

Starting from experience: what we observe

The Ground of Being: Presence, Intelligence, Intention

When we observe Reality and the world around us and our own experience of life, I feel we can discern that the Ground of Being, who animates this Reality, is at the same time Presence, Intelligence and Intention:

- 1) **Presence**: The Ground of Being is Presence: if he is the energy of life, nothing can exist without him. Even the atoms would crumble into dust if no energy holds them together and the whole world would be then only a kind of fog of more or less dense dust without any structure, nor any movement nor any cohesion, by total absence of energy. It is indeed the energy of Life that generates attraction, gravitation, cohesion, movement, and even change. And this energy is much more than just energy in its physical form; it is mainly the energy of Life that animates all forces of peace, justice, compassion, beauty, etc.
- 2) **Intelligence**: The Ground of Being is Intelligence: the Universe, in its evolution, has an orientation. It is evolving from simplicity towards more complexity and deeper consciousness. Probability or chance and necessity are not sufficient to explain the tremendous complexity and diversity of the forms of life we can observe today. Even after 14 bio years. Without this Intelligence that leads evolution, there would be only a big cloud of shapeless dust that could not change or evolve nor create new forms.

- 3) **Intention**: The Ground of Being is Intention: Life is impregnated by many values such as beauty, goodness, justice, compassion, solidarity, love. Life, and the evolution of the many forms it takes to express itself, are not only material; they have a content and a general intention guides them in their evolution. Love is the great attraction, the immaterial parallel to gravitation which is the material expression that makes love visible.

This Intention reveals that there is continuity between materiality and immateriality. It generates relationships between the elements. Life is indeed made mainly of relationships; it becomes especially striking if one observes how little effective matter (protons, neutrons, electrons) there is, in regard to the empty space that separates the grains of matter. Or the empty space in the solar system, between the planets and the Sun. Gravitation (relationship) holds the whole together. Without relationships between the parts, there remains only informal dust, once again. In introducing relationships into the process, Intention generates quality and love. Because of this power to relate, all the parts do not remain indifferent but become fully participants to the whole and to its wider evolution. The process of evolution is not without consciousness; it adopts a direction towards more unity and more compassion, more inclusiveness. It leads to true community which represents the further stage of our evolution as human beings and especially as humankind, as says Teilhard de Chardin.

And even, the most surprising thing: relationships become so personal; personal between all members of the community but relationships becomes also very personal and even real in the way we relate, as person or as community, with the Ground of Being, although it has no anthropomorphic shape; a relationship that is personal and unique, although it is very different from the personal relationship I can have with my partner, my children, my relatives, or neighbours. An amazing mystery!

The three worlds

As a metaphor (or myth) we could say that we live at the same time in three different worlds which, together, shape a complex Reality inhabited or animated by the Ground of Being who is Presence, Intelligence and Intention:

- 1) **World 1 = the Energy or the Source of Life:** World 1 is the world of our own Source and origin (the Ground of Being) that is not visible but nevertheless never stops from being active, from keeping us alive and from inspiring us. This is the immanent and spiritual source of our deeper being. The Ground of Being is indeed the Energy of Life.
- 2) **World 2 = the Intelligence or the Expression:** World 2 is the physical world in which we live (our natural and social environment) and which reveals to us (the book that makes it visible) the true essence of World 1 (the Source) when we dare to look for meaning beyond mere appearances. This is an expression of World 1 in many physical and material forms as the signs of impact of the Source on our surroundings. The invisible World 1 is made visible to us through the external and material signs of World 2. This is the Intelligence that guides evolution.
- 3) **World 3 = the Intention or the Interpretation / the (inspired or twisted) Construct:** World 3 is the world we construct ourselves (in our heart-mind) as a representation of the world (W1 and W2) in which we live: this is a man-made construct that fits more or less Reality (W1 and W2) when our representations and interpretations are inspired and adequate. But most of the time this World 3 consists in an illusion we have built to protect ourselves from the fear we have of the Mystery (W1) and from the harshness of an environment (W2) that, we wish, should be more gentle and comfortable. Or we create this kind of fiction (an illusory representation) because we need to feel that we master our

1) World 1: The Energy = The Source of life

Invisible – Our Essence.

Emptiness which is Fullness.

No way to represent it.

*In this world there are two orders of being,
the perishable and the imperishable.
The perishable is all that is visible.
The imperishable is the invisible substance
of all that is visible.*

(The Bhagavad Gita)

2) World 2: The Intelligence =

**The Expression: visible +
impermanent**

Nature - the world we see.

Makes the Source visible.

Signs that help us to grow.

