

MIRROR OF THE INTELLECT

(An Analytical Study)

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Titus Burckhardt (Ibrahim 'Izz ud Din 1908-1984), a German Swiss; devoted his entire life to the re-discovery of Tradition. His main works include 'An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine, Alchemy', 'Science of the Cosmos', 'Science of the Soul', 'Sacred Art in East and West' and 'Fez, City of Islam'. 'Mirror of the Intellect' comprises posthumous collection of his writings on Traditional Science and Sacred Art. The book is divided into five parts dealing with Traditional Cosmology and the Modern World, Christian themes, Symbolism and Mythology, Islamic themes and Envoi respectively.

Part one starts with an imaginative discussion on the Cosmological perspective. A study of the 'seven liberal arts' of the Middle Ages reveal the Medieval identification of science with art which 'indicates the fundamental nature of the Cosmological perspective.' 'But the modern historians construe traditional cosmology as childish attempt 'to explain the causation of phenomena'. Herein lies the basic error of modern scholarship in approaching the subject of sacred art and contemplative cosmology. The modern mentality further errs in 'its attachment to the sentimental aspects of art forms; and in initiating a sharp cleavage between artistic intuition and modern science. As a consequence, both primordial art and the nature of things have fallen in oblivion. Traditional cosmology is impregnated with an aspect of 'art' in the primordial meaning of the word, whereas modern science is not only restrictive to its study of nature but it further dissects the contents of nature. The scientist's emphasis on the 'autonomous materiality' of things fragments reality. Unlike modern science, the traditional art maintains fullness in unity, rhythm and proportion thereby achieving unicity in everything. It is the genius of Titus Burckhardt who in line with the tradition of Rene Guenon and Frithjof Schuon, has successfully traced out the common descent of art and science in the Medieval perspective, and has shown the modern fallacy of restricting them to separate domains. Modern science by dint of profane methodology dissects the living heart of Reality. A piecemeal view of Reality, in principle, is secluded from a vision of

wholeness. And in the absence of artistic intuition, each part narrates a different story. The plethora of modern scientific knowledge is an immediate consequence of the initial breach between art and science. This epistemological disequilibrium tends to destroy the very foundations of knowledge. Unless the modern science learns to live in harmony with the traditional art, the question of restoring equilibrium in the body of knowledge does not arise.

The chapter on traditional Cosmology and Modern Science is the most important chapter of the book dealing with Cosmologia pererinis, modern physics, traditional symbolism and modern empiricism, evolutionism and modern psychology. Titus Burckardt presents a critique of modern science on the basis of criteria provided by traditional cosmology. Unlike various critics of modern science, his critical examination of the subject is founded on universal and immutable principles which, in turn, are inherent in human intelligence. He is placed at a traditional axis from where it becomes possible to unveil the intrinsic contradictions of modern- science. He starts with a truism that genuine cosmology has a revelation basis. It gives birth to supra rational knowledge which, by nature, is timeless and sacred. In Christian cosmology, for example, there is no contradiction between Biblical myth of creation and Greek cosmology. The family resemblances of traditional cosmologies are not due to historical borrowings, but are always the manifestation of 'a revealed doctrine of the Spirit or Intellect'. This argument tends to establish transcendent unity of traditional cosmologies. Western cosmology was, however, dethroned when the ancient geocentric system was replaced by Copernicus 'heliocentric system.' The heliocentric system itself admits of an obvious symbolism, since it identifies the centre of the world with the source of light. Its rediscovery by Copernicus, however, produced no new spiritual vision of the world; rather it was comparable to the popularization of an 'esoteric truth'. The heliocentric picture of the universe did not correspond with subjective experiences of people, for in it man lost his organic place. Cosmology was reduced to cosmography. Titus Burckhardt attempts to re-capture the traditional vision of the world through the poetic works of Dante. He categorically commits that a modern cosmology is not possible, for it is based on the denial of the principle. Modern science of nature does not understand the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm world. It remains tied to the corporeal domain, and has no

inkling of the supra - sensible reality. It fails to realize that objectivity is impossible without transcendent intelligence which alone has access to the permanent essence of things. Mathematical knowledge takes a quantitative view of the physical world, whereas true cosmology is founded on the qualitative aspects of things. Thus, the traditional vision is 'static' and 'verical', whereas the modern one is 'dynamic' and 'horizontal'. Titus Burckhardt faithfully follows the main argument of Rene Guenon; as set forth in 'The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times', but adds his own beautiful insights to it. With the cessation of traditional cosmologies, modern science has come to assume an absolute position. It has encroached upon sacred areas of human experience. The very word cosmos meant 'order' and it reflected the ideas of unity and totality but modern cosmology has replaced it, with 'disorder', with corresponding disunity and partiality. Its main error consists in its severing itself from the principle. It neither refers to constant and universal qualities nor attaches the lower to the higher. It does not understand the symbolism of things but merely contents itself with studying their material and historical connections. Resultantly, man finds himself abandoned in an alien universe whereas the traditional man never felt alienated from the cosmos. The immensity of the universe did not eject him from his primordial home. The world of traditional cosmology was his permanent abode. He neither felt homeless nor suffered the infliction of de-personalization and de-humanization of his existence. He remained committed to the Truth which saved him. And what else is the treasure of life.

