

THE WEST AND THE EAST: RECIPROCAL ATTRACTION?

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Cartography

The division of Orient/Occident from the cartographic point of view of in a planisphere form is, shall we say, “Ptolemaic”, the earth flat; but the earth is spherical, it is difficult to determine where the orient starts or where the occident ends, to this end we are helped by the Greenwich meridian but it’s clear that the concept is dynamic. Ptolemy divided the world into seven climates in a latitudinal sense subdivided in ten longitudinal sections.

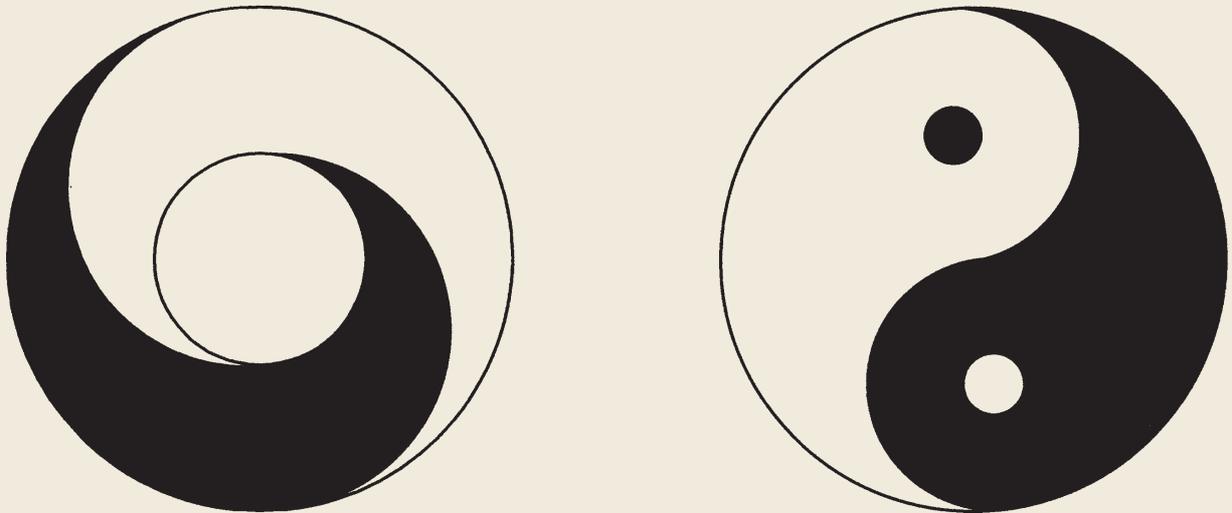
In China we are presented with the planisphere in a different manner, most correctly, in accordance with their idea of the world. China is the Empire of the Centre and they assumed that they were situated in the middle of the Four Seas surrounded by four barbaric populations. In one of the legendary versions Huang Di one of the three founder Emperors of Chinese lineage, was born from the spontaneous fusion of the Yin Yang energy in the *autocreation* of the world: later he, in his time, created the first men from statuettes of clay exposed to cosmic breath during 300 years to acquaint them with the four cardinal points thus permitting the explanation of the different appearance of men according to their geographic origin, by light and other climatic factors that they were affected by.



Orient and Occident

Asia, for Europeans, is the Orient – and to get there one has to go past the Near East, the Middle East and finally the Far East -, and Europe remains the Occident, that territory bathed by the Atlantic, a definition which eliminates nothing less than Italy, Greece and others. This taking into account the nomenclature and kinds of differences that exist between both “sides”. In dictionaries it is said that the Occident is the place where, in the equinoxes, the sun sets (although we all know that the sun neither rises or sets it is the earth that turns) and the Orient is the point in the equinoxes where the sun rises, which perhaps is valid for agriculture, astronomy, fishing, aviation and most surely many other things. The Greek way of thinking, the Ionic, of which we are more knowledgeable, had its source in Asia Minor and received clear Indo-Iranian influences in that epoch, but in reality it is a conventional Occidental way of thinking which influences medicine and other things. At present some of the countries in this zone are trying hard to incorporate themselves into Europe, which is resisted because traditionally Turkey is further away from the European frontiers, and Europe is the Occident. The political frontiers are limiting, even sterilizing, although they don't halt the influences which pass from one side to another, like the wind, the pollen, epidemics, languages, thoughts and this makes it difficult to determine exclusively which thought or idea belongs solely in one place.

