

The background of the entire image is a dense crowd of bald, stylized human figures seen from behind. The figures are rendered in a realistic skin tone, except for one figure in the lower right foreground who is colored a vibrant green. The figures are packed closely together, creating a sense of a large group or crowd. The lighting is soft, highlighting the contours of the heads and shoulders.

Freeing oneself from spiritual CONFORMISM

MICHEL CHIAMBRETTO

Freeing^{oneself}
from spiritual
CONFORMISM

Michel Chiambreto

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micel **chiambretto**

“[...] If the fringe of intuition surrounding his intelligence is capable of expanding sufficiently to envelop its object, that is the mystic life. The dynamic religion which thus springs into being is the very opposite of the static religion born of the myth-making function, in the same way as the open society is the opposite of the closed society.”¹

Henri Bergson

1. Henri Bergson, *The two sources of morality and religion*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, p. 268.

My thanks to Claudine, Marie, Paul, Thomas, Didier, Vlad and also to H.M. Chan Buddhist monk, Masters W.X.J. and W.S.W. of the Chinese internal tradition, Prior Don M. Roman Catholic, L.B.-M. Yoga Master, A.F. Master of the Occult, the F.: H.A., S.B., C.C., G.M., and Xue Yuan Kong Jin.

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FOREWORD

In both past and present, there have always been two types of spirituality.¹ One offered to anybody, with a societal purpose, defining bans and taboos through dogmas, all the while presenting marvelous imagery and promising a well-being within reach, now or in the future, for those who follow the institution. And another type, more discreet, which, in contrast with the previous one, has for objective the accomplishment of Man and offers only a long work on oneself to achieve an expansion of the field of consciousness toward the Divine, the All, the One, the Tao, or whatever one wants to call it.

This is obvious! You will say like most people. But contrary to what you may think, the difference between these two aspects is often hidden under deceptive guises.

Of course, this does not concern you, you think you are able to discern the true from the false, the spiritual direction from the societal one, and this may actually be the case. However, I suggest that you read this book to the end, even if you feel disturbed by certain remarks or are shocked by examples that call into question your current certainties.

But believe me, what we will be addressing is not built on gratuitous assertions, but on real knowledge of authentic traditions practiced for tens of years by Seekers of all backgrounds, members of various schools, religious and initiatory, from both the West and the Far East. These traditions should not be confused with the various methods offered to a select public, or to the public at large,

1. Bergson, philosopher of consciousness, divides religion into: static religion and dynamic religion. The former has a societal function, while the latter has for objective the accomplishment of Man. Henri Bergson, *The two sources of morality and religion*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1977.

these are discreet practices that do not highlight the individual, do not make for party conversation, do not help in achieving a status — a personal or a societal dream, in other words, a new “mask.”¹

As with any tradition stemming from the Primordial Tradition², these are initiations which, free of any smoke and mirrors, allow after a long work on oneself, not to access the defined — a virtuous society, happiness with a capital H, a predefined spirituality — but a dimension that your mind cannot anticipate.

To help you in your future quest, the one that will allow you to find a genuine guide, I propose you in a first time to remove some of the illusions that can limit your reflective analysis.

A reflective analysis that can only be based on the conditioning you received since childhood through religious, societal and scholarly education, and more insidiously, the one delivered by the “Knowledgeables”³ from the media, declared specialists of all spiritual paths.

What do you say? This is not your case. Well, we will verify this in the following pages, and if you feel upset, consider this feeling as something positive. Because, as you certainly know, freeing oneself of a conditioning requires the use of emotion and repetition; therefore, the more unbearable the rejection, the more you will advance on your new Path.

This can only be done with time, and thanks to what this book will leave inside you, unconsciously your perspective will change. Your mind will keep the memory of what initially appeared as an aberration, or a rambling, and progressively the promises offered by seductive, reassuring and empowering spirituality will make you smile softly, and for some, maybe also revolt you.