Titus Burckhardt then moves from cosmologia-perennis to a critique of modern physics and offers such a penetrating analysis of the subject that one is compelled to acknowledge that metaphysician is certainly higher than any modern physicist. The modern physics conceives the space as a void. Since mathematical thinking is insulated from a concrete intuition of things, it is therefore, constrained to posit the idea of a totally empty space. But the latter is non-existent. It is merely an abstraction envisaged in the mathematical model, Traditional cosmology, on the other hand, holds that the entire: space is filled by ether. Modern physics denies the presence of ether on the ground 'that it offers no resistance to the rotatory movement of the earth; but it fails to conceive that ether is the basis of material differentiations, and has no particular quality of its own', The question of resistance does not arise in this

context. If the modern science accepts the reality of ether, it may be able to resolve the dilemma that, 'whether light is propagated as a wave or as a corpuscular emanation'. There is possibility that its movement is neither of the fact that it is directly attached to ether and participates in the reality of the latter. Here we would like to point out that if modern science learns to re-examine its presuppositions in the light of traditional science it shall be able to overcome the crisis of modern physics. No serious physicist can afford to ignore the metaphysical foundations of science. The present crisis cannot be truly resolved within the ambit of modern science for it is precisely the very product of it. Moreover, philosophy of science moves in a vicious circle and ultimately ends in deepening the crisis. Its lack of intellectual method is primarily responsible for its being turned into a self-defeating discipline, and it is the metaphysics of science alone which can untie the knots of modern physics.

Einstein's theory of Relativity considers space and time relative to the observer. The only constant dimension is the speed of light. Titus Burckhardt presents a metaphysical critique of the theory and poses certain decisive questions in this regard. 'What is this famous constant number' that is supposed to express the speed of light? How can movement, having a definite and its definition will always be a relationship between space and time---itself be a quasi-'absolute' measure of these two conditions of the physical world? Is there not a confusion between the principal and quantitative domains here? That the movement of light is the fundamental 'measure' of the corporeal world, we willingly believe, but why should this measure itself be a number, and even a definite number? He further holds that the constant character of the speed of light shall be put in question. And once this constant dimension loses its absoluteness, the modern conception of the universe shall vanish like a mirage. We again reiterate the traditional point of view that it is only when one goes beyond physics that one can establish true physics. At present, the god of mathematics is being banished by the terrible gods of statistics and probability, and the cycle of this decadence is nearing a decisive turn but, if the modern man loses his intellectual possibility, then he may not be able to seize it for centuries to come.

Titus Burckhardt enlightens us on the nature of traditional symbolism and exhibits the limitations of modern empiricism. The ancient cosmogonies seem childish to the modern man for he erroneously takes their symbolism literally without understanding their deeper symbolic import. The modern theories about the origin of the world, on the other hand, are absurd. How human mind can be a witness of cosmic becoming when the mind itself is a chain in the event of becoming. The ancient man could have erred in his study of the sensible universe but he was fully conscious of the reality that the corporeal was not the total cosmos and the finite had its roots in the Infinite. The modern man, according to him, has absolutely lost the sense of the Infinite. He fails to realize that the entire universe is contained in the spirit or intellect. In the absence of primordial vision he is bound to live in *a world of fantasy and illusion. It is by virtue of traditional symbolism that one understands the origin of the universe.

Titus Burckhardt puts the phenomenon of evolutionism to a searching criticism. He starts his metaphysical analysis with a pertinent observation that one can go on adding quantities to one another; 'but a quality is never merely the sum of other qualities'. If one mixes the colours blue and yellow, one obtains green colour which is the synthesis of the two but at the same time it possesses chromatic quality that is new and unique in it.' It is a kind of 'discontinuous continuity' which is more visible in the biological world. Modern science does not appreciate the ancient concept of 'form' which designates the non-quantitative aspects of things while pointing towards their immutable essence. Form is an archetype beyond limitations and change. A species is, thus, an archetype which is manifested by individuals belonging to it. The archetypal roots reside within being. The 'material' reflections of the archetypes create the concepts of multiplicity and quantity. 'A species is in itself an immutable 'form', it cannot evolve and be transformed into another species, although it may include variants'. Darwin's thesis of the evolution of species is based on a confusion between species and simple variation. The theory is further beset with contradictions when it tries to explain the absence of intermediate forms. Its explanation contradicts its own principle of selection. 'The successive appearance of animal forms according to an ascending hierarchy - in no wise proves their continual and cumulative genesis'. Rather, a common model links the various forms to one another. Each essential form - or each archetype - includes, after its fashion, all the

others without any confusion; it is like a mirror reflecting other mirrors; which reflect it in their turn. Also, the postulate of evolution by leaps is logically absurd. Evolutionism errs in considering the physical dimensions as the sole reality. In fact, the process of materialization is from the supersensory to the sensory one. Teilhardian evolutionism is like a spiritual integration of paleontology. It is 'a purely mental sublimation of the crudest materialism'. Man occupies an intermediate place in evolution which starts from unicellular organisms and ends in transforming them into global cosmic entity united to God. The problem with this sort of evolutionism is that instead of opening 'the heaven of real and transcendent unity', it sinks man to the realm of lower psychism. It promotes a kind of pseudo-spiritual intoxication. In excerpts from two of the letters, he again shows the basic limitations in the evolutionary theory of Contra Teilhard de Chardin. If the spiritual faculty of man, the 'noetic faculty' is merely a stage in the continuity of biological evolution then how this phase can step out and have the grasp of the whole.

There is a confusion between the cerebral and 'noetic' faculties. It is erroneous to assume that intelligence has no immutable content and the spirit is in a state of becoming. The theory fails to make a distinction between proof and hypothesis. Evolution is a hypothesis without any valid proof. The 'thesis of Teilhard de Chardin is in no sense original; its novelty lies in its being a Trojan horse to introduce materialism and progressivism into the very bosom of religion'. Titus Burckhardt's critique of evolutionary theory poses a direct challenge to biology. It explodes the Darwinian myth and shows numerous absurdities involved in the hypothesis of evolutionism. It shall not be out of place to mention that number of similar thinkers including Martin Lings, Hossein Nasr, Osman Bakr, Michael Negus, Giuseppe Sermonet, W.R. Thompson and R. M Morrel have intelligently shown the pseudo-basis of evolutionary theory. Their criticism of the theory does not emerge from within the Western spectrum but arises from the traditional perspective. From the traditional point of view, the theory is nothing less than 'a metaphysical absurdity'. It fails to account for the immutability of species. It is based on a wrong notion of man and his creation. It has not the slightest awareness of the multiple states of Being. A theory which has no understanding of the Absolute and the process of • Its Manifestation can

neither understand the essence of life nor its unfoldment in the spatio-temporal order.

