

The Absolute Dualism

Of Mani

or The Gnostic paradox

of unity and duality

When we speak about Manichaeism, we seldom think of that exceptional man, that Messenger of Light, called Mani. Seven centuries after Buddha, two centuries after Christ, he who spoke of himself as the "Seal of the Prophets", being all at once a mystic, a poet and a musician, transmitted such a powerful vision of the world and of life that it spread from Africa to China.

What remains today of that tolerant, non-violent, unifying "Religion of Light" which embraced the world and moved so many souls for a thousand years ? Why was Manichaeism - so revolutionary, so deeply humanist, religious and universal - relentlessly persecuted by all empires and religions?

Today, as everything seems to face us with a world-wide spreading of the struggle between Light and Darkness, the dualistic spirituality of Manichaeism, which was the most widespread of all Gnostic movements, deserves more than ever to be re-discovered.

There is much talk, nowadays, about a "**religious come-back**" within our so-called **secular** society, as we can see, for instance, through the debate on private schools, the question of the Islamic veil, or the problem of sects. Such a come-back seems to frighten people because it is perceived as a step backwards, returning the so-called **reasonable** or **profane homo religiosus** (as expressed by Mircea Eliade), as opposed to the *homo sapiens*, or *homo scientificus*, of our modern and post-modern societies. But we can ask ourselves, along with Heidegger, if we really do think; if today, in the present state of events, we actually are "rational" beings, and if there is not a missing link between man and Man.

This fearing and recoiling should not surprise us for it is typical of "**misoneism**", that is, resistance to change, a phenomenon which is natural in human beings, but strongly increased in times of great trouble, as we are now experiencing at the end of the 20th century and the dawn of the third millennium. As we witness a resurgence of fundamentalism throughout the world, whether Hindu, Muslim, Jewish or Christian, it is essential that we centre our reflection on what could be called the **spiritual question**, in new terms, and ask ourselves : **a religious come-back or a spiritual come-back?**

Spiritual experience and religious experience

Reflecting on the historical origin of great human civilisations and cultures, we most often encounter a religious phenomenon. The origin of a religion will most often be found in the spiritual experience of its founder(s). Thus, spirituality and religion may be distinguished from one another, as shown by the etymological approach - the word "spiritual" comes from *spiritus*, breath, essence, principle, what is **first(1)** -, since the spiritual experience always comes **first**, before the religious experience, which merely institutes the spiritual experience, often solidifies it. The present development of various forms of religious fundamentalism now developing throughout the world bears witness to this fact.

While there are many works concerning the religious approach to date, we must admit that spiritual experiences have only rarely been the subject of serious, scientific studies. Among these works, I would mainly like to quote the works of the Orientalist and Islamologist Henry Corbin(2) and the thesis by P. Gast, a lawyer and specialist in the philosophy of law, the only author, to my knowledge, to have taken direct interest

in the criteria of spiritual experience. I would mainly like to emphasise the following definition from his remarkable work :

We shall call "spiritual experience" the "non-differentiated" state of consciousness.

(transcendental and primary perception, where the subject, the object, and the knowledge relationship between the two are one and the same) (3)

From our point of view, due to its incomplete character, this proposed definition requires further precision and must be expanded, in so far as it excludes Gnostic and theosophical western dualist thought (as well as eastern dualist thought, such as the *Samkhya*, which can be found at the heart of the *Bagavad - Gitâ*, probably the greatest text of the "non-dualist" tradition!), to the advantage of non-dualist philosophies, mainly of eastern origin. Neither it does not allow for a distinction between an ***authentic spiritual*** experience and a ***psychic*** experience, whether mystical or occult. It is therefore necessary to establish a rational basis for the concept of spirituality.

Considering spirituality, is first to show how the very idea of spirituality disappeared from the western landscape. Then, the role and influence of spirituality in the field of thought must be located historically, to establish its possible legitimacy, and to foresee reintroduction of the concept into the philosophical field. This sets the principles, by proposing a definition, a typology and criteria to differentiate spirituality from mysticism, religiosity, esoterism, occultism, or science, for there exists a science of the Spirit, as their exists a science of Matter. However, contrary to the current mentality which attempts to unite Logic and Mystique (according to Wittgenstein), these two concepts must be clearly differentiated, since the axioms which found them are radically antinomic. At this point, I would like to specify that, in order to establish the new criteria which implicitly underlie my entire process and which will be examined below, I mostly relied upon two sources : the teachings of Jan Van Rijckenborgh (4), to whom we are indebted for re-introducing the Gnostic idea and thought into the Western world; and the teachings of Vimala Thakar (5), whom I had the opportunity to meet during my trip to India in 1995 while visiting Krishnamurti schools. Both set a clear and precise separation between ordinary consciousness, cosmic consciousness, and spiritual consciousness (6). Some searchers, whether spiritual or scholarly, may be surprised by the connection made here between two spiritual beings belonging to different traditions, one western the other eastern, one non-dualist the other dualist. However, it is only an apparent contradiction, as we will attempt to demonstrate.

It seems that the time has come to raise the spiritual question again, leaving behind the confrontation and opposition between dualism and non-dualism, to which it is generally limited in the West. The dualist Gnosis, mainly Manichean, will become a theoretical tool in this context, a "point of view", to enable us to stand back and raise the question again : ***what is spirituality really?***

The Gnosis, the third element
of Western civilisation

Today, from our point of view it is impossible, for a serious searcher to ignore the Gnostic vision of the world and mankind. Likewise, no philosopher searching for knowledge can possibly ignore the decisive contributions of modern scientific thought, such as relativity, quantum physics, neuro-science or communication theories, which upset and question our vision of the world and mankind.