1. Mask, or Persona, according to C.G. Jung, denotes the part of the personality that organizes the relation between the individual and society.

2. Primordial Tradition: the one transmitted since the dawn of time, universal because of the essential nature of man.

3. Knowledgeable: “man of knowledge,” where knowledge is of the realm of the intellect, in contrast with cognition, which is of the domain of experience.

Indeed, there are other seekers just like you, who wish, who want to go beyond themselves, who feel a need, a necessity to transcend, not to gain something “more” but really to dissolve in the ineffable. I beg your pardon? That last part confounds you? Do not be surprised, we have just started on the proposed path.

Let us begin by immersing ourselves in the different stages of any spiritual evolution, with the aim to define, as a first step, your state of consciousness.

THE COMMON MAN

Any person thinks he is the product of his inherent nature. The implication is that his personality has been formed by a natural impulse and in consequence his individuality has been able to bloom.

However, what follows could potentially go against this assertion. We know that any questioning of one's self-image is difficult, to say the least, even impossible. This is due to the fact that the self-image — *which is associated with the Self* — is often nothing other than the reflection of the established societal norms and, like any introspective analysis, uses Reason¹, which, molded by these same norms, cannot escape the conditioning imposed since childhood.

To open a first breach, we will look in more detail at the molding of the individual suffered by citizens of any country. This can also be called “the shaping of the common man.”

The common man is a product of:

- Parents, family, education.
- Teachers, professors, his formal education.
- Priests, imams, rabbis, atheists, his “religion.”
- Leaders, politics, legislation, intellectuals, coworkers, media, his society.

Most of the time he is not aware of it. Happy and satisfied, he himself participates in the molding of his children and loved ones, which he considers as essential.

Absurd and ridiculous?

1. Reason: the entirety of the intellectual faculties allowing to discern true from false, good from bad, and organizing one's relation with reality.

Well, let us observe the life of a random person.

The example that follows, with a few adjustments, appears to be universal in both past and present.

The child is born.

From that moment on, a relentless logic will “shape” the child, condition it and make it a perfect cog of an existing whole. The child must not only fit the whole, and thus correspond to the definition of an integrable element, but must also participate in the collective effort — *the common objective is very rarely expressed, because it is often idealized in political expression.*

One might think that, with this idea of integration, the child would already be able to understand that he is nothing but a microcosm inside the macrocosm of society, which was the basic ideology of communist countries. However this is antithetic to our contemporary society, which believes in individualism.

However, this did not change anything in reality, because any political indoctrination cannot but be opposed to any blossoming of the individual, and in consequence to any personal evolution.

It is important to look at this “relentless” logic in more detail.

From early childhood, the common man will be imposed a cliché reference of his future life. That is, the Ideal man who, of course, corresponds entirely to what his relatives have themselves received, all with the leitmotif:

“You must become an adult, my child!”

According to this predefined objective, the qualities required to be accepted inside the community are cultivated within the child:

- A man must be honest, he must respect the property of others.
- A man should not hurt another man, except if his country asks him to — *a paradox that should raise questions.*
- A man must love and respect his parents, his family, his teachers, his leaders, his...; the social hierarchy.

- A man must be taught according to the criteria of the education system of the country where he resides.
- A man must be a conscientious worker.
- A man must respect religious precepts — *or not, the political or philosophical doctrines substituting for said religion.*
- A man should not question the social references of the society he lives in — *with the exception of the revolutionary or communal substitutes, which are also dogmatic.*
- A man, etc.

These rules of life and thinking, initiated by the parents, will be further applied by the public — *or private* — education, or maybe the religious one. At the school, in the college, even in the university, the same principles will be taught, as well as the training allowing him to have a purpose in the macrocosm of society.