After razing the fortifications of evolutionism, Titus Burckhardt assails the foundations of modern psychology. One may take an exception to his treatment of the subject on the ground that he has critically examined Jungian system alone, and has not discussed contemporary forms of psychology. But a careful study of his main argument reveals his rightness in attacking Jungian psychology for the latter, because it represents the essential character of modern psychology. The modern psychologist is trapped in the psychic and has no means to reach true objectivity. For Jung, the psychic realm is all - pervasive. He even places God and the supersensible realities in the psychic domain thereby denying their objective validity. Thus, he acts as a decoy for the people of the East. The Jungian trap is laid thus: 'The object of psychology is the psychic; unfortunately it is also its subject', Titus Burckhardt unearths this epistemological conspiracy and makes a subtle analysis of the entire syndrium. The psychologist is primarily concerned with the purely psychic. It is but his entire domain. It is a kind of Prometheanism which makes the psychic element the ultimate reality of man. It contaminates history, philosophy, art and religion, because when everything is termed as psychological, objectivity vanishes like a mirage. It is only intellect which can study the psychic but unfortunately the intellectual mode of knowledge is alien to modern scientific and philosophical thinking. Also, reason which is 'the mental reflection of the transcendent intellect,' is not considered as a source of truth, but as a principle of coherence. 'The soul, like every other domain of reality, can only be truly known by what transcends it'. Intelligence which guides our will, transcends both inward and outward phenomena. If it were purely a psychic reality, 'then the question of transcendence would not have arisen. Traditional psychology is derived from above and it does not claim a priorian empirical character. Modern psychology has no means to attach the individual soul with the Divine Self. It has no understanding of cosmology and morality. It confuses traditional morality with a purely social or conventional one. Freudian psychoanalysis wants man to accept his 'psychic entrails' as his own, whereas man needs to detach himself from the internal depth of his psyche. All true knowledge stems from man's transcendent self. 'The psychic cannot be treated by the psychic'. Also it is wrong to trace a rite 'to psychic dispositions of ancestral origin' for, in the

process the timeless and superhuman meaning inherent in the rite or symbol is lost. 'It is from the immutable and formless background of the Spirit that the subtle realities become detached as forms, and it is the soul, which, through its sensory' faculties, knows the corporeal'. Modern psychology also fails to understand the hermeneutics of dreams for in order to validly interpret images, one must have knowledge of the supra-formal states of being and the level of reality to which they refer. Jung's theory of the 'collective unconscious' holds that the non-personal zone of the soul is unconscious, therefore, 'its contents can never become the direct object of the intelligence, whatever be its modality or however great its extension'.

Myths and symbols are taken as the product of ancestral psychic fund without any intellectual or spiritual foundation. This picture brings man nearer to the animal for the 'collective unconscious' is situated at the level of physiological instincts. The archetype are the source of being and knowledge and not, as Jung conceives them 'unconscious dispositions to act and imagine'. The concept of the 'self' is also debased to a purely psychological and clinical level. This critique of Jungian thought is a masterpiece of traditional psychology. The horizontal progress of psychology has eclipsed the vertical dimension of man. This psychic addiction has eaten the roots of man's being. Nothing short of a metaphysical exorcism is needed to get rid of the psychic evil spirit.

Titus Burckhardt names one of his chapters on Julius Evola's book, 'Riding the Tiger'. The book tends to show that how a traditional man 'may not only survive in the antitraditional ambience of the modern world, but may even use it for his own spiritual ends'. The Chinese metaphor of the man riding a tiger signifies that, if the rider holds on to his seat, he shall finally gain an advantage over it. The tiger means a destructive force which starts operating towards the end of every cosmic cycle. It is futile to struggle for maintaining the forms and structure of a dying civilization. The only way is to carry the negation to its logical point without slipping into nothingness so that it may become the basis of a new formative activity. Titus Burckhardt spells out his points of agreement and disagreement with the author of the book and concludes thus: 'According to all the prophecies, the sacred deposit of the integral Tradition will remain until the end of the cycle; this means that there will always be somewhere an open door. For men capable of

transcending outward shells, and animated by sincere will, neither the decadence of the surrounding world, nor belonging to a given people or milieu constitute absolute obstacles'. One needs to mark these words which negate all philosophies of despair. Intellect never falls in despair. Its capacity of transcendence unites it with the Universal Intellect. That all doors are not closed is the joyful lesson which one learns from the tradition. Though the destined hour of the human civilization is drawing near, yet by an act of true choice man can creatively transform the moment into eternity.

Part two deals with Christian themes. Titus Burckhardt finds a correspondence between the seven liberal arts and the 'West door of Charters Cathedral'. In the Medieval context, the seven sciences grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music geometry and astronomy were the manifestation of the harmonious soul. Since they were not exclusively empirical sciences therefore they were also called arts. Dante in line with the ancient tradition compared the seven liberal arts to the seven planets. The architects of the Royal Door of Charters were fully aware of this correspondence and thus, they designed the structure accordingly. The tradition has always been mindful of the fact that number, proportion, harmony and rythm manifest unity in diversity. The medieval science was less concerned with knowing numerous things but more committed with a 'whole' view of existence. Modern science has no way to link the terrestrial world with the celestial one. We agree with the analysis that the modern separation of sciences and arts has stifled the real understanding of things. The modern man is totally captivated by the instrumental value of a thing and has lost the appreciation of its intrinsic value. The modern mentality has completely divested itself from the symbolic import of things and is thus condemned to live in a barren world. The medieval architecture was impregnated with a deeper meaning as against the modern one which is bereft of all symbolism. The modern architecture represents the impoverishment of the contemporary soul.