The goal of the association Pistis Sophia (7), created in February 1996, is, as indicated in its declaration of principle, to renovate Gnostic thought, the **heretic** thought "par excellence", which we will refer to as the **third element of western civilisation**, and to spread Henry Corbin's **spiritual hermeneutics**. We will see that, as a methodological tool, the latter is an interesting alternative to the development of various types of integrism, whether *spiritual*, religious or scientific. Spiritual thought, referred to as wisdom, theosophy, or Gnosis in the past, to mark the difference from philosophy, science, or theology, is a great unknown in the Western world. For this very reason, it often encounters serious misunderstandings concerning its essence, at times, and reluctance or antipathy, at other times.

For a long time, people argued that Greek reasoning and the Christian faith represented the dominant forces of western culture. Greek reasoning was founded on rational thought, and the Christian faith on an authoritarian interpretation of the divine revelation. But from the first centuries of our era until today, there has been a subjacent undercurrent opposed to pure rationality as well as to dogmatic faith : the Gnosis.

The word Gnosis comes from the Greek *Gnosis*, and signifies knowledge, knowledge through revelation. This represents living knowledge, founded on inner enlightenment, which reveals the true nature of the world and man to a consciousness which searches for this knowledge. If Gnosticism, in the most precise sense, is all esoteric doctrines from the beginnings of Christianity, the Gnosis itself is **non-temporal and universal**.

As emphasised by H. Corbin, something in the way a Bohemian, or a Swedenborgh understands the Genesis, the Exodus, or the Revelations resembles the way Islamic Chi'ites, or Sufi theosophists from the Ibn'Arabi school interpret the Koran. The same state of mind seems to have allowed the Iranian prophet, Mani, to integrate such apparently opposed teachings as Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity, and Zoroastrism (an inner attitude intending to show the unity of all Gnosis, also be found in India with Sankara, at the heart of Islam with Sohrawardi, or in Rosicrucian Gnosis with Jan Van Rijckenborgh). Let us return to Henry Corbin's definition of chi'ism and prophetic philosophy in Islam, as the "esoteric element of Prophecy" - etymologically, in Greek, the word esoteric designates "inner aspects" as opposed to exoteric, "outer aspects" - and we will define the Gnosis as "esoterism, the hidden side of great universal religions". Manichaeism, which we will now examine, may be considered as the most influential, the most highly perfected, and most typical form of Gnosticism, and, more extensively, of universal Gnostic thought, appearing on the fringes of official Christianity during the three first centuries of our era.

Manichaeism, a religion of Light

To speak about Mani and Manichaeism is a heroic act nowadays, considering the marks left in men's memories by Mani's opponents. We are fully aware that when someone wishes to attack someone else, to bring out the simplistic character of his philosophy, his thought, his conceptions, the term used is a Manichean. However, what Mani brought, what Manichaeism conveyed, was precisely the opposite. Mani proved the unity of all Gnosis. He taught Christians the deep meaning of universal Christianity, explained the message of Ahura-Mazda to Iranian magi, showed the Buddhists the path to illumination indicated by Buddha. The Church of Light, which he founded to convey the mysteries of Perfect Man, enlightened millions of souls for over a thousand years.

Such clarity, such light obviously arouses adversity and jealousy. Because they did not understand his enlightening speech, religious men and politicians attempted to destroy the luminous thought of Mani, to produce the image which remains, the image of simplistic dualism.

Why was Manichaeism, so deeply humanistic, religious and universal, continually persecuted by all empires and religions?

What sacred barriers did Mani disturb? What interdicts did he trespass? Why such obstinacy, as questioned by Amin Maalouf in his novel "The Gardens of Light", devoted to the Iranian prophet?

If we want to understand why Manichaeism was ***the most persecuted religion in history***(8), according to specialists, we must delve into the essence of absolute dualism, typical of Mani's thought, and reject all religious or occult illusions.

The seven senses

In his teaching, Mani sets the principle of two opposed and non-reconcilable orders of nature : the order of Light and the order of Darkness. To escape from the order of Darkness, the Manichean pupil must rebuild the Man of Light through a threefold process, in three steps. The Doctrine of Two Principles and Three Steps, which Mani summarised as a myth, is the result of an inner vision, a Revelation.

Mani was **a visionary**, in the strict sense of the term. His knowledge was founded on a Revelation, and he conveyed what he discovered through images and symbols, rather than through concepts. From this first-hand knowledge, Mani renewed the vision of God, the world, and man, inherited from previous Gnostic systems.

According to Gnostics, there are two types of visions of the world. Unlike the common idea, the consciousness sees, not the eye. The eye is the mirror of the soul, and the nature of the consciousness which drives us, which determines our image of the world, our perception of events, our ideologies and our sensitivity. This is why it may be said that, as expressed by the ancient sages of India, *the world is in the soul*, and all knowledge is structured in the consciousness. We will refer to the first vision as a vision with five senses, and the second as a vision with seven senses. While we are familiar with the first, since it enables us to apprehend the world, the second remains a mystery for us.

Once again, according to Gnostics - and as clearly testified by Indian spiritual science - in addition to the five senses recognised by science, there are two latent senses, the activity of which is intimately linked to the "hidden" functions of two internal secretion glands, the hypothalamus and the pineal gland, and to the corresponding *chakras*. Our ancestors referred to these two new powers of consciousness, which allowed for the discovery of *"the pure and unknown half of the world"* (9), Intuition and Knowledge, or Understanding and Vision.