To complete this task successfully, all the principles of deep brain conditioning will be used — same as with any brainwashing:

- *Tireless repetition of the same topics;*
- *Emotional dimension; family, society, opposite sex;*
- *Multiple rewards or various threats and punishments;*
- *In addition, the “animal mimicry” is activated.*

In this way, he can become a worker ant, a manager ant, a fighter ant, a thinker ant, a knowledgeable ant, more rarely a leader ant, and in some exceptional cases, a Queen ant. The latter, often daughters of Queens, will be nourished differently. Right from their earliest childhood, their education will be different, especially before the nuptial flight, conducted in elite schools that will give them the required wings.

Everything is done and organized for the child, and later the adolescent, in such a way that he orients his life toward the upcoming integration in the macrocosm of society.

The child could, at some point, ask the following question:

“Why? Why spend the best time of my life, all my youth, all day long, in this collective education intended to make me useful and productive?”

But he will not ask it, because the answer has already been provided — it is his duty and if he does not do it, he will not conform to the image that he can be proud of, in his eyes and in the eyes of his loved ones.

This is the indoctrinated definition of happiness; which will later provoke the “middle-age crisis” when the concerned becomes aware of his aberrant way of life.

Additionally, there cannot be any doubt, everything around him confirms that this is the only way to obtain what everyone desires, that is to say:

- To be recognized socially,
- To be loved by his relatives,
- To be desired by the opposite sex,
- To be calm, without fear of the future, of the unknown.

This last point is omnipresent in the modern context, where people are worried about their future, where man lives in a permanent anxiety — *a feeling that undoubtedly helps to better control society.*

From the moment he starts working, his main objective is to accumulate enough stuff so he can live “without needs.” And the main concern is to do everything possible to cope with tomorrow and with old age, even if this means depriving oneself during one’s entire life.

The level of conditioning is impressive.

Man abstains from living fully his youth so as to receive the necessary education allowing him to... abstain himself from living fully his adult life so as to accumulate material goods that will allow him to... eventually live fully the few remaining years of his life, if he is still alive, if his health allows it, if he has the energy for it — *and if he manages to decondition himself...*

An intentionally negative perspective, but maybe not entirely wrong.

The established hierarchical structure will only reinforce this “system” by basing everything on the obtained diploma. It will allow or not the individual to claim this or that job and to thus acquire the corresponding social status. The social status becomes for him the reflection of his Being, or at least this is what he thinks.

Regarding self-image, C.G. Jung said: “Society expects, and indeed must expect every individual to play the part assigned to him as perfectly as possible [...] must at all times and in all circumstances play the role of persona in a flawless manner [...] hence the construction of an artificial personality becomes an unavoidable necessity.”¹

This “shaping” has become universal to such an extent that today it can be found even in domains whose initial role was to produce a certain awakening of the mind.

We can mention here, among others, the Initiatory Arts, the so-called schools of Awakening, the trendy spirituality and the philosophy courses², where the “Knowledgeables,” as well as the teachers and the institutions, go through the sieve of intellectualism, of dualism, thus entirely excluding the experiential.

This confusion of categories only reinforces the initial conditioning and in turn increases the opacity of the veil covering the sensitive perception of man — *confusion from which genuine “Seekers”³ are excluded.*

1. C.G. Jung, *Two essays on analytical psychology*, Collected Works, Vol. 7, Princeton University Press, 1967, pp. 192-193.

2. We mean here the ancient Traditions whose objective was to “awaken” the Spirit of the disciple through the use of initiatory tools, for example: Alchemy, Yoga, meditation, pranayama, philosophical contemplation, Zen, Yi King, Taoism, Tantric Buddhism, Freemasonry, Way — Do — of the martial arts, etc.

3. Seeker: “a man in quest,” a path that is in the realm of the experiential.

The confusion is such that it is often forgotten that some of today's "sports" and "well-being activities" were initiatory Traditions when they were transmitted differently. This is to say, not with the aim of improving one's physical and mental condition, but rather developing one's field of consciousness.