Despite the fact that it is old fashioned to use the parallelism/opposition both geographically and soci-culturally between the Orient and Occident, the theme requires constant explanations about how each one interprets this aspect. For me it is more of a form to get closer to the traditional yinyang of the Chinese, where everything is relative. This partition does nothing but share in the wise decision of oriental thinking when it maintains that everything divides in two to carry out its action and get back to a unit; in this case the planet earth or theoretically the paradigmatic opposite/complimentary of all the elements of daily life. To have obscurity at night the sun which illuminates the day has to leave, but the sun doesn't leave, it is shining in another zone of the globe. We only recognize evil because we know there is good and so we can carry on until infinity with concrete themes and practices or theories and abstracts.



The illustration on the left indicates the chaos according to cosmic order, the light moves from inside and is thrown towards the exterior in a spiral route that looks for order. This light revitalizes the elements and gives them order with the result that it arrives at the image on the right, the circle in which everything is contained in its universal position. White yang, black yin.

Apart from the astronomic division in terrestrial meridians that establish correspondent spaces, between us if you wish to see the Orient as that site where religions are polytheist while in the West they are monotheist, or according to the British, that the Orient starts at the line that demarcates Palestine, which is converted into the occidental protective flank of its Indian colony of the Far East, or in the question of cultures or civilizations all that is in the planisphere in European style that stays to the right of Iran is the Orient and all to the left the Occident ; or is the Orient all places original sin is unknown which is the fundamental myth of the Occident ...that is to say imprecise mobile references.

Occident

Occident: comes from the Latin *occidere*, to fall. It is the Cardinal point of the horizon where the sun sets in the equinoctial days. Place on earth or of the terrestrial sphere with respect to the other with which it is compared falls where the sun sets.

Occidental: It is said where the planets position themselves after the sun sets. .

In sociology all which is bathed by the Atlantic Freemasonry: the side of the lodge where the vigilantes are.

History: a group of European nations of the West in opposition to those situated in the East, after the Second World War, the countries allied to the United States against the Soviet block. These definitions

coincide with those that support that it is the Occident that looks at and is bathed in the Atlantic.

The Occidental part of the Roman Empire since the partition of the Empire as a result of measures taken by Diocleciano which are associated with the power of Maximilian, but the real division happened with the death of Teodosio (395 A.D.) between Honorio (Occident) and Arcadio (Orient) The Empire of the Occident lasted until 476, when Odoacro overthrew RomuloAugusto. The imperial idea survived the disappearance of the Empire and was established by Pope Leon III, in favour of Charlemagne who was acclaimed Emperor of the Occident.

Orient

From *oriens*, participle of *orior*, that which is born or appears again. The point where the sun was born in the equinoctial days. Group of ancient countries situated in the East in relation to the occidental part of Europe (covers Asia, Egypt and including a part of Europe)

