

The West and East In Us

Our modern civilization is the civilization of the west. It was created in Western Europe and America. With irresistible power it spread to the rest of the world. The extent to which Africa and Asia's folk enter the political and economic arena is determined by the extent to which they use the results and methods created by western civilization.

In the extended line of human development there are no alternatives that move beside of or past western civilization. It is the most complicated civilization ever. And the complexity increases progressively from year to year.

These are the times of specialists in all areas and of the huge unspecialized, unknowledgeable masses. All of our power is directed to one goal – to control the outer reality and to adapt to a position of comfort and security with maximum prestige and well-being. But how much is enough? And how good is good enough? If we do not continually increase the amount of production every year, win new positions in the world market, create new products and improvements we would quickly notice signs of a coming recession. The consistent, forward moving will to better control the outer world is the driving force behind the west.

Western civilization's victory over the east has been unstoppable. Just what happened in the meeting between the west and the east in the Twentieth Century? Was it a one-sided victory for the west at the expense of the ancient culture that no longer had a future? Can the east's deepest, most authentic quality ever be united with the progressive line of the west? Does this meeting mean that the east's most authentic quality will be shut down and replaced by the west's world-dominating civilization that ensures the west will rule?

The confrontations between these ways of life were especially brutal at the end of the Nineteenth Century. When the first telegraph line should be set up between Fu-Tschou and Amoy signs were all over Tschuan-Tschin stating:

"People of the villages in the Tschuan-Tschin-District, you are hereby called upon to resist the building of the "Lightning Threads". Everyone should know that barbarians have come here from an island beyond the four oceans to hurt us and ruin us by removing the peace and order that has sustained us for many generations.

The line begins at the eastern gate of the capital of the province (Fu-tschou) and is now set up in Hok Tschin. Where it is raised we find not a single piece of ground the size of an egg that is not damaged forever. It throws shadows over our father's graves, damages our ownership rights, destroys "Feng-tschui" and brings sickness and death to our wives and children.

Our entire folk are enraged. Let the drums sound, strike the gongs and let us awaken the whole nation to resistance. If anyone works with the barbarians, sells them land or rice or works for them, they shall be arrested immediately and mercilessly killed. Let us unite to resist the arrival of the barbarians. If they appear, attach them and murder them. This is a very important because our property and our lives are at stake and we should not be afraid of resisting and holding together."

Much the same could be read in the paper "Sin-pao" when a drainage project was announced in the Vusung River at the port of Shanghai:

"Mountains can be changed to valleys and deep valleys to mountains. The blue ocean can become fertile fields and fertile fields can become blue oceans. We know that the most beautiful harbors under the Ming-dynasty in the province of Kiangsu were along the Liu River. Huge ships swarmed in and merchants arrived in the thousands. The ships that transported the corn to the sea to Tientsin were loaded in the very same Liu River. At that time no one knew of Vusung. When the Liu River filled up with sand they used the Vusung river. Thirty years ago the ships collected at Vusung (a village with the same name as the river) and the early life in the villages along the Liu River was removed from our memory. Thirty years is a man's age and here we may have seen the will of Heaven. According to western concepts human accomplishment and willpower can overcome Heaven. But China is ruled in line with the commands from Heaven. Devoted obedience to Heaven determines everything we do. As Heaven decides, so it must be. If Heaven wants the Vusung River to fill with sand for thirty more years then it is unnecessary to dredge it. Heaven is not so weak that human beings can fight it."

That was naturally a hopeless battle. Western civilization entered and China made "The great leap forward". Now China's leaders consider atomic bombs important and do not ask whether or not they disturb nature's holy breath, "Feng- tschui".

The spirit of the east does disappear, even though it is gradually removed from the economic-social-politi-

cal field. Removal does not mean domination or destruction. It is suppression and sidetracking into the under-conscious.

From the most surprising sources the spiritual life of the east appears in masked figures. Let us take one example: C.G.Jung. The famous Swiss doctor, with psychiatry as his specialty, fulfilled his university training and considered consequent natural scientific methods and attitudes to be of critical value.