Incarnation: see and do / be.

3) World 3: The Intention =

**The Interpretation: our own
(inspired?) construct**

Our projections – fiction.

The meaning we impose.

The world of our making.

**The world we change / have
changed.**

knowledge of the world in which we live. But, most important, this is then not only our own inner representation but it is also, as a consequent of it, the world we build artificially and physically (no longer in our heart-mind but in our physical or social environment) through our action when we relate more to our preconceived representations (W3) than to reality (W1 and W2). We then transform physically and mentally and socially our environment (W2) to make it “more compatible” with our artificial representations (W3), rather than with the Source (W1). This forced adaptation of World 2 into World 3 makes World 2 less perceivable as the Expression of W1 but more representative of W3. It means that our action will participate in hiding ever more the Reality (W1) through the screen we interpose between us and World 1 in transforming World 2 into World 3. Finally W3 or our understanding of it becomes more similar to the inspiration by the Intention when we let it be what it is truly. W3 becomes then enlightenment or revelation.

The great contradiction of materialism

If this myth or metaphor (this is only a myth or metaphor!) describes a true relationship between spirit and matter, it means that World 1 (the Source) is the origin of everything.

Yet we do not start our own evolution from this source but we start indeed from the experience we have of World 2 (the Expression), which is not revealing all of its true source (W1) but is only in the image or incarnation of it (W2). The great contradiction is therefore that we observe only an image instead of seeing the source. The expression, beyond which is the Reality that the expression reveals, may well also hide the source in many ways (because it is not the complete revelation) as much as it reveals it (it reveals only glimpses of it). This unclear perception that leads to a form of confusion about what the world truly

is impacts strongly on the way we try to explain (W3) the nature of our world (W1 and W2).

This distortion is pretty evident in what concerns science, religion, art and culture (especially if culture means what we call liberalism or humanism), when each of these ways of thinking and acting pretends to deliver a complete and exclusive explanation of our world at the exclusion of the other approaches.

Science, culture, art and religion have, each of them, tried to propose descriptions and interpretations of what they see. As such they belong to World 3 as interpretations (the Construct), but each one is concerned with only one of these three worlds at the exclusion of the others: religion focuses on World 1 as a description of the Source, science on World 2 as a description of what we see (the Expression), and culture (humanism or liberalism) on World 3 as a description of what we made of the world (the Interpretation).

Art, as a description, is similar to science but relies on a fundamentally different approach as it is not rational but intuitive; in this way it is apart and bridges the gaps between the three worlds depending on the sensitivity of the artist to the presence of these three worlds.

- 1) Science has adopted a very rigorous path that only accepts what it can observe and measure and prove as consistent through experience. It means it has decided that it would only accept what belongs to World 2. This is not a problem as long as it is able to see in World 2 an image of World 1. But it becomes a serious limitation when science refuses to accept that there is anything else than World 2. What you see is what you get; i.e. it excludes World 1 and World 3. And therefore it decides that World 2 is all that there is and refuses also to see that what science generates as knowledge is not an all-encompassing description of World 2 as such, but only an interpretation of what we can grasp and that it belongs therefore to World 3; which is different from World 2 which it is meant to focus on.
- 2) Religion (rather in its institutional, often so rigid and sclerotic forms) adopts also a pretty similar path, but inverted, when it declares that World 2 is despicable because there is indeed only World 1. Or at

least it is what it is perceived to do. In other words it affirms that matter is bad (or inferior) and spirit only is good. It denies in this way the reality and wonder of World 2; and the whole mystery of incarnation (which is yet a fundamental dimension of Christianity or Hinduism and even Buddhism). This denial is in fact in contradiction with the core of the religious message that a deeper expression of religion is meant to deliver. This is a mere regression into pre-rational behaviour, especially when narrow formalised religion prescribes simple beliefs and rites and proposes a closed package of so-called complete revelation and denies that all of World 1 is indeed pure Mystery.

- 3) Culture or humanism (called also often liberalism) does the same when it rejects both science as too narrow and religion as regressive and proposes humanism as the base for a new ethics and social reference - in which humankind becomes the central and main actor (the new god).

The three of these approaches (science, religion, humanism) are in general very rich and creative in what they describe as their own specialised field but they are mistaken in the exclusive character of their own process when they exclude one another, i.e. the other approaches in denying they could be complementary and not competitive contributions. They all tend to deny what is not their own focus of specialisation, i.e. they deny the two other worlds.

