



Exotericism and Esotericism

Jean Duval

The distinction that exists between interior and exterior is not a human convention. It is a natural fact. It is the same in what concerns esotericism and exotericism. Esotericism refers to what is intimately interior, vertical, unchangeable, incommunicable, clear, simple, free from war, tranquil. Exotericism refers to what is exterior – a garment or a shell –, horizontal, versatile, reasonably discursive, veiled, complex, war engaged, troubled.

These are two separate domains and they do not mingle, they do not oppose for there is no common measure they share. Esotericism is like a diamond: translucent and hard. It cuts everything that doesn't rise to its "nature". It is not in need of any protection and we would deceive ourselves to think that exotericism could provide it. *Ātma* doesn't need protection from *jīva*. On the contrary, the Law is in need of a Way, otherwise it couldn't bear the name it bears. The Law takes its orthodoxy from the Kernel it covers. It is true that our humanity couldn't follow a Way without the prohibitions and the guidance of a master, however this is only true concerning the present humanity. And even regarding the latter, there are exceptions, and we mean by that, extraordinary spiritually-gifted individuals that are on the way, being beyond the Law. An esotericism could fairly well remain uncovered, thus unprotected by exotericism, for it is "naturally" unreachable by demonic forces. The core needs no protection for it is beyond the grasp of mediocrity. That is why a mystery is a mystery, even if it stands bare in front of everybody. And actually, such is the case. How many can grasp It and escape this mundane prison? It is beyond the power of exotericism to grasp the full meaning of esotericism.

Today, we see authors interested in traditional studies trying somehow to promote an "eso-exoteric" perspective, for different reasons. During the last 50 years individuals like Schuon, Borella, Florin Mihaescu, etc., in order to accord their religious beliefs with Tradition and René Guénon's teachings, invented an "eso-exoteric" domain, which, of course, is pure fiction, and it will be no surprise to see after that someone advertising a "sacro-profane" society.

The expression "eso-exotericism" is nonsense. It has absolutely no real meaning and it is used in order to plead for granting the lesser the quality it lacks. And this is a rather democratic approach. Let's take the case of Christianity. Is a spiritual tradition in need of human defense? Is the Kernel in need of anything? We think not. Then why do we feel the need of adorning the exterior with the mystery it lacks? On the other hand, Christianity was not in need of an exterior but the exterior was in need of Christianity,

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that is why Christ *sacrificed* Himself, or in other words, the Kernel allowed Itself to bleed for the shell. We shouldn't think revelation is conditioned by the contingent. For example, this is why nobody can tell or predict the Apocalypse. Even if the signs overwhelm us, who are we to measure the power granted to us to carry the burden of ignorance? We cannot imagine God acting in haste for the End of Times approaches. This is rather hilarious. It is pointless to consider from a contingent perspective realities that are of a metaphysical order. Everything that happens is already written, consumed and born simultaneously in God's Will. Moreover, although from a contingent point of view it seems that historical events happen because of a struggle or a competition of any sort, they come into existence as possibilities of manifestation and not as a result of human strife. Even if the contingent conditions seem to be absolutely favorable for one thing or another, things happen as God wills. This is one of the reasons why sometimes we stare dumbly in utter pain. It is not our job to question His ways, but to walk on them.

Christianity did not sprung from the Judaic tradition but from the Kernel Itself, being the manifestation of an Avatāra. Christianity is a new tradition and not a form of Judaism, so much the less *Jewish esotericism*. If Christ's descent, it was for the spiritual renovation of the West, since this is the barren soil, this is the blind law and these are the dusky times that needed Christ's mission. Is such a mission in lack of the Kernel? Does such a mission need human help? The Spirit is not historically conditioned but history is spiritually invested, as all things are.

The "eso-exoteric error" brings others with it. For example, we cannot say that the Judaic tradition lacks the esoteric path, since Kabbalah is nothing else than that, and it is impossible to accept that Christianity is the esoteric aspect of Judaism, and Judaism is the exoteric aspect of Christianity. It means just to play with words in considering the Judaic tradition an „esoteric exotericism" and the Christian tradition an „exoteric esotericism," as some people would try to advance. At the same time, John the Baptist's baptism was not an initiation into an esoteric path, since it was given to everybody; and it did not become afterwards an exposed esotericism, because such a thing does not exist: an exposed esotericism is not anymore esotericism. Even less comprehensible are expressions like "interior exotericism," "outer initiation" and "inner initiation," related to the "eso-exoteric" perspective: they are just fantasies.

The "eso-exoteric error" is, unfortunately, not only a fantasy, but a dangerous approach, since it will lead to false conclusions, to a false perception of the three "monotheist" traditions, and consequently will just increase the confusion that reigns over our modern world today.

