

DIVERSITY OF REVELATION

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Seeing that there is but one Truth, must we not conclude that there is but one Revelation, one sole Tradition possible? To this our answer is, first of all, that Truth and Revelation are not absolutely equivalent terms, since Truth is situated beyond forms, whereas Revelation, or the Tradition which derives from it, belongs to the formal order, and that indeed by definition; but to speak of form is to speak of diversity, and so of plurality; the grounds for the existence and nature of form are: expression, limitation, differentiation. What enters into form, thereby enters also into number, hence into repetition and diversity; the formal principle— inspired by the infinity of the divine Possibility— confers diversity on this repetition. One could conceive, it is true, that there might be only one Revelation or Tradition for this our human world and that diversity should be realised through other worlds, unknown by man or even unknowable by him; but that would imply a failure to understand that what determines the difference among forms of Truth is the difference among human receptacles. For thousands of years already, humanity has been divided into several fundamentally different branches, which constitute so many complete humanities, more or less closed in on themselves; the existence of spiritual receptacles so different and so original demands differentiated refractions of the one Truth. Let us note that this is not always a question of race, but more often of human groups, very diverse perhaps, but none the less subject to mental conditions which, taken as a whole, make of them sufficiently homogeneous spiritual recipients; though this fact does not prevent some individuals from being able to leave their framework, for the human collectivity never has anything absolute about it. This being so, it can be said that the diverse Revelations do not really contradict one another, since they do not apply to the same receptacle, and since God never addresses the same message to two or more receptacles of divergent character, corresponding analogically, that is, to dimensions which are formally incompatible; contradictions arise only on one and the same level.

The apparent antinomies between Traditions are like differences of language or of symbol; contradictions are in human receptacles, not in God; the diversity in the world is a function of its remoteness from the divine Principle, which amounts to saying that the Creator cannot will both that the world should be, and that it should not be the world.

If Revelations more or less exclude one another, this is so of necessity because God, when He speaks, expresses Himself in absolute mode; but this absoluteness relates to the universal content rather than to the form; it applies to the latter only in a relative and symbolical sense, because the form is a symbol of the content and so too of humanity as a whole, to which this content is, precisely, addressed. It cannot be that God should compare the diverse Revelations from outside as might a scholar; He keeps Himself so to speak at the centre of each Revelation, as if it were the only one. Revelation speaks an absolute language, because God is absolute, not because the form is; in other words, the absoluteness of the Revelation is absolute in itself, but relative *qua* form.

The language of the sacred Scriptures is divine, but at the same time it is necessarily the language of men; it is made for men and could be divine only in an indirect manner. This incommensurability between God and our means of expression is clear in the Scriptures, where neither our words, nor our logic are adequate to the celestial intention; the language of mortals does not *a priori* envisage things *sub specie aeternitatis*. The uncreated Word shatters created speech while directing it towards the Truth; it manifests thus its transcendence in relation to the limitations of human powers of logic; man must be able to overstep these limits if he wishes to attain the divine meaning of the words, and he oversteps them in metaphysical knowledge, the fruit of pure intellection, and in a certain fashion also in love, when he touches the essences. To wish to reduce divine Truth to the conditionings of earthly truth is to forget that there is no common measure between the finite and the Infinite.

The absoluteness of a Revelation demands its unicity; but on the level of facts such unicity cannot occur to the extent of a fact being produced that is unique of its kind, that is to say constituting on its own what amounts to a whole genus. Reality alone is unique, on whatever level it is envisaged: God,