It is good to add here a few remarks about the expressions *liberalism* and *humanism*: The English word *liberalism* is a pretty ambiguous expression when, at the same time, on the one hand, it describes a radical freedom of speech or ability to criticise the existing social settings in order to re-establish more justice in place of inequity and, on the other hand, it is also the proper term to define the neo-liberal free market tendency that precisely creates this inequity.

This ambivalent meaning is of course linked with previous historical developments that, because they generated the concept, make it understandable. At the time when in the 19th cent. liberalism was the challenging critic of our society, it became a revolutionary force of liberation from monarchic absolutism, but it was in the hands of the bourgeoisie which defended then (and also later) its own privileges against the working class they used to exploit since the Industrial Revolution. The Revolutions (Industrial and French) reversed the social

pattern when the liberal movement, from a liberation of the middle upper class against absolutism turned into a privileged class of owners (land and industry) against working classes. The liberal movement turned then into a conservative force that tried to defend its own privileges against the more radical force of the Jacobins who defended the working class (the ordinary people). This is the big clash between Girondins and Jacobins that happened in France and not so much in Britain.

It seems also that the Anglo-Saxon culture has always had difficulties to distance itself critically from capitalism and liberal economics, probably for the reason that this is precisely this type of economics that has generated its fantastic wealth and allowed its later domination and spread over the world.

Consequently it would be more appropriate to use here the term *humanism* (it is the word that is in use in French culture) which refers to the deeper nature of our common humanity (in ethic terms), mainly as distinct persons and yet also in our belonging to an extended community (humankind). Like the word *liberalism* the expression *humanism* does not include any reference to science or religion which humanism as well as liberalism tend to deny.

Techno-liberalism seems nowadays to become the dominating force today of an alliance of market and technology with human domination of the creation. Man makes himself God (Homo Deus) by his own power. Or even power over mankind. Dreadful!

The great dance

It is very important to understand that our description of the 3 worlds is only a myth or metaphor and that these three worlds of our metaphor are not separated one from another but on the contrary inter-meshed. They are indeed like the three dimensions in space: length, width and height cannot exist one without the two others. Each one of these three worlds hence penetrates the other two and is ever present in everything. Each one also impacts therefore on the two others.

The Ground of Being is by essence in everything we see, it is in us, because it is the energy that sustains life itself and everything. Without

it, there would be no life, no energy, no atoms, no matter, no nature. World 1 is the Source; but World 2 expresses what it is (makes it visible) and is therefore present also in everything we see or experience. World 3 (interpretation) tries to describe and to explain what one understands about Worlds 1 and 2. World 3 changes in turn what World 2 is and it probably impacts as well by ripple effects back onto World 1. The fact is that the three of these worlds exist as complementary reflections (mirrors) of what is (at least this is the intuition and the meaning of the metaphor) and are narrowly interrelated. They all need each other: World 1 needs World 2 to be perceived, and World 2 needs World 1 to get any content. World 3 needs to become explicit to show how far we have understood or twisted the perception of Worlds 1 and 2. Without World 3, Worlds 1 and 2 would be pure abstractions.

In a similar way we have these three worlds in us: body (W2), mind (W3) and spirit (W1). We need indeed urgently to develop a broader approach that has to integrate the three approaches (W1-3) as a synthesis: an integral understanding which is able to situate itself on three different levels or from three different points of view at the same time. It means that we have to elevate our understanding to a higher level that is ready to integrate the three different approaches without opposition from one to another. It is a great dance. The image we will get can then be in three dimensions: more complete and trustworthy.

Metaphors should not be taken literally but only received as an emphasis on one of many aspects. The meaning of our metaphor is to tell us that the leading energy is the Source although it is not a constraining power that pre-defines everything. Truly the influence of the Ground of Being upon us is indeed restrained by the measure of our acceptance of its influence. It is then “only” a source that contributes in the measure of the space we give him or her. It means first that it is only the source of energy and life and inspiration from which we can freely draw (or not) our respective originality at will. How much do we let life, beauty, hope, love, justice inspire and move us in everyday life? It just depends on us, on how much we accept to remain open to the unknown; nothing is forced upon us.

It means as well that we are meant to go back every time, again and again, to the Source if we want to understand what happens in our

world. This leads us to adopt a regular practice of spiritual reading of the Universe: everything that happens has at the same time, on the one hand, a visual form that makes it perceivable (or also hides partially its true content) and also, on the other hand, a deeper spiritual meaning that is to be related with its Source.

In other words any event has both a formal appearance and a spiritual content; it means two different modes of reading. To well understand what is at hand we need therefore to go back to this spiritual meaning that is not always apparent but may be deciphered when we bother to search further for the true original cause. And we are never sure to be right with our reading and interpretation, although we have to trust that we have been rightly inspired.

