. Any discourse subject to the rigors of its development, will clarify through loss of information.

truth and *falsity*. How much is actually being built on those two! So much that we no longer notice that what lies outside this construction is more comprehensive and complex by far.

Logic forced on us this binary approach of reality. Reality, however, is not logical and even less binary. It is not *'either... or.'*

True understanding, beyond the inherent elegant and simplistic approach mediated by logic, sets us in a special relationship with *ourselves*, the *world* wherein we act, and *life* in its entirety. The doubting that draws us closer to understanding becomes apparent also in relation to the point we stand for, the world as finite proximity and the plenitude of existence.

Natural language is a stronger and more flexible instrument than logic; as principal and dominant 'ambassador' of our intentions, it is manifest at least in three distinct modes, which we will illustrate by the following (limit) examples:

*Oh, so much silence lies around me that I seem
to hear the moonbeams rapping at my window pane...⁸*

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*A monk asked Joshu, "What would you say when I come to you with nothing?"
Joshu said, "Fling it down to the ground."
Protested the monk, "I said that I had nothing; what shall I let go?"
"If so, carry it away," was the retort of Joshu.⁹*

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In a right triangle, the square of the hypotenuse equals the sum of the square on the other two sides.

The previous examples illustrate how natural discourse can *evoke*, *suggest* or *assert*. What we **suggest** here is that Man can link with life's plenitude and profundity, manifest his spontaneous intentionality or obey the rigors of reason. The fundamental problem is to find a good balance between all these modalities, according to their respective place, time and purpose.

Quite often in history, Man's proven inability to understand himself has made him not approach what he erroneously believed should not be his own. Two of these unfortunate instances of dissociation and ignorance are captured by Aldous Huxley:

Christianity made us barbarians of the soul and now the science is making us barbarians of the intellect. ... The Christians, who weren't sane, told people that they'd got to throw half of themselves in the waste-paper basket. And now the scientists and the business men

⁸ Excerpt from Romanian poem by Lucian Blaga (tr. A. G. Sahlean)

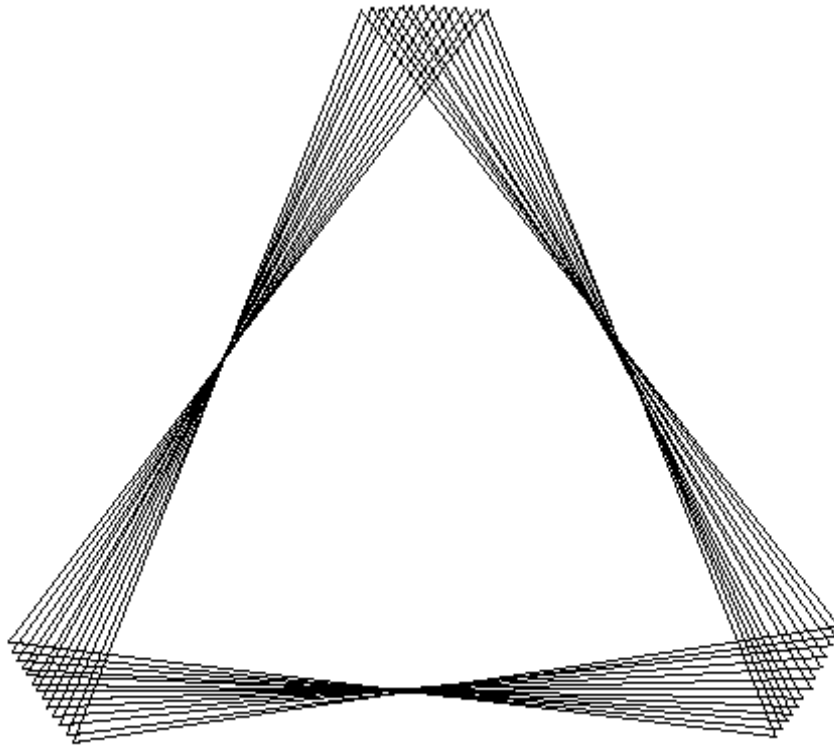
⁹ Zen koan, quoted by Suzuki '64, pg.54.

come to tell us that we must to throw away half of what the Christians left us. I prefer to be alive, entirely alive. It's time there was a revolt in favor of life and wholeness¹⁰.

We have always been fortunate that Man's failures have come about when his acts were defined too sharply and incisively. Not only do we not act solely along the two planes suggested by Huxley – the **rational** and the **spiritual** – but we also have an essential ability that ensures our very survival: the spontaneity of imagination which can save us from our own excess. The **binary opposition** (*spiritual - rational*) can evolve into the **unifying triad** of the *spiritual, imaginary* and *rational*, as a reflection of a triadic unity corresponding to all of life's levels, or perhaps better said, to all of life's dark corners.

The triadic unity of *existence* is also replicated by the same type of unity at the level of the *world* and that of *Man*. The multiple forms of this triadic unity are nothing but *approximately* identical manifestations of each and any one of them. The reason for elaborating on the following 16 triads in this book is given precisely by the slight lack of identity of those various facets. The “triangle” formed by any triad does not “overlap” any other precisely. We can perhaps imagine a subtle atemporal “vibrato” of these triads, testifying to their multiplicity. We envision the *image* of a triangle vibrating around its stable position, becoming more pregnant, much like a ‘*vibrated*’ sound acquires ‘*contour*’. Therefore, the 16 triads we propose below attempt to ‘*give contour*’ to life's triadic unity.

¹⁰ Huxley '28 (pg.103 and 118)



Pregnancy of the “vibrated” triangle.

We will see that each and every triad we analyze is fundamentally connected to the others, pointing to an **architectural unity** that we can no longer ignore. Our investigation will consider only the *architectural interface* of any domain with the interval separating it from the rest. It is the locus of nonspecific competency that attempts nevertheless to avoid being superficial, precisely because the surface of things, from an architectural viewpoint, can reveal essential characteristics without going into details available only to specialists. Using this architectural approach, we will contrast **disintegration** (achieved - simultaneously or consecutively - by rational justification, by spiritual induction or introduced by the free arbiter’s spontaneous play) with **integration**, which we believe is possible only through the acceptance of the triadic unity.

The unity of existence and its wholeness lies at the foundation of what we present through the following essays. Our contribution is only part of a continuously growing process. We offer yet another argument to the free debate aiming at an integral vision that will have to gradually supplant the state of disintegration about which the world has become complacent - which flies in the face of life and acts against Man.

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A first essay will deal with the three fundamental mental reflexes that Man is subject to, which he projects simultaneously onto his own world and onto existence. The three parts of the present volume will apply, in non-systematic fashion, the resulting **ternary dialectics** used to characterize various manifestations of life, Man and his world. The fragmentary mode in which the mechanism of the *triadic unity* (or *ternary dialectic*) is revealed is due to its non-formal essence. The ‘thread’ of this book, if there is one, goes the way of the labyrinth. It takes shape in the essential reality that ‘connects’ artificial closure to unlimited openness, both equally illusory.