And to complete the whole, rewards of all sorts are provided: honors, distinctions, titles, trophies, awards, and all kinds of accolades; in other words, the frame of reference for societal appraisal — *without forgetting the financial aspect, which does not surprise anyone anymore in this world of globalization.*

This principle is applied from the earliest days of schooling, when children are made to compete through grades, the whole assorted with various rewards and punishments. It continues all life long with a whole set of more or less gratifying benchmarks that follow the gradation of the community apparatus.

Some examples are "Club service" associations that only accept in their ranks the privileged, creating by this choice a new distinction of a pseudo-elite. To maintain the hierarchy of these clubs, members are co-opted based on their "societal value". Membership in a particular association defines the status of the member, and is sometimes highlighted by wearing a pin — *we are not that far away from the Hindu caste system.*

This last example, which can be found in some form in every society, shows that man, irrespective of his age, remains susceptible to smoke and mirrors. Proof, if any is needed, that spiritual evolution does not depend on age, intellectual quotient, education, or social standing.

It is often forgotten that the person with the highest IQ can be the most dim-witted one in other fields, such as self-knowledge — "intra-personal intelligence," the "sensitive." Which is confirmed by H. E. Gardner, professor in cognition, psychology and neurology: "There are savants who perform great feats of calculation even though they are tragically deficient in most other areas."¹

1. Howard Earl Gardner, *Multiple intelligences, new horizons*, Basic Books, 2006, p. 12.

This addiction to status seeking is so prevalent in our societies that it follows the individual to his grave. Indeed, the tributes to the dead where medals, titles, distinctions and various praises flourish are plentiful — man remains in his illusion in all circumstances. Such “testimonials” are obviously based more around the existential references of the living than on the spiritual accompaniment of the deceased — *maybe that is why Leonardo da Vinci chose to be accompanied by sixty beggars during his burial.*

One could think then, quite logically, that man has the possibility of reconnecting with his “Essential being” through his relationship with religion. But here again, everything is definition, everything is conditioning, at least at the first level, that of the “static religion.”

Bergson, philosopher of consciousness, distinguishes between static and dynamic religion. The static one is the social aspect of religion, serving to maintain society's cohesion. Conversely, the dynamic religion has as its objective the accomplishment of Man.¹

This same confusion was highlighted by René Guénon, who stated that Islam presents primitive Christianity as “Tariqa” — an initiatory path —, and not as “Sharia” — social legislation —, thus demonstrating the evolution of an initiatory message toward a moral path understandable by all and so intended for the greatest number of people.²

An evolution that can be considered as generic to the contemporary religious, esoteric and initiatory domains.

In our Judeo-Christian society, it all began with the Tablets of Law. Ten rules to strictly abide by, so as not to risk the wrath of a punishing God.

1. Henri Bergson, *The two sources of morality and religion*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1977.

2. Jean Marc Vivenza, *Le dictionnaire de René Guénon*, Le Mercure Dauphinois, 2002.

The ten commandments of the Mosaic law — which consisted of 613 laws — called the Decalogue, deka logoi — ten words —, whose source comes either from the Egyptians — 1000 years before the Decalogue, or the Babylonians — the Code of Hammurabi, 200 years before.

It is worth mentioning that Buddha himself, facing the growing number of people who wanted to follow his teaching, made the monks recite 10 vows — 8 for the laymen — the first few of which remind the Decalogue, namely:

- *Do not kill,*
- *Do not steal,*
- *Do not seduce the wife of another.*

Precepts which, despite being apparently obvious, seem to be indispensable to man in all latitudes.

Over time, this was completed by establishing what is authorized and what is not in the form of dogmatic definitions of “Good” and “Bad.” Moreover, same as the “father” in the family unit, the “Divine” is omnipresent to monitor every act and thought — *the objective, in both past and present, is to control the animal that is in every man.*

And so, the man shaped by society finds, once again, the outlines of his “mold.”

Everything is kept in boxes. You open the box of “Good” and you find a set of predefined topics. As a logical consequence, as soon as you tackle a new topic, you have to put it in this box or in the other one, that of “Bad.” When in doubt, you will analyze it according to the instilled parameters, which will allow you to find the appropriate box. Also, you will have been taught beforehand that it is not possible to put it in two boxes at the same time or in a third one.