Titus Burckhardt has reflected a great understanding of the traditional meaning and symbolism enshrined in Dante's Divine Comedy. He has placed the masterpiece in its true perspective. His great fascination for the work lies in the fact that 'there shines forth a timeless truth, at once blissful and terrifying, in short, it is because Dante is right'. There is an intimate

relationship between knowledge and will. 'Knowledge of the eternal truths is potentially present in the human spirit or intellect, but its unfolding is directly conditioned by the will, negatively, when the soul falls into sin, and positively when this fall is overcome'. He praises Dante for his condemnation of the Papal policy of his time which 'led to the misfortune of the Lutherean secession and the secular explosion of the Renaissance'. Dante's chief spiritual legacy consists in the use of symbols and imagery which transcends the limitations of the spatio - temporal circumstances. It is the genius of Titus Burckhardt to have entered the heart of the Christian Tradition. He has not only re-discovered Dante but has developed a keen insight into the world of Christian symbolism. In one of his chapters, he finds a correspondence between the Heavenly Jerusalem and the Paradise of Vaikuntha. He reproduces a miniature of the Heavenly Jerusalem taken from a manuscript of the eleventh century and compares it with the Mandala Of the Paradise of Vaikuntha. He examines their subtle details and tries to bring out the family resemblances of certain great traditions of the world. One is fascinated to see his immense power of deciphering the traditional symbols. In another chapter he considers two examples of Christian symbolism: the Wooden Chest and Gargoyles. The Wooden Chest due to its geometrical form is the symbol of the earth for like the chest which contains precious possessions the earth supports life. The Gargoyles are also symbolic in character. The grotesque masks on the outside world of Romanesque churches were meant to exercise evil spirits. Man could not detach himself from evil unless he understood it. The chapter on the Russian Icons carries a theological message. The icon has a permanent character with diverse manifestations. 'The art of Icons is a sacred art in the true sense of the term i.e. it is nourished wholly on the spiritual truth to which it gives pictorial expression'. What a beautiful unveiling of the Christian spectacle. How pathetic is the condition of the modern Christian who under the spell of progressivism and scientism has forgotten his own tradition. Can a civilization survive which has lost contact with her own traditional symbolism.

Part three deals with symbolism and mythology. Titus Burckhardt establishes himself as the master of the subject. The discussion starts with the symbolism of the mirror. The symbol of mirror expresses the essence of mysticism and is essentially sapiential in character. 'The mirror is the most immediate symbol of spiritual contemplation, and indeed of knowledge

(gnosis) in general, for it portrays the union of subject and object'. Various meanings of a symbols refer to different layers of reality but at the same time - enjoy an inward coherence by achieving an harmony within the image which is of spiritual nature. The essence of a symbol is manifested in the multiplicity of meanings and thus has an advantage over rational definition. Symbol opens upwards and transcends to the level of supra-rational realities. The content of a symbol is supra-rational but psychologism considers it irrational thereby debasing it to the realm of 'collective unconscious'. The symbolism of the mirror can be construed in a way that mirror becomes the symbol of the symbol. 'What is the mirror in which the symbol appears as the image of an eternal prototype? 'It is the imagination if one takes into consideration the visual nature of the symbol as against abstract concepts. Then, mind with the power of discrimination and knowledge reflects the pure Intellect. Further, 'the Intellect itself is the mirror of the divine Being'. Seen in the traditional perspective 'The heart, centre of the human being, is, therefore, like a mirror, which must be pure, so that it may receive the light of the divine Spirit'. Its reflection is at the stages of symbols (isharat), spiritual qualities (sifat) or essences ('ayan) and Divine Realities (hagia'q) . The same message is conveyed through the 'sacred mirror which occupies a prominent place in Taoism and Shintoism. The heart by virtue of its reflective capacity of truthfulness attracts divine light. However, the law of reflection is such that 'the reflected image is inverted in relation to its object'. It is correspondingly applicable to the spiritual process wherein 'eternity appears as a sudden moment'. A reflection while having qualitative similarity to its object is materially different from it. Also, the shape and position of the mirror reflects the object accordingly. The process of knowing is not exhausted at the rational level. The process of reflection is the most perfect image of this reality. The mirror is what it reflects to the extent that it reflects. 'In itself, without light, the mirror is invisible, and this means according to the meaning of the comparison, that in itself it is not'. Reflection does not exist outside Infinite Unity. It is Maya which gives rise to this illusion and the former is a pure possibility in the Infinite. Man is the mirror of God.

Speaking in higher esoteric sense, God is the mirror of man. The mirror signifies the knowing subject, 'which as such cannot also b.e the object of knowledge'. Absolutely speaking, it is true of the Divine Subject alone. Titus

Burckhardt quotes from the works of Ibn Arabi, Meister Eckhart, Suharwardi of Aleppo, Dante and Farid-ud Din Attar to spell out the symbolism of mirror. He successfully deciphers the inherent meaning of the most richest symbol in the traditional literature. How unfortunate is the modern Age of sterility that it does not experience the life of symbolism. The man of spirit has been reduced to mere flesh and bones. The death of a civilization is the death of its symbolism. The superficiality of the modern mentality is manifest in its crusade against traditional symbolism. In the absence of symbols, the process of conceptualization itself becomes self defeating. An idea which does not contain limitless possibilities of conception is condemned to be ensnared in empiricism, scientism and pseudo-positivism. The horizontal flatness of the modern mind is an intellectual ugliness. Technology is a false substitute for a real understanding of the physical world. The lop-sided growth of technology has even destroyed the equilibrium of the scientific world. Human understanding is not merely instrumental, it is essentially participative. Since the modern man has ceased to look into the mirror, therefore, he has forgotten his own face. It is precisely due to this reason that he constantly faces Crisis of Identity.

