



# The Great Triad

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If these latest considerations are set beside what was said at the beginning, it will readily be appreciated that the traditional idea of 'Universal Man,' despite the name, has absolutely nothing anthropomorphic about it. However, while all anthropomorphism is strictly anti-metaphysical and must be rejected as such, it remains to be shown in what sense and under what conditions a certain anthropocentrism may nevertheless be regarded as legitimate.

In the first place, from the cosmic viewpoint mankind performs a 'central' function in respect of the degree of Existence that it belongs to, but in respect of that degree alone, and not, of course, in respect of universal Existence, in which that degree is merely one among an indefinite multitude, with nothing entitling it to a special position as compared with the others. In this regard, then, there can be no question of anthropomorphism except in a restricted and relative sense, yet one sufficient to justify the analogical transposition of the idea of man which gives rise to the term 'Universal Man.'

From another viewpoint, it has been shown already that every human individual (or for that matter any manifestation of a being in any state) contains the possibility of making himself the center with respect to the total being. Thus it can be said that he is virtually the center, so to speak, and that the goal he must set before himself is to turn that virtuality into a reality. Accordingly, even before such realization, and having this in view, the being is entitled to place himself ideally at the center. Since he is in the human state, his special perspective naturally endows that state with a preponderant importance which it cannot have from the standpoint of pure metaphysics; and this preponderance will be justified *a posteriori* so to speak in the case when the being, after taking the state in question as its starting-point and basis for realization, succeeds in really making it the central state of its totality, corresponding to the horizontal plane of coordinates in our geometrical representation. This implies, in the first place, that the being in question has been reintegrated into the center of the human state itself (it is in this reintegration that the restitution of the 'primordial state' consists), and thereafter that the center of the human state itself has become identified, for this being, with the universal center. In the first phase the integral human state is realized, in the second the totality of the being.

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According to the Far-Eastern tradition, the 'true man' (*cheng jen*) is he who, having realized the return to the 'primordial state', is thenceforth established for good in the 'Invariable Middle,' and thereby escapes from the vicissitudes of the 'wheel of existence.' Above this degree is that of 'transcendent man' (*shen jen*), who strictly speaking is no longer a man, because he has risen above humanity and is wholly emancipated from its specific conditions; he is one who has achieved total realization and attained the 'Supreme Identity,' and such a one has therefore truly become 'Universal Man.' This cannot be said of 'true man,' yet he can be described as at least virtually 'Universal Man,' in the sense that as he has no further states to go through in distinctive mode, because he has passed from the circumference to the center, the human state will necessarily become, for him, the central state of the total being, even though it is not yet so effectively.

It now becomes clear in what sense the middle term of the 'Great Triad' envisaged by the Far-Eastern tradition should be taken; the three terms are 'Heaven' (*Tien*), 'Earth' (*Ti*), and 'Man' (*jen*), with the third playing the part of 'mediator' between the other two, uniting their two natures in himself. One may truly say, even of individual man, that he participates in 'Heaven' and 'Earth', which are identified with *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, the two poles of universal manifestation; but there is nothing here that is peculiar to the case of man, and one may say the same of any manifested being. In order that man may be effectively able to play the part in question in respect of universal Existence, he must have reached the point of situating himself at the center of all things, in other words he must have attained at least the state of 'true man'; even then, he will actually perform that function for one degree of Existence alone, and only in the state of 'transcendent man' is this possibility realized in its plenitude. This is tantamount to saying that the true 'mediator,' in whom the union of 'Heaven' and 'Earth' is fully accomplished by the synthesis of all the states, is 'Universal Man,' who is identical with the Word; and, be it noted in passing, many aspects of the Western tradition, even from a purely theological point of view, find here their deeper meaning.

Again, as 'Heaven' and 'Earth' are two complementary principles, one active and the other passive, their union can be represented by the figure of the 'Androgyne,' and this takes us back to what was said earlier in regard to 'Universal Man.' Here again, every manifested being participates in the two principles and this is expressed by the presence of the two terms *yang* and *yin*, but in different proportions and always with one or the other predominating; the perfectly balanced union of the two terms can be realized only in the 'primordial state.' As for the total being, there can no longer be any question of a distinction between *yang* and *yin*, which have then re-entered the principal indifferentiation; accordingly, one can no longer even speak of the 'Androgyne,' which already implies a certain duality in unity itself, but only of a 'neutrality' which is that of Being regarded in itself, beyond the distinction between 'essence' and 'substance,' 'Heaven' and 'Earth,' *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. Only in respect to manifestation, therefore, can the couple *Purusha-Prakriti* be identified, as was said earlier, with 'Universal Man'; and this is clearly the point of view from which the latter is the mediator between 'Heaven' and 'Earth,' for these two terms themselves disappear as soon as one passes beyond manifestation.