A person for whom inner vision unfolds, who physically experiences the reality of **the other world**, which is not the beyond, sees not only the three-dimensional world, but a four-dimensional world, a vision of the world in which the seven senses participate.

Throughout the history of mankind, this difference in vision, and the consequences implied, was the profound reason for opposition to Gnostics, who emphasised that our nature is imperfect, impermanent and incomplete, and unveiled the existence of another realm of life, unknown to men. Where ordinary man sees merely one creation, Awakened Man, the Gnostic, sees two worlds, two creations, as confirmed by Mani's testimony (10), "the Buddha of Light", concerning his Awakening and the Reality which revealed itself to his inner spiritual eye :

"I grew up and came of age during the era of Ardashir, King of Persia. The very year Ardashir...(died), the living Paraclet (11) came down upon me, and spoke to me. He showed me the hidden mystery, that had been inaccessible to the worlds and to generations : the mystery of Depth and Height; he showed me

the mystery of Light and Darkness, the mystery of conflict, and the great War that Darkness has instigated; he showed me how Light (thrust aside? conquered?) Darkness by their union and how this world was established (as a consequence)... He enlightened me, about how Adam, the first man, was formed. He taught me about the mystery of the Tree of Knowledge of which Adam ate, because of which his eyes could see; the mystery of the Apostles who were sent to the world to choose the churches (that is, to found religions)... Thus the Parcelet showed me everything that has been and will be, everything that the eye sees, that the ear hears and that the mind thinks. Through the Parcelet I learned to know all things, I saw the All through him, and I became a single body and a single spirit. (Kephalaïa, chapt. 1, 14, 29-15, 24). (12)

Mani's testimony draws our attention because of its unusual character in "spiritual" literature. In fact, autobiographical texts concerning inner experiences are extremely rare among Gnostics, contrary to "mystical" authors, such as Saint John of the Cross, Saint Theresa of Avila, Hildegarde de Bingen etc... It may even be the only example in Gnostic literature. At this point, I would like to emphasise the fact that, according to Mani, Awakening is a paradoxical experience, since it is both ***absolutely non-dual*** - it is a discovery of the world of Unity - and ***absolutely dual*** - the Seer clearly describes the existence of two orders of nature : the World of Light and the World of Darkness, the World of Spirit and the World of Matter. I would like to recall that, etymologically, the word paradox comes from the Greek *paradoxo* and means "*something contrary to opinion*". **Paradox**, according to the definition given by Y. Barrel, "*is that which astonishes or shocks because we are confronted with a situation where a being or a thing is or seems to be, does or seems to do, thinks or seems to think, both one thing and its opposite*" (13).

This exceptional testimony by the Iranian Prophet - similar descriptions can be found at other moments in the history of the spiritual thought, in the works of Gnostic theosophists such as Jacob Boehme, Sohrawardi, Jan Van Rijckenborgh...- is the most perfect illustration of what visionary or paradoxical thought is, and in itself justifies the definition we give of the spiritual experience, following P. Gast, to differentiate it from mystical or occult experience :

Definition 1 : We will refer to the experience of duality, characterised by the differentiated state of consciousness (relative dualism), as "***material***" experience.

Men corresponding to this experience of consciousness will be called **asleep**.

Definition 2 : We will refer to the experience of Unity or relative non-duality, which may be reached in a mystical or occult manner, characterised by an undifferentiated state-of-consciousness or ***cosmic consciousness***, and the temporary abolition of the subject-object duality, as "***psychic***" experience.

Men corresponding to this experience of consciousness will be called **enlightened**.

Definition 3 : We will refer to the experience of Being ("I am") or absolute, stable non-duality, characterised by the definitive overcoming of the undifferentiated state-of-consciousness or ***cosmic consciousness***, and the disappearance of the self, as "***spiritual***" experience. In order to be considered "***spiritual and authentic***", the experience must not only testify to Unity, (absolute non-duality) but also include testimony of the existence of two opposed and non-reconcilable orders of nature and the separation between Spirit and Matter (absolute dualism).

Men corresponding to this experience of consciousness will be called **awakened**.

To understand why Manichaeism, through the testimony and teachings of its founder, and dualist Gnosis in general, always raised problems for religious consciousness, and scientific reasoning - we see no fundamental difference between these fields of human thought - we would like to briefly recall the axioms upon which our western logic is based, principles which today still govern our daily behaviour. Until recently, these principles ruled over philosophical and scientific thought :

The principle of non-contradiction. "*The same attribute cannot both belong and not belong to a given subject with the same relation and at the same time.*" The following principles are based on this principle :

The principle of identity. "What is, is; what is not, is not."

The principle of the excluded third. "All things are or are not", in Latin : *tertium non datur*, there is no third solution, this expression has also been translated by "exclusion of the middle".