We see here a possible interpretation of the metaphor of Adam and Eve’s exit from Paradise, to wit the image of a child’s arrival in this world. That is to say, the immaculate child who, at its birth, takes on its animal nature, followed by the sexual one, and without forgetting the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil — the binary —, its Reason.

It is clear that we are far removed from the sensitive relation that should exist between the subject and the “object.”¹ We remain in the object definition.

The religious education, like the secular one, is made complete by the allure of the reward. If you do “Good,” you are in fact a man of quality and the paradise is open to you. The paradise where man is happy and lives without working, because everything is given to him, where there is no hate, no aggression, no sickness, no poverty, no misfortune, no old age, no death; in other words, the opposite of life. However, if you do “Evil,” the hell awaits you and you will suffer eternally the torments of life.

Obviously, the preceding description is a limited view of religion, but we are only at its first level, the “static”² one. It is this aspect that is often rejected by atheists, but the latter are equally dependent on the social conditioning received, with some theosophical and philosophical variations.

The didactic conditioning is complete. Scholastic education has done its work in both the social and religious fields, which are in complete synergy.

And indeed:

- A whole set of principles of societal life have been instilled in the subject.
- He has been taught to “spontaneously” adopt predefined behaviors, according to the situation.
- The foundations of analytical and logical reasoning have been inculcated, based on a binary approach to everything.

The realm of the Spirit³ disappears just as much in the Arts, of-

1. Object: anything, animate or inanimate, that affects the senses.

2. Term borrowed from Bergson.

3. Spirit, spiritus (capital S in the text): “the corporeal/incorporeal substance” that connects man to God, to the Tao, to the universe, depending on everyone — not to be confused with the Soul. Also, not to be confused with “mind”: commonly used to encompass the principles of the psychic life, the intellectual and emotional faculties, and sometimes the way of being.

Soul: transcendent principle of man, but also “pure individualized conscious-

ten reduced to limited methods and approached in an intellectual manner like the sciences. The latter are emphasized to prove the superiority of man over the animal — *which is confirmed by the religions*. Sciences called exact because demonstrated through analysis, logic, discursive analysis.

Konrad Lorenz, biologist and zoologist, states on this topic: "All too willingly man sees himself as the center of the universe, as something not belonging to the rest of nature but standing apart as a different and higher being. Many people cling to this error..."¹

And when the spiritual dimension is addressed, we are told that it is a different category which completely escapes common understanding. This is true to such an extent that it was necessary, at a certain point, to define Jesus as the son of God, and thus God himself — *by vote during the Council of Nicea in 325* — and not as a Guide, as an accomplished man, or as a... — *and consequently, without opening the mind of man to the undefinable*.

Moreover, in this definition of "belief," it was necessary to bring a miraculous dimension to the inherited metaphors and this despite the quality of the messages transmitted by them — *when the voluntary or involuntary translation is not too erroneous*.

The use of allegories and metaphors is particularly useful for any transmission. Indeed, words have their limits, with definitions that vary in time, and this is without mentioning that "to translate is to betray." The meaning of a metaphor avoids such issues.

Everything that cannot be explained scientifically is miraculous. And the miracle does not depend on man, only the Divine can create it. The miracle has thus become essential to popular belief — *the very basis of this doctrine: it is not possible for a "believer" to think that the resurrection of Christ did not happen, because without this miracle, the transmitted message would lose its strength*.

ness," "sensitive perception," (and not individuation, personality, persona); it can be the link of consciousness, "the corporeal substance" that leads to the "incorporeal," the "Soul/Spirit."

1. Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression*, Routledge, 2002, p. 213.



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Michel Chiambretto, after more than forty years spent in initiatory traditions from both the West and the Far East, and after fifty years in the domain of martial arts, offers his experiences of the spiritual traditions he encountered, but also those gathered from people devoted to spirituality.



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