In the year 1944 he broke his foot and suffered a heart attack. For a time he was very sick and his family thought he would die. What he experienced at the threshold of death he considered the most important experience of his lifetime. He wrote about it in his book, "Memories, Dreams, Thoughts" that was released in 1962 after his death.

There he tells:

"It was as if I found myself high up in space. Far below I saw the ball of earth enwrapped in a wonderful, blue light. I saw the deep blue oceans and the continents. – On many parts of the globe the earth had dark green stains like oxidized silver. - I knew I was about to move away from the earth.- Then something appeared in my vision. Close to me I saw a very dark clump of stones flying through the universe as I also flew through the universe. – An entrance led to a little hall. To the right sat a dark Indian in the lotus position on a stone bench. He had a white suit and rested completely still. He waited for me – silently. Two steps led into the hall and on the left side within the door stood the temple. There were numerous bowls filled with coconut oil and burning wicks that surrounded the door in the shape of a reef of burning flames. – As I approached the steps to the entrance towards the cliffs something uncommon occurred: I had the feeling that everything that had been in my life glanced off me. Everything I meant, wished for or thought about, the whole Earth's fantasticalness fell away or was stolen from me, an extremely painful experience. But something remained. It was as if everything I ever experienced, everything that happened around me was now with me. I could say: That was with me, and that was I. I consisted of that. I consisted of my history, and had the feeling that it was I. " I am now that bundle of everything that was." This feeling gave me a feeling of complete emptiness but also great satisfaction. – As I approached the temple I was sure I would enter an enlightened room and meet everyone I truly belong to. I was also sure I would understand the historical situation to which my life and I belonged. I would learn what was before me, how I was created and where my life would continue to flow. Previously my life appeared to me as a historical page upon which the text before and after was missing. My life seemed to be cut out of a long, continuous chain with many questions were unanswered. Why did that happen? Why did I bring these prerequisites with me? What have I done with them? What will the consequences be? I wanted answers to all of these questions as soon as I entered the temple. I wanted to know why everything turned out the way it did and not differently. I wanted to find the people who could answer my questions about what happened before and what will happen in the future.

As I thought about these questions something happened that caught my attention; below, from Europe rose an image. It was my doctor or more correctly spoken, a picture of him with a laurel wreath. I knew immediately it was the archetype of my doctor, Basilius from Kos, (Basilius means "king" and Kos is the birthplace of the doctor, Hippocrates and was famous for its Asclepiads Temple.) – A telepathic experience took place between us. He was sent to protest that I went away. - I was very disappointed because everything seemed for nothing. – I was not allowed to enter the temple and find the people who belonged to me. – Now I must enter the "coffin system again." It was as if I built up an artificial three-dimensional world where every single person sat alone in a coffin. And now I tried to convince my self that this is meaningful. Life and the whole world seemed to be a prison and I was irritated by the fact that I would soon learn that all of this was in beautiful order. – I had been weightless and now it should once again end."

Just as C.G. Jung saw the doctor he became clear that the doctor would soon die. That happened a few weeks later.

Now one huge experience after the other follows for C.G. Jung much like the ones I referred to above. And he points out that the "experiences were absolutely real. Nothing was forced, everything had total objectivity".

Here we see the spirit of the east, the eastern experience of the world appearing strongly in a western person at the threshold of death.

C. G. Jung experiences everything within his under-conscious. It appears non-stop from childhood and follows him through his whole life until the climatic moment on the threshold of death. He continually struggles. How can he find security? How can he obtain a clear understanding of his experiences? How can he find his own individual existence within this enormous threshold that appears in full objectivity?

Time after time he knows something will happen and it does. Something penetrates into Jung's three-dimensional field, bringing experiences of time in the past, present and future as a unified, objective totality.

Especially strong experiences of objectivity appeared when his wife died.