As expressed by J.-P. Schnetzler, "That third axiom, which upholds the other two, is contested by certain modern logic theories, which add "impossible to decide" to the values of right and wrong. The discovery of the quantum world in modern physics and the emergence of couples of mutually exclusive contradictory elements, for instance **the wave and the corpuscle**, (and others) generated **new logic theories** intended to overcome the contradiction. Basarab Nicolescu argued for an included third theory of logic where the principle of non-contradiction consists in : a, non-a, but also T, the included third. This tertiary formulation implies the existence of at least two levels of reality. What appears as contradictory at the level of basic angles, (**the wave and the corpuscle** in the example of the particle), is resolved at the highest level, as a quantum." (14)

There is also a quadruple logical formulation, the tetralemma, which is mainly found in Buddhist type eastern philosophical teachings, but also in Plato, who was Aristotle's master before the latter left the Academy to found his own school, the Lycée. The tetralemma can be stated as : being, non-being, being and non-being, neither being nor non-being. The third proposition, being and non-being, brings out a paradox, the fourth solves this paradox but becomes non-operational. The previous examples enable us highlight the existence of two forms of logic underlying our way of thinking : **exclusive logic**, which we will refer to as western, understood in the metaphysical, not geographical sense of the term, as H. Corbin and Sohrawardi have shown, and **inclusive or eastern logic**. Spiritual thought on the whole, and more specifically Manichaeism, is clearly based on this second form of logic. As for all complex phenomenon (from *complexus*, woven together), Manichaeism requires a **paradoxical and multi-referential** approach to be apprehended and understood. To accept the paradox, to enter into a paradoxical mode of thought, is thus to accept the joint presence of contradictory elements within a given message. This same paradoxical formulation, clearly apparent in Mani's testimony, can be found in the teachings of the Iranian prophet (15) on another level. We will now describe the basic outline of these teachings.

Mani's absolute dualism

Mani's mission was to bring to the world the Revelation of the two Natures. In his cosmogony, Mani asserted the co-existence of two principles from the Beginning, Light and Darkness, Good and Evil, Spirit and Matter, as revealed in the beginning of the "Epistle of Foundation", preserved for us by Saint Augustine : "From the Beginning, there have been two principles ..."

The Manichean system relies on this **axiom**, which cannot, by essence, be demonstrated. According to Mani, the fact that Evil is eternal, places religious consciousness opposite a paradox nearly impossible to resolve or withstand. This axiom has immense philosophical and practical consequences since it questions the very notion of sin, generally considered as the deprivation of Good. Catholic, Arab, Persian and Chinese theologians were not mistaken, since the essence of their struggle against Manichaeism, on the philosophical level, was based on questioning this axiom. Manichaeism expanded very rapidly, was received in a very positive manner by many circles, due to its realism, and very soon forced theologians to abandon the field of ideology and reason, for lack of arguments, and enter the field of repression and persecution.

The following quote, taken from the work of Saint Augustine, who followed Manichaeism for nine years before converting to Catholic Christianity, shows the importance of this question in the struggle against Manichaeism:

"When yet but a priest, I wrote against Manicheans concerning the concept of two souls, one which they say is a part of God, and the other from the race of darkness, which God did not create, and which is co-eternal along with God.

In their madness, they add that every man has these two souls, one good, and the other evil : the latter, the evil soul, would belong to flesh, which they say comes from the race of darkness; the former, the good soul, would come from the adventitious aspect of God which engaged in combat against the race of

darkness. *These souls mingle together and, according to Manicheans, everything that is good in man comes from the good soul, everything that is evil, from the evil one".(16)*

Paradoxically, Manicheans always refused to be assimilated with dualists - an accusation that caused their persecution throughout history, as expressed by this quote, through which the Manichean Faustus of Mileva answered the criticism of Catholic Christians, who saw two gods in the Manichean doctrine.

"Never have our assertions uttered the words "two gods"... It is true that we proclaim the existence of two principles, but we name only one God. We refer to the other as matter (hylè) or, in a better known and more common term, demon..."(17)

Manichaeism and hermetism

As we penetrate deeper into the question of the relationship between **Manichaeism and Hermetism**, we will better understand the paradoxical character of Faustus' answer according to which Manicheans claim : *"the existence of two principles whereas they assign the name of God to one only".* Hermetism is a movement of monist inspiration, which, according to legend, dates back to Thot-Hermes, *"The twice-great"*, the great teacher of the Egyptian period, who later became Hermes Trismegistus, *"The thrice great"*. As a doctrine founded on the principle of unity and the interdependence of all things - a fact confirmed today by modern physics - Egyptian and Greek hermetism represents the heart of the mainly dualist western spiritual tradition, - which, of course, is a paradox in itself! This has been the case from the most ancient Egyptian period to the present, as testified by the devotion of true Rosicrucians, Cathars, Ismailians, Persian Platoniciens from Sohrevardi, Sufi Theosophists (Ibn'Arabi), Manicheans, Valentinian Gnostics, Jewish Cabbalists, and the disciples of Pythagoras and Plato...

For a long time, in spiritual and scholarly circles, the question was whether or not Manichaeism and Hermetism were contradictory, and to what extent. Manicheans consider Hermes as one of the five great prophets before Mani. We will attempt to answer to this question, which is an enigma or a **koan(18)** to our reasoning, by saying that interest of Gnosticism is something which cannot be expressed, cannot be formulated because it belongs to a radically different realm of life and consciousness, but can be presented in several manners, according to different points of view. Hermes presented the absolute unity of life, space and time as an easily acceptable incident. Mani insisted on the opposition and struggle between light and darkness, such as he saw it in the universe. By presenting a clear cut vision, he was obviously responding to the deep rooted questions of men and women in his time, allowing Evil to assume a position refused by religions. This apparent opposition is purely formal as shown by the passage by Poimandrès (v.68,69,70), for example, where Hermes clearly allows the Mani's language to be expressed :

"O, people, men born from the earth, who give way to drunkenness and sleep, and ignore God, become sober, stop wallowing in debauch, bewitched by animal sleep!