Everything is natural / nothing is supernatural

To make more explicit what we mean by a spiritual reference to the Source (W1), we need to say that there is indeed no supernatural process that would make the action of this Source to be of different nature from the laws that govern our physical world. Each phenomenon is indeed natural, i.e. naturally the expression of what it is according to the law of causes (W1) and consequences (W2). Most people in everyday life and even on a spiritual path do not experiment any special so-called supernatural event (vision, lights, apparitions, etc.). The Ground of Being is, as it has been said, not apart from us and from the surrounding world. It is everywhere present (although a discrete presence) precisely because it is the natural force that leads everything, like the force of attraction in the atom, like gravitation, like the force of life and of love. The action of the Source is not distinct from these forces we experience daily in our physical interaction with the world. It means that there is nothing supernatural that is apart.

Everything (all three worlds) is involved in everyday life. Life is therefore the natural thing and the unique and true miracle that happens again and again at each instant for each of us. There is only one Reality. When one grasps this truth, one opens to the true wonder of life: a life beat at each instant. The bird is a good metaphor for this magic instant

that is full of liveliness, of beauty, of immateriality too, yet incarnated, despite or thanks to the few grams of such a light body. Life is magic. This is the wonder: simply breathing in and out, here and now. There is nothing else that matters more! Nothing else than the episodes and anecdotes of our everyday life that reveal the true meaning of everything.

The Trinity (metaphor)

We can do here a bit of theology, more exactly of Christian theology. There is indeed a striking resemblance between these 3 worlds I just described and the Christian myth of the Trinity. This is evidently not by pure chance. The myth of the Trinity intends to describe this complexity of perception we are confronted to as incarnated human beings living in a tension between dualism (Me and the world) and unity (the Source in me).

Let's remind us that a myth is a metaphor that tries to describe a reality in using an analogy. The myth is not the reality but it is only its evocation: a description which does not represent strictly what has to be shown (how could one show the ultimate Reality?) but only evokes a deeper unfathomable truth which cannot be grasped. The metaphor is then a kind of poetic incomplete illustration that does not try to grasp the essence of the topic but only orients our glance into the right direction where sight is not limited by a closed description.

As everybody knows, the Christian Trinity describes God as three persons in one Unity: it is composed of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. By analogy, as it is a single unity composed of three persons, it may also be described basically like the three different natures of the fire which yet remains one single entity: energy + light + heat, in the equation $3 = 1$. It means that the Godhead or Ground of Being, according to this poetic evocation, is composed of three persons and yet remains One.

1) 1st person: the Father (World 1) is the invisible energy of the fire, the Source and force of life which gives itself freely and animates everything. He is the Origin but he remains invisible. He is the Creator, not so much because he made the Earth and the Universe in seven days (this is also only a poetic metaphor), but principally because he is the constant source of all life, the strength of love, the deep nature and consciousness of everything that exists. He is, at each instant that passes by, the energy and life which supports everything. In this way he is in the Big Bang but also in the transformations of every day. He is the energy of life itself. Without him, everything returns to nothingness.

He gives himself unconditionally, yet he leaves us free to choose to recognise him, to accept him in our lives or to ignore him. He does not impose himself. He is all powerful but remains discrete (powerless), hidden in a way which remains yet always accessible. Like our own heart he is not visible but he is essential for maintaining us in life. He is invisible like the wind which cannot be seen but can be noticed and observed through its effects, in the movement of the leaves of the trees. If we let him do, he nourishes our lives, lifts us, guides us, inspires us. He is the meaning of our own evolution that we have to trust because it will lead us to peace and joy. When we trust in him and let him guide our lives, his power of life (which is not imposing) can flow through our presence, to be given to others.

2) 2nd person: the Son (World 2) is the light of the fire, the Expression or incarnation which makes the Father (the energy of the fire) visible; the Son gives himself, in humility and gentleness, to reveal the Source. He is the Expression and materialisation of what is invisible. Since the beginning of the world he has been the transformation of what cannot be seen into what can be perceived. He is the expression of creation into signs and matter. He is by excellence the expression of love, the true love which helps us (all

beings) to grow, to become more real and mature, more aware and integrated into the general movement of creation of the cosmos. Light makes things visible. Shadow is what remains where light does not shine.

The man Jesus is only the human figure who incarnated the person of the Son into a human being, in a certain time in history, two thousand years ago. By giving himself he made the generosity of the Father perceptible as well as his own because they are united in one will. He made known that the Father is a gentle power who gives himself. He did this not so much by obedience to the Father but because he is of the same nature as the Father and he is therefore love too. He gave himself of his own will because it is his true nature, and it is also our same true nature that he reveals to us.