Titus Burckhardt next turns to the symbolism of water. The modern world has forgotten the living purity of water. 'The 'life' of the waters is symbol for the 'life' of the human soul'. When the Nature is in balance, 'the earth's waters themselves continually re-establish their purity, whereas, when this balance is lost, death and pollution are the result'. The split in modern consciousness has disturbed the natural balance of things, which is manifest in the longing of the city - dwellers to re-discover Nature. Beauty creates equilibrium. It helps us in a direct participation in things before they are caught up in the net of categories. Beauty and reality_ were united. There were sacred springs, rivers and lakes which reflected an aura of sacredness. The Medieval Christians accepted water as a symbol of grace and intimately linked, it with the symbolism of baptism. The sacred manifests the eternal and becomes the object of veneration and awe thereby enjoying absolute inviolability. As compared to earth, air and fire, it is water which can be violated so it requires special protection. The quality of water is characterized by humility and chastity. The river water takes different forms but it still retains its essential purity. It is likened to the image of the soul which, in spite of all impressions, remains essentially an undivided essence. 'The soul

resembles water, just as the spirit resembles wind or air'. Water stand as a symbol of the materia prime' of the whole universe. The Koran states that 'at the beginning, the Throne of God was upon the water and God created every living from water'. Titus Burckhardt has beautifully shown the sacredness attached to water in the different traditions of the world. The Japanese, Hindus, Christians, Muslims and other traditional people portray a rich symbolism of water which sustain their respective civilizations. The modern world, on the other hand, gives a purely physical or biological meaning to water. It merely concentrates on knowing its properties in order to exploit it as a physical resource. It has neither the capacity nor the willingness to understand the essence of water. We would like to point out that Thales, the father of Western philosophy, took the symbolism of water from the ancient world but, unfortunately due to the method of speculative reason, could not appreciate its quintessence. ' He considered water as the essence of universe bereft of traditional symbolism. The vertical dimension of water - symbolism was' displaced by the horizontal one. It initiated a departure of Greek thought from the traditional world, the effect of which is clearly visible in the contemporary world. Except for the interlude of the Christian tradition, the Western world has remained faithful to the profane aspects of Greek philosophy. It is only the traditional water which can quench the thirst of the modern man.

'Insight into Alchemy' is a chapter which unveils another aspect of traditional thinking. Titus Burckhardt has made a special study of the subject and has written a marvellous book on Alchemy. He sums up the whole of the alchemy in this adage! 'To make of the body a spirit and of the spirit a body'. The base metal is the consciousness bound to the body. This is the 'metallic body' from which must be extracted the 'soul' and the 'spirit' which are termed as 'Mercury' and 'Sulphur'. The truth is that if the 'body' lacked inner reality, then it could not serve the material for the spiritual work. He,explains the process of extraction in such a beautiful manner that one instantly transcends to the alchemical world. Spiritually speaking, alchemy turns base metal into gold. But what about the modern man who refuses to submit to the process and contents by remaining base metal?

Titus Burckhardt's discussion on the symbolism of chess is yet another beautiful facet of traditional symbolism. The game of chess traces its origin

from India. Through the Persians and the Arabs it was passed on to the medieval West. At the time of the Renaissance some of the rules of the game were changed: the 'queen' and the two 'bishops' were given a greater mobility, and thenceforth the game acquired a more abstract and mathematical character; it departed from its concrete model and strategy, without however losing the essential features of its symbolism. In the original position of the chessmen, the ancient strategic model remains obvious; one can recognize two armies ranged according to the battle order that was customary in the ancient East. The form of the chess board resembles classical type of Vastu-mandala. This diagram symbolizes existence conceived as a 'field of action' of the divine powers. The combat symbolizes in the most universal sense the combat of the 'angels' with the 'demons'. All other meanings are derivative from this primordial one. Light is represented by white army, whereas, black army stands for darkness. If the symbolism of the chess is transposed into the spiritual realm, then, the King symbolizes heart or spirit and other pieces represent the various faculties of the soul. The various movements on the chess board reflect various ways of realizing cosmic possibilities. Also, the relationship between will and destiny is revealed in the symbolism of chess. 'Freedom of action is here in complete solidarity with foresight and knowledge of the possibilities; contrary wise, blind impulse, however free and spontaneous it may appear at first sight, is revealed in the final outcome as a non-liberty'. Wisdom is the knowledge of possibilities. The possibilities are all contained in the universal spirit. 'The Spirit is Truth; through Truth man is free; outside Truth, he is the slave of fate. That is teaching of the game of chess'. Titus Burckhardt's unveiling of the symbolism of chess provides an opportunity for the human intelligence or spirit to understand the essentiality of things. The contemporary world has divested itself from the archetypal roots of things and thus has ceased to understand the truth buried in the labyrinth of 'facts'. The metaphysical/traditional mind had placed man in a meaningful universe. There was a kind of holy equilibrium which seemed to be all-pervasive. Human activity had a serious purpose. Each move of a person was spiritually calculative and it was committed to the higher ends of life. The primordial lesson of necessity and freedom was known by everyone. Life was construed as a game of possibilities. Intelligence was supposed to know the realm of possibility and the means to realize it. The modern man has transformed the

symbolism of chess ' into a mere worldly game which in the ultimate analysis remains meaningless.

Titus Burckhardt's treatment of the sacred Mask reveals the symbolism inherent in the most ancient modes of sacred art. It is found in India, Japan and among the primitive people. The exception is the Semitic monotheism but it has been preserved in the folklore of the Christians and certain Muslim communities. 'The sacred mask' is above all the means of a theophany; the individuality of its wearer is not simply effaced by the symbol assumed, it merges into it to the extent that it becomes instrument of a superhuman 'presence'. The analysis offered is significant to the extent that it provides an opportunity to understand the role of sacred mask within a certain tradition.