We should remind ourselves that the study of tradition is meant as a support for the spiritual realization and not for cultural purpose, political feuds, inter-traditional fights, not for gossip, not for posing as defenders of this or that way, or of this or that individual. This study, unlike any other in our times, is meant for a personal and intimate effort towards the realization of the Self.

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Guénon wrote for his *General Introduction*¹ two chapters entitled *Tradition and Religion* and *Esotericism and Exotericism*. Let us extract some ideas that would set the general background of this article. A tradition doesn't take necessarily the form of religion, whereas a religion – in order to possess its orthodox quality – has to follow a spiritual way. That which is traditional is Super-rational Holy Breath.

Guénon states that for the Westerner the doctrine (the rational-discursive teaching about God) has to have a sentimental ingredient. In India or in the far-eastern tradition, the doctrine is purely metaphysical and the moral law derived from the sentimental ingredient present in the Western doctrine, in order to keep away frail (psychic-oriented) individuals from the inferno of passions, lacks. From this follows that poorly intellectually-gifted individuals of these latter traditions limit themselves to the following of the rite. And this seems quite a monstrous way of life for the Westerner, and maybe it really is thus in what concerns his/her nature, which is quite sentimentally oriented. This is one good reason why one should stick to his/her own tradition.

Since they lack the moral law, they have no interest in individualism. This is inconceivable for the Westerner. And we shouldn't damn either one because each of us functions according to the corresponding law, or in other words, to the correspondent nature². What is really monstrous is to implement by force allogeneous law. It is quite clear that the exoteric West doesn't need the Indian, the far-eastern, not even the Muslim tradition, but it needs restoration of Christianity to its purely spiritual roots, or, if this is God's Will, the apocalyptic second coming of Christ. But, in the same time, it is quite curious how the Westerner fear the East's lack of interest for the individual, its great mass of people and, ironically, its reception of our modernity: the Westerners fear China for it has adopted communism and for its crescent capitalism, they fear both India and the Far-East for its technical, cybernetic, nuclear capacity, they fear Islam for killing the Westerners with the weapons they sold them, etc. Was there a time that the Westerner was not frightened? And what is quite hilarious, we fear the Far-Easterner because this individual cannot be psycho-analyzed. However, the Westerners ask their modern fellows: how is the sensitivity of the individual respected and cared for in this mass-one-class-one-sex capitalism, how was it respected in modern West's previous gifts to the world, such as, Communism, Nazism, Colonialism, Proselytism, Inquisition? Maybe the Westerners should start to fear themselves and not the other. Maybe the Westerners should start hurt themselves and not the other, maybe the Westerners should really try to find Christ and not kill the other because of their frustrating ignorance and impotence. Maybe this sensitive Westerner should try to feel about his own kind and not about Indian widows or veiled Muslim women.

Exoterically we are different, in the sense that we perceive differences. Esoterically we are One. The passing from alterity to identity necessitates the transfiguration of mind, the organ of dual perception, to the point of the intimate communion which is innate and

¹ See **René Guénon**, *Introduction générale a l'étude des doctrines hindoues*,

² In its most general and deeper meaning, *Law* refers to *the nature*, that is, to the conditionings that define one state of the being.

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cosmologically common (*al-Wāhidiyah*) to all individuals. This unutterable communion, constituting the level of esotericism that corresponds to the Lesser Mysteries, is silently eloquent within. The perception of truth in this case takes place within fire, understood as one of the five cosmological elements. The unique nature (*al-Wāhidiyah*) is perceived in the warmth quality of light, which is the vital breath. *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2: 7).* Through this warmth, man lies within an eternal relation with his Maker, and if we wish to say this in another manner, we could consider that the warmth quality of the *tāijasa bhūta* is where man transcends earth, water and air to represent the unique (*al-Wāhidiyah*) manifestation of God on earth. This stage of initiation doesn't correspond yet to the Divine Mystery but to the Divine Eloquence. The former is beyond individuality to grasp, the latter is futile to express. All in relation with the center has the quality of incredible intimacy, recognition, familiarity, etc. It is there where words fail, not because they are impotent but because they are useless. A different kind of language is used here, and this language is the *lingua Syriaca* – the eloquent idiom of Love. From here on follows the transcendence of manifested bliss in order to “liberate” God from manifestation.

We should mention just one more thing. Within the individual domain, the silent comprehension is *empatheia*, which literally means *within suffering*. This is a riddle. And this is the Divine Eloquence of man. *Empatheia* does not name the bliss but veils it and holds it in its bosom. *Burning flame, dark flame, warming flame, bright flame...*