The Son is present in us, in our surroundings, in nature because these material realities (nature as much as us) are expressions of who the invisible Reality is, as we are also in our essence the expressions of this true love that needs to find ways of expression. He is the Revelation. He brings then a deep change in us when we slowly start to understand the true nature of his gift. He is Action of transformation. Salvation does not consist in a magic deleting of our awkward nature. No, it is indeed a very different process; it consists in fact mainly in this deep transformation in ourselves (metanoia or turn-around of our mind) of our own perception of what is the sacred and true dimension of life, and of the true essence of ourselves, and of the others. Salvation is not the sponge over the list of our debts; it is a fundamental revolution in our own understanding of life.

- 3) 3rd person: the Spirit (World 3 – as interpretation and inspiration, rather than the illusory world of our making) is the heat of the fire, the energy of love which unites everything and inspires us on the path of search for Truth. He is the Movement which leads us in the everlasting dance of life. The power of the Spirit is a unifying force

which creates Unity beyond the frequent fragmentation of our perceptions and inevitable tensions generated by differences and complementarity. Love is the linking force between what is perceived as antagonistic tendencies. We see “Either / Or” when we should rather perceive “And / As well”. The link becomes relationship.

Rather than established by a single monolithic power, unity relies on the balance of different and often opposed forces. Antagonisms provide indeed the best way to manage balance; they may do this much better than an authoritarian power that intends to control all forces by itself alone. Antagonisms are necessary to keep the balance because they participate in keeping the whole together, in an equilibrium between acting and antagonistic reacting forces. For instance the arm has two muscles which work in antagonistic ways, yet the arm remains one because the antagonism is kept in balance by the sense of equilibrium and the interaction of the two forces.

On the other hand, the Spirit is also the energy of transformation because life is constant change. Nothing lasts, nothing remains, all is flowing. Transformation is growth in maturity and awareness, adaptation to the flow of life. Like the wind, the Spirit is leading us where we go, without us knowing where. He is the guide on our spiritual path.

Remember: this is only a metaphor, a myth that tries to reveal an unfathomable depth and mystery which remains beyond words. It happens that these three persons are called today by names in the masculine form. This is very disturbing because these entities are indeed as much feminine as masculine; the three of them are of yin and yang natures in equal measures. The Hebrew and Greek traditions - that were shaped on the patriarchal model of the early centuries - have distorted these images and narrowed the extent of their true identities in giving them dominant masculine attributes, except for the third one that had a feminine name in Hebrew (ruah) yet neuter in Greek (pneuma).

The anti-trinity (metaphor)

Now, there is another aspect of this trinity which is very interesting. Our market society has twisted this original image of our Source of life into an illusory search for profit, wealth and power. As Ivan Illich used to say, the most dangerous evil is not the force of destruction that opposes bluntly revelation but the slight twist of the truth that may, by mimicry, reverse this truth into its contrary. It is precisely what our market society has done, while mimicking the original pattern we just described into a false appearance that seems built on the same premises but is not.

The anti-trinity of our materialistic society is also composed of 3 elements, of 3 idols which are also leading forces, yet of very different natures:

- 1) 1st idol: Power, not as a force of life that is the discrete source of vitality and love, but as a force of domination, exploitation and destruction. Also invisible in itself.
- 2) 2nd idol: Technology, not as a force of gentleness that gives himself as a servant, but as a force of control and manipulation that subjugates. Also expression and materialisation of the power.
- 3) 3rd idol: Market and Consumption, not as a force of love that inspires and unites, but as a force of greed, accumulation and retention that fragments and divides. Also a force that moves us, but where we do not want to go.

But this is only a false image, an illusion, a virtuality. What matters is the original Trinity and what it represents for our daily life. In this opposition between Trinity and anti-trinity, there is a hidden aspect that is pretty vicious, because of some symmetries or analogies (the mimicries or twists). We have in fact too well absorbed the logic of the anti-trinity because we bath in it at each instant of our urbanised life and it impregnates most of our representations in a way we are not aware of. It is then essential to cleanse our perceptions of this influence.

Because Trinity and anti-trinity are not compatible. We have to choose which one we will trust. This is the great metanoia or turn-around of mind we tried to describe earlier.

If you look more attentively at this metaphor, you will discern a striking parallel with the experience of Brahman, Atman and Purusha in Hinduism or with Emptiness in Buddhism and Zen. Emptiness is Form; Form is Emptiness as the Heart Sutra says.