Titus Burckhardt re-discovers the symbolic element present in the return of Ulysses. The spiritual path of realization teaches man that he shun his every day self and discover his true, essential self. But this path is beset with great affliction, hardship and misery, and without sacrifice man cannot reach his primordial reality. The mythology and folklore represent this basic human vocation in the form of the royal hero who returns to his kingdom under different guises and then re-conquers the property by dispossessing the mean usurpers. The parallel theme of the myth is to liberate a beautiful woman from the clutches of hostile forces so that in the ultimate analysis she belongs to the hero. These mythological themes are present in Ulysses return to Ithaca where he retrieves his wife and property and makes the people know the master of the house. Homer reflects an understanding of the myths, that he was transmitting or adopting. And it is again the greatness of Titus Burckhardt's vision to have re-discovered Homer. The Western philosophers, can never understand Homer who was a link between the ancients and the Greeks. But unfortunately, the Greek philosophers, by dint of their rational method, could not get any essential inspiration from him. Had they "understood his message, they would have positively contributed to the development of human thought.

Titus Burckhardt attended a Sun Dance held on the Reservation of the Crow Indians in Montana. He has beautifully described it from the beginning to the end with symbolic significance of each stage. Unlike Jung, he does not trace the common symbolism to the 'collective unconscious' but attaches it to a universal realm. For us, to celebrate the rite of the full moon is more

meaningful than the modern dance which celebrates perhaps, the eclipse of the sun.

Part four deals with Islamic themes. The chapter on the Traditional Sciences in Fez starts with a discussion on the difference between traditional and modern science. 'The traditional science (al-imu't-taglidi) and modern science have little or nothing in common; they do not have the same root and do not bear the same fruits'. Tradition transmits a message of non-human origin which reflects a spiritual continuity, and if ever this integral science is lost, it cannot be reconstituted by human efforts. The modern science, on the other hand, is based on sense-experience and in principle, it is open to all though, in practice, it is beyond the ordinary grasp. The reason being that the geometrical progression of scientific data and its conclusions has exceeded the normal limits of comprehension. Man's integral nature is constituted of body, soul and spirit. The modern science commits the mistake of concentrating solely on the physical datum. It either remains silent on the question of Man or considers, him an animal with developed cerebral faculties. The play of chances cannot impute real meaning to the existence of man. The tradition) science replies to this basic question by help of metaphors about the creation of Adam. Man is considered a unique cause and his existence has a deeper meaning. It does not tie man in the chain of contingency but probes his real essence. The traditional understanding of Man stands transmitted till the present day. Titus Burckhardt further analyses the reduction of traditional sciences in Al-Qarawin but holds that these different branches of learning were homogeneous as against varying disciplines of modern education. There was concentration on grammar, hadith and fiqh; but reason was not the measure of all things. Also, there was an intimate relation between the master and the pupil, and both worked for the love of science. There was concentration on 'Tasawwuf' and certain classical treatises were taught to the pupils. There was a total commitment to the highest spiritual truths. When It came to traditional medicine, the point of equilibrium was always kept in the forefront. Alchemy was integrated in the Islamic tradition. Traditional art and craftsmanship was fully promoted. The above discussion is an eye opener for the modern educationists who finds nothing meaningful in the traditional selected. He fails to perceive man In totality. He fragments the reality of man and divides it into multifarious categories. We have written elsewhere that such a growth of knowledge has

diminished human understanding. The lop-sided growth of various disciplines amounts to a cancer in the body of knowledge. It is only the transcendent root of knowledge which can bear sacred fruits. Instead of imitating the modern West, we must look into our own traditional mirror.

The Prayer of Ibn Mashish (As - Salatul - Mashishiyah) forms an important chapter of the book. Abdas - Salam Ibn Mashish, the Moroccan Sufi, was the master of Abu' l Hasan ash - Shadhili; the founder of the Shadhili order. The prayer is a summary of the Sufi doctrine of Universal Man (al-insan al-Kamil). Titus Burckhardt translates the prayer and comments on its difficult passages. The 'secrets' and 'lights' are derived from the prophet. Both complement each other. The 'secrets' are understood as 'latent predispositions of man or of the cosmos' while 'lights' are construed as 'emanations or flashes of Being which echo the 'secrets' by actualizing their potentialities without ever yielding up their ultimate depth.' The concept 'secret' reflects the innermost part of the soul. It is an organ which contemplates 'light'. This is similar to a mirror that reflects the divine realities and polarizes them in a certain fashion according to its own predisposition (isti'dad). When situated on the side of the potentialities 'secret' plays a passive role in relation to the 'lights' but considered in its unfathomable depth, it is identical with that the 'Immutable essence' (al-ayn ath thabitah) of the being. This archetypal reality or the archetype contains within itself 'indistinctly everything that the individual consciousness realizes in existential and successive mode'. Thus, 'secrets' correspond to the archetypes whereas 'lights' stand for divine qualities. The archetypes, indistinctly contained in the Divine Essence, are distinguished first of all, in a principal manner, in the First Intellect (al'aqlal-awwal) and it is through it that they shine as it were into the cosmos; thus they 'derive' from it and, from this starting-point, are 'split-up'. Likewise the Divine Light is broken by the prism of the Intellect into multiple 'light'. The First Intellect can be likened to the 'isthmus' (barzakh) between the two 'seas' of the created and the untreated of pure Being and Existence the latter being relative'. The intellect is not different from the spirit (ar-Ruh). 'In a certain sense, the Intellect is like the consciousness of the spirit and the spirit is like the life of the Intellect'. The First Intellect is the universal Mediator, and it is with this that the prophet is identified by the very secret of his function'. 'The First Intellect is to the whole cosmos what the reflected intellect is to man'.