“There I saw her in a dream. She stood at a little distance and looked at me. – Her expression did not show happiness or sorrow, but objective understanding and knowledge without the slightest reaction of feelings. I knew it was not her real self but an image that was presented by her for me. It contained the beginning of our relationship and everything that happened in our marriage of thirty-five years as well as the end of her life. In relation to such a totality we remain silent for we can barely understand it. The objectivity that I experienced in that dream and in the visions belongs to my completed individuation process.

It entails liberation from all value judgments and from all relationships in feelings. The pure feeling relationships normally include a lot to people but they always contain subjective projections and this must be held back in order to arrive at your self and to objectivity. The relationships of feelings are relationships of desire and are loaded with force and lack of freedom. Objective knowledge remains behind the relationships of feeling. That seems to be a central secret. Once we go through it a genuine unification (coniunctio) is possible.”

Just what does C. G. Jung mean with the word individuation? It is a process that brings forth individuality, an undividable unity, and a totality. It entails becoming a single being. With individuality we mean our innermost, ultimate and true Self. According to Jung, “individuation does not lock out the world but embraces it.” Everything we sense and experience, everything that happens during our life, all of the people we meet belong to our Self. If we want to lock out something in our life or if we pretend it does not belong to us we remain in a limited, subjective consciousness. This includes everything we experience in the “outer” world as well as everything that appears in our “inner” world. When we discuss our Self both our outer and inner lives melt together in one entity.

The following words by C.G. Jung do not appear to be theory but the result of mature, individualized experience:

“First after my illness I understood how important it is to say YES to my own fate. For then it is a SELF, that does not disappoint when something unexplainable happens. It is a SELF that endures, that tolerates the truth and is mature to meet the world and individual destiny.”

C. G. Jung is a man who struggles. If you get stuck in certain words he speaks you do not reach what is essential. There was such an overwhelming richness of pictures the streamed through him they often threatened to take him away. Many times he considered the human being's existence to be a temporary illusion, like waves of foam on top of powerful waves that fall forward from the depth of the archetypal under-conscious. Many times he seems about to disappear into an ancient Chinese cloud of bliss. Many times he is totally resigned from the possibility of breaking through to true knowledge of the comprehensive, objective spiritual world where there is no difference between outer and inner, between Self and the world, between the powers of nature and morality. And once again something new shakes up his life. Time after time he is confronted with a spiritual reality that he does not understand but wants to understand and his struggles begin all over.

Does not the western approach provide more security? Is it not more secure to lock out the entire world that appears in the “inner life,” to lock out the ocean of pictures where everything can happen and everything seems uncertain? Should we not consequently refer to our outer senses and combine the impressions using our reason? Is not that a certain and secure existence? I have to ask: Secure for what? Secure for the individual human's existence? Will the individual's existence be more secure with one-sided and consequent interest for the outer world, for material conquest? Nothing could be more less the case. Wherever this rules we find a one-sided anti-individual tendency. Wherever technical-commercialization rules human beings are reduced to part of the masses, to standardized types and their thoughts are colored by the tyranny of public opinion. The individual is then described as a coincidental product of inheritance and environment.

Both the west and the east's idiosyncrasies act in their one-sidedness directly anti-individual. Both remove to the same degree, but in different ways, the individual human's existence when they effect people and are not integrated for separate tasks. In our struggle, our search for knowledge within our situation in life whether it is within western or eastern paths we find the human possibility to grow as an individuality. And in this battle a transformation takes place. The degree to which we find the western and eastern forces in our Self and can say YES to both, is the degree to which they no longer overpower us. They become our own forces.

When you discover these forces a new world opens up. New experiences are available for the human Self. It does not matter what education you have, where you stand in life or where you work. Here there are no dogmas and no authorities. It is the pure, spiritual activity of the individual, human Self that contains eternity and unlimited potential and also what seems to be unimportant. This is where people find their path in life.

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www.joergensmit.org is the adress of the website focussed on life and work of Jörgen Smit. Biography, books, lectures, fotos etc., published by Rembert Biemond.