"When they heard me, they came to me. And I continued : "O, you who were born from the earth, why did you surrender to death, whereas you had the power to participate in immortality? Repent, you who walk in wrongdoing and accept ignorance as a guide. Free yourselves from the dark light and partake of immortality, abandon corruption forever"

"Some made a fun of me and went away, for they were on the path to death. But others, as they kneeled before me, beseeched me to teach them. I made them stand again and I became the guide of humankind, teaching them how they would be saved. And I sowed wise words in them, and they were nourished by the water of immortality".(19)

There is thus no essential difference between Manicheans and disciples of Hermes, as emphasised by Jan Van Rijckenborgh in his modern comments concerning the *Corpus Hermeticum* :

"Manicheans and Hermetists are brothers from the same stock..."

Hermetism formulates philosophical clarity. Manichaeism evokes a revolutionary reality, a positive, conscious farewell to lower nature. In its time, Manichaeism also had a significant hold over men, because of this vision. That is why it was so severely dread by the enemy, and persecuted in the most deadly manner,

even more than Catharism. Enemies of Cathares forced them to perish by fire and hunger. Manichean brothers and sisters were mutilated and martyred in an atrocious, unimaginable manner.

We know that Catharism, though philosophically placed on more hermetic ground, was oriented towards the same goal as that pursued by Manichean brothers and sisters. Because the goal was similar, Cathares were accused of being Manicheans, with the preconceived intention to prosecute and exterminate them in the same way. The present Gnosis has an inexpressible debt towards these two Brotherhoods." (20)

At certain times in the history of mankind, the present appearance of the malignity of nature must be emphasised in order to bring out the enlightened origins of humanity, to our consciousness. But at other times, it is likewise necessary to direct searchers' attention towards the principle of Unity, to free consciousness from the grip of matter, as Sankara did in India, for example, where Brahmanism and Buddhism confronted one another with great difficulty.

While Gnosis is eternal, its manifestation varies according to place and circumstance. The world is constantly changing; it goes through different steps in development, which those who serve the Logos, Light, must necessarily take into account. This message must be up to date, dynamic, liberating, and practical in every era when it reveals itself. For in the world of death, every old message is altered, curtailed, weakened and consequently rendered inefficient or impossible to use. This is why, in his day once again, Mani had to liberate teachings, a method and its application, drawing directly from first-hand knowledge, from the realm of the Universal Spirit.

If Mani's vision disturbs us because of its implications and if our first reaction is to annihilate the turmoil caused by the paradox of the eternal co-existence of two principles, we should try to abandon our own vision, what we know or believe we know, to come into his vision and discover the hidden intention as well as the true reasons why it was necessary to present the Gnosis and its liberating message in such a manner, at a precise moment in history (21). We must thus consider the often contradictory myths and cosmogonies used by the Gnostics of all times to transmit their vision of the world, as a representation full of imagery, a **world model**, a means of explanation, a means to affect man's reason and comprehension, in order that he begin the true search concerning the purpose of his life, and especially that he discover the inner power which he does not use.

Dualism and Monism

We find another exemplary echo of this apparent opposition between dualism and monism in texts found in Nag-Hammadi, "High-Egypt", in 1945, which, according to A. Wautier, constituted the library of a Gnostic community, the Sethians (22) - That discovery, fundamental for our knowledge of Gnostic thought, requires several comments :

- First, Sethians, though Christians, had a **universal**, non-exclusive, vision of the spiritual phenomenon; an inventory of their library shows that they referred to sources or traditions other than Christian writings, such as Hermetic and Mazdean texts, Jewish apocalypses...

- Some texts clearly state a dualist vision of the world and mankind, which remains the distinctive mark of Gnosticism, as shown in the following passage, which upsets the traditional conception of the Genesis. Considering the Demiurge, which Marcionite Gnostics, for instance, identified with the jealous God of the old testament, in contrast with the Loving God revealed by Jesus Christ, *the Hypostasis of the Archontes* declares :

"As he opened his eyes, he perceived the vast, wide-spread matter, and he became arrogant, he said: I am God, and there is no other but me. As he spoke, he sinned against the whole. But a voice was heard over the supreme Eon which said : "You are mistaken, Samaïl (that is the god of the blind).

But he retorted : If there is somebody else prior to me, let him stand before me! At once, Sophia pointed her finger and she transmitted light into the bosom of matter, and She followed it down to the bottom, to the regions of Chaos. Then she left, returning upwards towards her light. Darkness, once again, (then invaded) matter." (23)

Though systematic attempts have been made to disqualify Gnostic movements, by calling them "dualist", a practice which is based on amalgamation and over-simplification, documents once again at our disposal prove that, parallel to "dualist" teaching, of which the best-known representatives are Marcionites, there was a monist Gnosis, mainly Valentinian, which, according to E. Pagels, was *"the most influential and the most complex Gnostic teaching, and by far the greatest threat to the church."* (24)

The *Tripartite treatise*, attributed to Valentine, begins with these words:

"Whatever may be said about matters from the high, it is suitable that we start with the Father who is, in fact, the root of All... For He existed even when nothing had yet come into existence but Him ... the only Father and God is the one nobody generated, whereas He generated and created the All."(25)

In *"the Eugnoste letter"*, in a laudatory song, it is said of God :

"Inexpressible is the Only One which is. No sovereignty knew Him, no authority, nor subjection, nor any being since the creation of the world, other than Himself. For He is immortal, He is eternal and without birth, while anyone who was born will perish. He is not generated, having had no beginning, for anyone who had a beginning (will also have) an end. Nobody commands Him and He has no name, either : for anyone who has a name is the creature of someone else. He can (therefore) not be named."
(26)

What conclusions can we draw from this paradoxical situation in which two brotherhoods of equal importance claim they belonging to the Gnosis, the Marcionites and the Valentinians, teaching at the same periods and in the same places, seemingly without ever competing with one another or excluding the other; and simultaneously delivering a message aiming at salvation of the Soul, one through dualism, the other through monism.