‘Universal Man’ (al-insan al Kamil) is that whose intellect and universal nature is in intimate consciousness with the First Intellect Itself. It is through him that things ‘rise up’ in Unity and ‘the realities descend’ by the reflection of universal truths in the ‘human mind’. Mohammed is the ‘Universal Man’ for he represents ‘the most complete earthly manifestation of the Universal Mediator, the First Intellect’. Its basis is not ‘Incarnation’ or ‘Illumination’. ‘The Universal Mediator’ the First Intellect, is like a mirror that reverberates the Divine Beauty’. Different worlds are derived from the ‘light of Mohammed’ (an-nur al-muhammadi). The graces (salat) which God confers on the Prophet are ‘irradiation (tajalli) of the Divine Essence, which eternally pours into the cosmos, of which Mohammad is the synthesis. To pray for God’s blessing on the prophet amounts to participation in the divine act and becoming receptive to the blessing of the entire universe.’ The ‘essential reality’ (haqiqah) of the Mediator is the first divine self-determination (taayyun). It reveals and veils Him at one and the same time. In unity in the sense of al-ahadiyah, all traces of the creature of the servant are effaced, whereas in Unicity in the sense of al-wandah, the creature appears in God i.e. multiplicity in unity and unity in multiplicity’. ‘Titus Burchardt takes us deep into the waters” of religious metaphysics and makes us understand the nature of the Absolute and the process of Its Manifestation. The entire prayer finds its axis in Mohammad, “Light of ivohammad”, Universal Mediator, Universal Man or the First Intellect; by whatever name one designates the process of Cosmic manifestation. The graces (salat) showered on the prophet both by man and God reveal their inherent meaning on the metaphysical plane. From our point of view these points towards a realm which is beyond physics but which can provide an ultimate foundation to physics. If the modern physicist starts understanding the “Light of Mohammad” it shall unravel numerous mysteries of the universe. Modern physics by its restricted methodology, solely deals with the world of bodies (alam al-ajsam). It has no means to link this world with the world of spirits (alam al-arwah), the world of omnipotence (alam al-jabarut) the world of analogies (alam al-mithal), the world of imagination (alam al khiyal) and so on and so forth. Einstein’s theory of Relativity remains tied to the world of bodies (alam alajsam). It holds that the velocity of light cannot be exceeded and it remains the same for all observers disregardless of their systems of movement. Thus, the theory of Relativity establishes an absolute and correspondingly builds a modern conception of the universe. But the rational

or scientific discovery of such an absolute cannot be guaranteed for all times to come. Physics needs and intellectual constant and that constant is the 'Light of Mohammad' (an-nur-al-muhammadi). It shall link the entire worlds in a metaphysical hierarchy and shall understand the manifested and non-manifested possibilities of the Absolute. It shall also realize the truth of the traditional notions of space and time. We are not proposing something imaginary, for the 'Light of Mohammad' is a recurring phenomenon in the universe and the graces on Mohammad provide a key to this metaphysical reality.

Concerning the Barzakh is another important chapter of the book. Titus Burckhardt states that the meaning of barzakh in Islamic theology pertains to 'a certain intermediate state in the posthumous evolution of the human being'. Esoterism gives it a metaphysical meaning and interprets the following Quranic verses accordingly: 'He bringeth forth the two seas, which meet: between them is an isthmus (=barzakh)' which they do not go beyond. He it is who bringeth forth the two seas; one is fresh and drinkable, the other is salt and bitter; and He hath made between the two an isthmus(=barzakh) and a closed barrier'. The symbolism of the two seas is expressed thus: The two seas symbolize respectively, Quantity and Quality, or, according to other interpretations, the non-manifested and the manifested, the formless and the formal, immediate knowledge and theoretical knowledge, etc.' Barzakh understood in a vertical sense is junction and separation, and on horizontal plane it is expressed by the alternations 'of expansion and negation. Shahadah is 'the doctrinal barzakh' par-excellence'. We revert to our previous stand point and state that if modern physics starts accepting the metaphysical idea of barzakh then it may succeed in resolving certain dilemmas in the heart of physics. It is incumbent upon the modern scientist to accept the metaphysical foundations of physics.

Extracts from the commentary on the Divine Names by the Imam Ghazali is a fascinating chapter. Titus Burckhardt spells out the intellectual/spiritual meaning inhering in the divine Attributes. The study certainly raises one's level of understanding the Divinity.

Titus Burckhardt is deeply committed to the idea of traditional art. He has developed a keen insight into the quintessence of Islamic art. The Role of the Fine Arts in Moslem Education is a chapter which examines the place

that Islamic art occupies in modern academic institutions mainly through the disciplines of archaeology and the history of art. But both these disciplines are derived from European humanistic philosophy 'which reduces all spiritual values to their purely human aspect'. It is doubtful whether this science can understand the outward history of Islamic art alongwith its spiritual content.

'Archaeology and the history of art are both founded on the historical analysis of works of art. Such an analysis may'. well deliver objective results, but it does not necessarily lead to an essential view of things'. Rather, it has a tendency to remain fixated on minor details at the expense of comprehensive views.

Modern scholarship, for instance, has committed the mistake of explaining the origin of Islamic art in reference to Byzantine, Sassanid, coptic or other art. Thus, it has 'lost 'sight of the intrinsic and original unity of Islamic art' and has 'forgotten the 'seal' that Islam conferred on all borrowed elements'. The history of art makes a fallacious attempt to judge a work of art by 'its real or presumed 'originality' or by virtue of its 'revolutionary' character; as if the essential quality of a work of art were not its beauty, and as if beauty were not independent of the psychological dramas of the moment.' Most historians of art are more interested in the individuality of the artist than the spiritual truth which art conveys. The psychological impulse behind the artistic expression comes to dominate the entire horizon of art. Islamic art has no room for such individualism or psychologism. It remains primarily committed to the reflection of universal beauty. As a consequence, it remains serene and impersonal. In the western world 'the image of man occupies the central position in all visual art, whereas in the world of Islam the image of man plays a secondary role and is altogether absent from the liturgical domain.... Islam banished all this ambiguous play of psychological mirrors at an early stage, thus preserving the primordial dignity of man himself'. The commitment of European art to image makes figurative painting and sculpture stand higher than architecture. The 'decorative' arts occupy a much lower position in the hierarchy of arts. Islamic art has no goal of imitating or describing nature. It is oriented to 'the shaping of the human ambience'. 'Islamic art does not add something alien to the object that it shapes; it merely brings out their essential qualities'. Thus, Islamic art is essentially objective. 'In Islam too man is the centre to