universal Substance, divine Spirit immanent in this Substance; however, there are 'relatively unique' facts, Revelation for example, for since all is relative and since even principles must suffer impairment, at any rate in appearance, and in so far as they enter into contingencies, uniqueness must be able to occur on the plane of facts; if unique facts did not exist in any fashion, diversity would be absolute, which is contradiction pure and simple. The two must both be capable of manifesting themselves, unicity as well as diversity; but the two manifestations are of necessity relative, the one must limit the other. It results from this, on the one hand that diversity could not abolish the unity which is its substance, and on the other that unity or unicity must be contradicted by diversity on its own plane of existence; in other words, in every manifestation of unicity, compensatory diversity must be maintained, and indeed a unique fact occurs only in a part and not in the whole of a cosmos. It could be said that such and such a fact is unique in so far as it represents God for such and such an environment, but not in so far as it exists; this existing however does not abolish the symbolism of the fact, it repeats it outside the framework, within which the unique fact occurred, but on the same plane. Existence, which conveys the divine Word, does not abolish the unicity of such and such a Revelation in its providentially appointed field, but it repeats the manifestation of the Word outside this field; it is thus that diversity, without abolishing the metaphysically necessary manifestation of unicity, none the less contradicts it outside a particular framework, but on the same level, in order thus to show that the uncreated and non-manifested Word alone possesses absolute unicity.

If the objection is raised that at the moment when a Revelation occurs, it is none the less unique for the world, and not for a part of the world only, the answer is that diversity does not necessarily occur in simultaneity, it extends also to the temporal succession, and this is clearly the case when it is a question of Revelations. Moreover, a uniqueness of fact must not be confused with a uniqueness of principle; we do not deny the possibility of a fact unique to the world in a certain period, but that of a fact unique in an absolute sense. A fact which appears unique in space, is not so in time, and inversely; but even within each of these conditions of existence, it could never be affirmed that a fact is unique of its kind— for it is the genus or the quality, not the particularity, which is in question— because we can

measure neither time nor space, and still less other modes which elude us.

This whole doctrine is clearly illustrated by the following example: the sun is unique in our solar system, but it is not so in space; we can see other suns, since they are situated in space like ours, but we do not see them as suns. The uniqueness of our sun is belied by the multiplicity of the fixed stars, without thereby ceasing to be valid within the system which is ours under Providence; the unicity is then manifested in the part, not in the totality, although this part is an image of the totality and represents it for us; it then 'is', by the divine Will, the totality, but only for us, and only in so far as our mind, whose scope is likewise willed by God, does not go beyond forms; but even in this case, the part 'is' totality so far as its spiritual efficacy is concerned.

We observe the existence, on earth, of diverse races, whose differences are 'valid' since there are no 'false' as opposed to 'true' races; we observe also the existence of multiple languages, and no one thinks of contesting their legitimacy; the same holds good for the sciences and the arts. Now it would be astonishing if this diversity did not occur also on the religious plane, that is to say if the diversity of human receptacles did not involve diversity of the divine contents, from the point of view of form, not of essence. But just as man appears, in the framework of each race, simply as 'man' and not as a 'White' or a 'Yellow', and as each language appears in its own sphere as 'language' and not as such and such a language among others, so each religion is of necessity on its own plane 'religion', without any comparison or relative connotation which, in view of the end to be attained, would be meaningless; to say 'religion' is to say 'unique religion'; explicitly to practise one religion, is implicitly to practise them all.

An idea or an enterprise which comes up against insurmountable obstacles is contrary to the nature of things; the ethnic diversity of humanity and the geographical extent of the earth suffice to make highly unlikely the axiom of one unique religion for all men, and on the contrary highly likely— to say the least— the need for a plurality of religions; in other words, the idea of a single religion does not escape

contradiction if one takes account of its claims to absoluteness and universality on the one hand, and the psychological and physical impossibility of their realisation on the other, not to mention the antinomy between such claims and the necessarily relative character of all religious mythology; only pure metaphysic and pure prayer are absolute and therefore universal. As for 'mythology', it is— apart from its intrinsic content of truth and efficacy— indispensable for enabling metaphysical and essential truth to 'gain a footing' in such and such a human collectivity.

Religion is a 'supernaturally natural' fact which proves its truth— from the point of view of extrinsic proofs— by its human universality, so that the plurality and ubiquity of the religious phenomenon constitutes a powerful argument in favour of religion as such. Just as a plant makes no mistake in turning towards the light, so man makes no mistake in following Revelation and, in consequence, in following tradition. There is something infallible in the natural instinct of animals, and also in the 'supernatural instinct' of men; but man is the only 'animal' capable of going against nature as such, either wrongly by violating it, or else by transcending it.