It is said that the teaching of dualism, whether **explicit**, radical, mitigated, or **implicit**, is shared by all Spirituals, from the East or West, whether referred to as Gnostics or theosophists, whether typified or identified as dualists or non-dualists. It appears as such depending on historical circumstances, or results from educational choices.

If spiritual teaching is **explicitly dualist**, monism, the doctrine of unity, becomes **implicit**, and is hidden behind the veil of appearances, of manifested things. This was the case, with Marcionism, for example, the pure Gnostic religion of Marcion which, although it oriented its pupils towards the reality of One, established a clear distinction between the God in the Old Testament, a vengeful god who punishes and chastises every violation of his law, and the God of Love in the New Testament, the Spirit of the New Covenant, proclaimed by Jesus. Marcion raised the question of why an "all-powerful" God would create a world with suffering, pain and illness? He concluded that there must have been two different gods.

E. Pagels reminds us that the Credo, the Christian profession of faith, was originally founded to exclude Marcion disciples (approximately 140) from Orthodox churches, as well as anyone who asserted that "there is a god other than the Creator". The Credo begins with these words: "*I believe in **only one God, the all-powerful Father, creator of heaven and earth***". Thus a clear assertion is made as to the irremediable and definitive separation between the Churches and the Gnosis. Below we will see that this formula nevertheless did not suffice to chase Gnostics from Christian communities.

While spiritual teaching is **explicitly monist**, dualism, the doctrine of two orders of nature, becomes **implicit**, "hidden" or occult (esoteric), as is shown by the example of Valentinians who, though outwardly presenting themselves as monists, secretly developed the teaching of two creations for their pupils. "*For if Valentinians, says E. Pagels, professed faith in one God in public, during meetings held between themselves, they managed to emphasise the distinction between the popular image of God and what that image represented - God understood as the ultimate source of everything which exists.*(27)

This attitude, similar to the "arcana's discipline", enabled Valentinians to remain within Christian communities, without being excluded, contrary to Marcionites. Irénée himself tells us that the Credo, which efficiently forced Marcionites away from the Church, proved to be inefficient with Valentinians. They repeated the Orthodox Credo along with other Christians. But, as St Irénée explained, although "*they verbally confess one and only god*", they do so while "*saying one thing and thinking another*". (28) "*Such individuals are lambs, if you keep to appearances, for they appear to resemble us, according to what they say in public, repeating the very words (we profess), while inside they are wolves.* (29)

What most afflicted St Irénée, was that most Christians did not acknowledge Valentine disciples as heretics. Most of them could not have explained the difference between the Orthodox and Valentinian teachings :

"Though their ways of speaking are similar to ours, their opinions are, not only very different , but in all aspects filled with blasphemies." (30)

That assertion made by Irénée shows that it is often difficult, even when forewarned, to draw the line between authentic spiritual monist teaching and mystical-dogmatic doctrines which in fact concern simple natural religiosity, amply justifying the following proposition : **It could be said that teaching which excludes one of the two terms, is neither spiritual, nor true**, according to the criteria of spiritual experience we establish; dualism in fact degenerates into moral dualism and monism into religious mysticism, rendering the reality of Evil and suffering illusive.

In this sense, we clearly assert that spiritual teaching which is not **paradoxical**, cannot be spiritual. This question will be developed in an upcoming article devoted to the criteria of spiritual experience.

However, we must be fully aware that the consequences of such a choice concerning the transmission of spiritual teaching are not the same :

- To teach dualism, and thus to stress evil in the world, generates suspicion, intolerance and persecution, as testified by the tragic destiny of Marcionites, Manicheans, Paulinians, Ismaelians, Sufis, Bogomiles, Cathars and Rosicrucians.

Thus, "dualist" Spirituals knowingly expose themselves to hate in the world, without any desire for martyrdom, merely because "*certain things must be expressed*" as asserted Krishnamurti, whose clearly libertarian and anti-authoritarian teachings would undoubtedly have led him to jail or to burn on the stake, in other times.

- To testify about monism, to vouch for Unity, as many so called "non-dualist" currents of thought from the New Age (31) do today, can, on the contrary, only incite political and religious authorities, which have been partially linked throughout History, to benevolence or tolerance. At this point, it should be recalled that Mani was condemned to torture and put to death in atrocious conditions mainly because of Persian occultists and Zoroastrian religions Magi, and that Cathars were slaughtered by the thousands under the rule of Catholic Christian bishops.