which all art refer, but as a rule man is not the theme of visual art'. In the hierarchy of the visual art in Islam, calligraphy or the art of writing occupies the highest place, for it, has the privilege of translating into visual forms the divine speech of the 'koran'. Architecture is equally important. It has the vitality in 'shaping the human ambience and making it congenial to Islamic baraka'. Minor arts attached to architecture include woodcarving, mosaics, sculpture. Major, minor and all utilitarian arts belong to the same principle. Islamic art promotes the qualities of unity, justice and generosity which are also the fundamental aspects of beauty. The role of the fine arts is 'to manifest the hidden qualities of things'. Islamic art 'is like a silent education'. In the traditional Islamic world no distinction was made between arts and crafts. The disappearance of the crafts, due to the invasion of the machine, has dealt a death blow to the Islamic arts. 'The essence of art is beauty and beauty by its very nature is an outward as well as an inward reality'. Beauty is intimately linked with truth and vice versa. Modern European art offers a beauty which contains no wisdom, no spiritual grace. Titus Burckhardt has very successfully pointed out the role of Islamic art in the educative process. Strictly speaking, there is nothing common between the modern European art and the Islamic art which is derived from Islam itself. The basic limitation of the profane art is that the artist has been locked up in his own psychic world and has no access to true objectivity. His own psyche stands in the way of his essential self and the objective world. The element of transcendence remains conspicuous by its absence. Modern European art is the product of alienation and it correspondingly manifests alienation. It has no inkling of Divine Beauty which is the metaphysical foundation of Islamic art. Instead of revealing the essentiality of a thing, it conceals it. All philosophies of art fail to understand the metaphysical concept of 'Beauty' and 'Truth'. Resultantly, art is deprived of the metaphysical/spiritual foundation.

Perennial values in Islamic Art is another chapter which further develops the concept of Islamic art. The unity and regularity of Islamic art is based on the intellectual vision of timeless realities. 'This is also the meaning of 'intellect' (al-aql) in Islamic tradition; faith is not complete unless it be illumined by al-aql which alone grasps the implication of at-tauhid, the doctrine of divine Unity'. In a similar way, Islamic art derives its beauty from wisdom. It does not let anything 'stand between man and the invisible presence of God'. Unlike modern European art, Islamic art creates a void; it

eliminates, in fact, all the turmoil and passionate suggestions of the world, and in their stead creates an order that expresses equilibrium, serenity and peace. Thus, architecture occupies a central position in Islamic art. "Islamic art is fundamentally derived from Tawhid, that is, from an assent to or a contemplation of Divine Unity. The essence of 'at-tawhid is beyond words; it reveals itself in the Koran by sudden and discontinuous flashes. Striking the plane of the visual imagination, these flashes congeal into crystalline forms, and it is these forms in their turn that constitute the essence of Islamic art'. Titus Burckhardt is at his best in describing the perennial values in Islamic art. How unlike the profane values which are trapped in human individuality, psyche and the temporal circumstances of an age. The latent possibilities of art were inherent in Islam itself and they started manifesting in different epochs and taught man the primordial link between man and God. Thus, Islamic art attained the level of a decisive discipline.

The Void in Islamic Art elaborates further the main argument of Islamic art taken in the previous chapter. 'Strictly speaking, the forbidding of images in Islam refers only to images of the, divinity'. It is to avoid idolatrous polytheism which falsely associates the relative with the absolute. Sacred art, no doubt, is based on symbolism but it is not necessarily composed of images'. This void which Islamic art creates by its static; impersonal and anonymous quality enables man to be entirely himself, to repose in his ontological centre'. Sacred art needs to be studied by sacred criteria therein shall shine forth the timeless truth enshrined in Islamic art.

"The impart of the Arabic Language on the Visual Arts of Islam "is a very instructive chapter on the subject. The Arabic language is sacred and archaic and 'has succeeded in preserving its primordial character. (The 'Arab is a priori an auditive rather than a visual type. 'He is dynamic and contemplative. 'He finds access to unity by means of rythm, which is like the refraction of the eternal present in the current of time.' The arabesque is the most clear expression of rythm in the visual order. The semitic nomads had no figurative tradition. Even the borrowed images could not be integrated within the tradition). Titus Burckhardt had reflected a great vision in determining the relationship between language and art. It is only the primordial languages which succeed in revealing the essence of art. The

Islamic tradition in particular finds a close connection between Arabic language and the corresponding art.

Part five, captioned as 'Envoi', consists of a letter on spiritual method. "There is no spiritual method without these two basic elements; discernment between real and the unreal, and concentration on the real". The first presupposes a metaphysical understanding, whereas the second requires a support of sacred character that can be achieved within the framework of a normal tradition. The perpetual concentration on the Real presupposes a regular transmission such as exists only within a normal tradition. The master is attached to an initiatic chain and it is necessary for the disciple to obey him. The master transmits the spiritual influence, keys to meditation and 'the sacred supports for perpetual concentration on the Real'. He is aware of the relativity of forms, for his knowledge transcends all forms. No true master puts himself outside a tradition. 'In the spiritual life, there is no place for individual experiments; they are too ruinous'. Titus Burckhardt has very beautifully brought out the essence of spiritual method. Spiritual epistemology has its own methodology. The very presence of spiritual method indicates that the tradition stands for true knowledge and the spiritual master, by discerning true from the false, concentrates absolutely on the real. Thus, the way exists and it cannot be termed as an illusion.

Titus Burckhardt's *Mirror of the Intellect* exhibits infinite reflections. These twenty five essays on traditional science and sacred art restore the intellectual vision which has been obstructed by modern science and profane art. The work alluded to shines as a pole star in the 'dark night of the world'. It is a mirror in which both the traditional and the modern man can recognize their primordial faces. Viewed from all angles, it is not a psychic mirror but mirror of the Intellect which reflects the world of archetypes.

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