We hope that all of the above has made it clear that this apparent opposition between Spirituals, in this case Marcionites and Valentinians, is mainly due to "theory", that is to the "point of view", or to a determined strategy, the only purpose of which is to spread the Gnostic message. In the same way, we must stop considering dualism as the negation of divine unity, of monism, or a *degeneration of monotheism*, as expressed by Guy Monno.; (32) From these few examples, which highlight the paradoxical character of Gnostic thought, the following definition may be retained, which can be added to the previous definition concerning spiritual experience :

Definition 4 : *If spiritual teaching is outwardly expressed as dualist, monism is **implicit**. If spiritual teaching is outwardly expressed as monist, dualism is **implicit**.*

Teachings which exclude one of these two terms could not be referred to as spiritual. As a consequence, spiritual teaching can only be paradoxical.

Seen from an external point of view, no Gnostic brotherhood, no Awakened man is in contradiction with the spiritual edifice of humanity, but is a stone which adds to this immense invisible construction which could be referred to as the dwelling of the Spirit, the "*House Sancti Spiritus*" of traditional Rosicrucians in the 17th century, which is the true dwelling of Man. Each revelation, whether experienced 6,000 years ago or today, is a possibility, a new stone added to the previous ones. If, instead of opposing them, we could determine their respective positions within the construction, we would be on the path to solving the paradox of unity and duality.

NOTES

(1) - **P. Gast**, critical analysis of the situation concerning religious movements in French positive legislation, p. 176, In "To put an end to the problem of cults", CESNUR - Di Giovanni, 1996, supervised by Massimo Introvigne and J. Gordon Melton.

(2) - *We are indebted to Henry Corbin, Islamologist, philosopher, phenomenologist and historian of religions, (who died in 1978) for the re-discovery of chi'ite spirituality and philosophy (his translations and commentaries), not only in Europe, but also in Iran. Through his method of interpreting the "religious experience", which attempts to be essentially "phenomenological", without being linked to any particular school of thought, he imposed the idea of Eastern philosophy, while the East was considered as having no philosophy, where religion and beliefs are the rule.*

(3) - **P. Gast**, *Spiritual experience, consciousness, and law, a thesis defended for a doctorate in law at the University of Paris 2 (Pantheon-Assas) on February 7, 1991, Librairie de l'Inde (India Bookshop), p. 23.*

(4) *Jan Van Rijckenborgh (1896-1968, the Netherlands), founder of the International school of the Golden Rosecross, with Catharose de Petri, discovered the directing theme of his life at an early age : The search for the original source of all knowledge. Sensitive to that great nostalgia of a state of perfection which every man carries within himself, he deeply questioned himself about the origin of that "remembrance", about that feeling of being fundamentally a stranger to this world. Anticipating the power of the Gnostic idea underlying history and the great myths of mankind, he highlighted this idea in Christic symbolism and displayed it in various works, such as: "The Universal Gnosis", "The Present Day Gnosis", "A New Man is coming", "The Alchemical Wedding of Christian Rosecross", and "The Chinese Gnosis". Original Gnostic thought appears throughout his works : over than thirty books, thousands of conferences, both public and private, and an immense revelation system. A powerful spirit emanates from that unknown, often difficult work with a prodigious variety of ideas, indications, and knowledge, testifying to the source from which he drew, the source of the eternal, timeless Gnosis. Today more than ever, Jan Van Rijckenborgh's thinking deserves to be re-discovered, as does the great GNOSIS of the past such as Paul, Marcion, Valentin, Mani, Master Eckhart, or Jacob Boehme, who is more familiar to us.*

(5) *Amongst contemporary Hindu masters - throughout this century, India has witnessed great spiritual masters, such as Ramakrishna, Krishnamurti, Nissargadatta Maharaj, Sri Aurobindo, Ma Ananda Moyi, Ramana Maharshi - Vimala Thakar is one of the most captivating. To our knowledge, she is the only person Krishnamurti "authenticated" when he was alive, though it must be said that Krishnamurti had always asserted he wanted neither a successor nor an interpreter for his thought. This is one of the paradoxes, which we are examining in a study devoted to Krishnamurti, as demonstrated in the book, "An eternal voyage", where Vimala shows how that particular relationship with him came to pass. It is interesting to notice that none of the "official" biographies refer to her, and that her personal realisation was never acknowledged by the people closest to Krishnamurti, nor by the Organisation that was built around him. This is a typical occurrence in the religious and spiritual history of mankind and can easily be compared with the situation of various Gnostic brotherhoods. These brotherhoods claimed to be "true Christians" according to the dominant ideology of the Church which assumed the statute of the "only keeper of the true teachings of J.C." Marginality in relation to a dominant movement is one possible criterion which can testify to the spiritual character of a process. As a descendent of Krishnamurti., Vimala Thakar teaches no doctrine, but merely attempts to bring her listeners back to their essential being. Her "presence" and her teaching have had a strong impact on those who approached her and she now updates and embodies the living testimony of that individual realisation Krishnamurti strove to accomplish throughout his life, until his last breath, as the only alternative to world disorders and their possible annihilation.*

6) *Concerning the 3 states of consciousness, cf. especially, Jan Van Rijckenborgh, The Universal Gnosis, Rozekruis-Pers, Haarlem, the Netherlands, 1984, p. 84-86 and Vimala Thakar, Meditation, un état de conscience, Terre Blanche, Toulouse, 1994, p. 2 to 47.*

7) *The "Pistis-Sophia" was considered the sacred book of Gnostics from Egypt. Discovered in the 18th century, the Pistis Sophia, attributed to Valentin, is the first major Gnostic work to be re-discovered, testifying to original Christianity.*

According to Gnostics, Light, Gnosis, has always accompanied mankind. It cannot remain hidden, for it has to be known, experienced, lived. Gnosis, as a divine emanation, always expresses itself as two force-currents, the prophetic one, referred to as Pistis (Faith or Intelligence) descending, and the initiating one, Sophia (Wisdom) ascending. One of the goals of Gnostic thought has always been to unite these two apparently contradictory and opposed currents.

8) Cf. S. Hutin, *Les gnostiques*, PUF, Coll. Que sais-je?, Paris, 1978, p. 105-106.

9) Jan van Rijckenborgh, *The Call of the Rose-cross Brotherhood, Rozenkruis Pers, Haarlem, the Netherlands*, 1983, p. 21.

10) Chinese people referred to Mani as "the white Buddha" or "the Light Buddha", and Egyptians referred to him as the "Jesus Apostle". His spiritual experience must be compared with that of Buddha, who embodies the archetype of Awakened being. See the collection of texts *the Apostle of Buddha*, Paul Carus, Aquarius Press, Geneva Switzerland, 1983, p. 34-39.

11) The Paraclet, or Healer, is one of the names of the Holy Spirit; Jesus had announced his return to the disciples in John's Gospel. Often conceived by religious minds as a phenomenon exterior to man which should be manifested by the return of Christ in History, Gnostics interpret the return of Paraclet as the Revelation of the Spirit to enlightened man, a preliminary to any spiritual development, as is clearly shown by Jacob Boehme's or Sohrevardi's visionary experience.

12) Cited by H. Jonas, *La religion gnostique*, Flammarion, Paris, 1970, p. 275.

13) Cited by R. C. Kohn and P. Nègre, *Les voies de l'observation*, Nathan, Paris, 1991, p. 9.

14) J. P. Schnetzler, *De la mort à la vie*, Dervy, Paris, 1995, p. 133 and following pages.

15) Testimony, teachings, method, and behaviour constitute the four aspects of the treatise which gives an account of inner experience, liable to be studied rationally, justifying the words: "You will know a tree by its fruit." Our approach to spiritual experience relies on two propositions:

1st proposition: Spirituality is a complex phenomenon. Like all complex phenomena, it requires a paradoxical approach with many references, to be apprehended and understood.

2nd proposition: Spirituality can be approached rationally and scientifically through the arguments it expresses.

16) Saint Augustin, *Six traités anti-manichéens*, Translated by R. Jolivet and M. Jourjon, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1961, p. 29.

17) Cited by D. Roche, *Saint Augustin et les manichéens de son temps*, in *Cahiers d'études cathares*, Carcassonne, 1957, p. 171.

18) A koan is an enigma, a paradoxical formulation, impossible to solve on the level of ordinary logic, which Chinese T'chan masters (Zen in Japan) gave to their pupils in order that they may reach enlightenment (Satori).

19) Here, we follow the translation by Jan van Rijckenborgh in the *Original Egyptian Gnosis*, volume 1, *Rozenkruis Pers, Haarlem*, 1978, p. 61. We would like to call the attention of interested parties to a scientific and scholarly translation in four volumes of texts attributed to Hermès-Trismégist, *Editions des Belles Lettres, Paris*.

20) *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

21) We should bear in mind that "religious dualism is a solution which is periodically rediscovered by many men deep in the anguish caused by the tangible and vicious character of evil." - S. Hutin., *Les*

gnostiques, PUF, Collection Que sais-je?, Paris 1978, p. 106. This remark by **S. Pétrement** deserves meditation (*Le dualism dans l'histoire de la philosophie et des religions*, p. 77), cited by S. Hutin : "There seem to be dualist periods, which are almost always **periods of significant change.**"

22) - Cf. The seven books by **A. Wautier**, published by the Canadian Publisher Ganesha, devoted to the Nag-Hammadi texts, translated and commented by the author. A scientific and scholarly translation of these same texts is available from Editions de l'Université de Laval, Canada.

23) - **A. Wautier**, *Toth-Hermès / Nôrea, fille d'Adam*, Editions Ganesha, Montreal, 1995, p. 150.

24) - **E. Pagels**, *Les évangiles secrets*, Gallimard, Paris, 1979, p.72.

25) - *Le Traité tripartite*, translation by Editions de l'Université de Laval, Canada, p.51, 52.

26) - **A. Wautier**, *Textes fondamentaux du séthianisme christianisé*, Ed. Ganesha, Montréal, 1989, p.25.

27) **E. Pagels**, *Les évangiles secrets*, Gallimard, Paris, 1979, p. 74.

28) *Irénée*, AH, 4-33-3, cited by **E. Pagels**.

29) *Idem*, 3-16-6, cited by **E. Pagels**.

30) *Idem*, 3-16-8, cited by **E. Pagels**.

31) The upcoming era of "peace" and "spirituality", the "holistic" vision of the world, personal development, "Awakening for everyone", are major themes of the "Conspiracy of Aquarius", which today invade all layers of a society without any direction, and without indication, referred to as the New Age. A new type of "spontaneously enlightened" or "Awakened" teacher talk to us about spiritual realisation in terms of "awakening", an awakening of consciousness he claims to have experienced without any religious framework, without any masters, doctrines, or techniques. But what, in fact, is that "fused awakening", that "cosmic or universal consciousness" to which these new instructors refer? Labelled as "spirituality", this phenomenon most often reflects lack of thought, a rejection of constituted knowledge and a disappearing sense of criticism, to the mere favour of "experience", and "feeling".

32) **G. Monnot**, *Islam et religions*, Maisonneuve et Larose, Paris, 1986, p. 129.