The Roman Empire of the Orient is the Byzantine Empire

In reality, that which we find isn't, as Huntington maintains, (which seems to me erroneous) a collision of civilizations, for me it is much more *Weltanschauung*. a vision of the world, a concept of the world, a feeling of life, ideology, ideas, that which helps us with the rich interchange between one and another. In a certain way and in many aspects now we are living it as a daily experience. That of the Occident and the Orient is and isn't cartography and lends itself to many other readings. It's clear that sometimes east/west opinions are represented with a receptivity/power attitude. The Occident, in its way, aspires to dominate nature and thus its scientific attitude; science in essence isn't only an explication of natural phenomenon but also discovering its laws and applying them transforming the means to serve man better. Life for the Occident is *evolution* and progress, a straight line. The Orient centres on *revolution*, permanent changes that come back to the starting point or near to it, relations associated between elements, a circle. But it isn't so clear that the Occident is the path to follow, there are drawbacks, one doesn't dominate nature in many aspects. In medicine, which has made a giant leap since the second half of the XIX century, there have appeared "new" illnesses which in a certain fashion are transformations of the previous "extinct ones" or, those that have been dominated return, and all generally in an atmosphere of apocalyptic fear of uncontrollable epidemics for which

immediate cures are sought.. Humility is not learnt, arrogance places its stamp.

Interchange

It is said that Occidentals tired and decadent, anxious to anaesthetize their emotions, look for salvation, wisdom, the spirituality of the Orient and to even creating the term *Orientalism* which appears to denote the form in which the non occidental is presented before us in order that we can get the most of it and suppress that which doesn't suit us, above all in political contexts.. Also it has been suggested less critically that Orientalism is formed by the distinct forms in which the West uses the Asian way of thinking to resolve its own kinds of problems ... and it is said that something or someone has occidentalized themselves by an external form or its customs: dress, speed, illuminated advertisements, soft drinks, personal income, mediocre music with local influences, round eyes... in some occidental cities with a strong Asiatic immigration one can find newspaper advertisements for surgery on oriental eyes to give them an Occidental look.

In turn it is also maintained that, in exchange, Asiatics look for our technology and material well-being, our ability in promotion. I don't agree much with this. China since ancient times exported occidental products elaborated with their technology and I find it difficult to think that the Japanese or the Koreans only look for technology in Europe, when we enjoy a multitude of inventions coming from these places, they look for ideas to contrast with their own. Countries of great industrial development like U.K. or U.S. value the brains of Hindus and Chinese for computer astrophysics and other complex sciences although it is clear that actually the principal parts of technology were created and made in the occident. We could agree that if wasn't for the numerical Indian and Arab notation much of European progress in science and technology would not have taken place. How could one do calculus using European Roman numerals? We know that the earth is spherical, that is to say it's not possible to isolate one territory from another, ideas arrive and more so now in this world of communication and voyages.

Also Europe originated spiritual movements which were later expressed in its art, its philosophy, its literature, its religion ... nor is incense, which is so "oriental", exclusively from the Orient, but these contributions were always marked by the perpetual dispute between theological spiritualism (gods, angels, spirits...) an inheritance from the Jews,

Egyptians Babylonians and the materialistic mechanism of the atom and the void of rationalist Greeks. (Needham Joseph, *Dentro de los Cuarto Mares*, XXI century, 1975). It happens that one system as much as another presents holes, large areas which don't offer explanations or solutions to many problems which the public and /or students point out in their search, and these vacant spaces used to serve, as in the case of acupuncture in the twentieth century, to absorb techniques, ideas, focuses which come to fill these deficiencies. Or referring to the sanitary situation in China at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th occidental medicine could have been introduced in that country.

We should recognize that in the last 500 years the Occident has predominated over the other half of the world, in initiative, technology, imperialism.

When we say Occident we clearly mean the countries bathed by the Atlantic whose progress comes from the great power that they exercise over nature ever since the scientific renaissance movement. And in some way the pendulum looks as if it wants to return to the ancient position of a lost equilibrium, later maybe, to the predominance of the Orientals? In the Far East it seems that humanity matters more than the person, on the other hand in the Occident identity, individualism is beyond the knowledge of many. We look to the orient as an exotic space, colonial and able to be colonized and the fear of "the other" induces us to try to dominate them. It gives the impression that the Orient, near, middle and far each time looks at us more closely so we can observe the "other" through ourselves, experimenting, always asking ourselves how to understand them.

Origins

These reflections take us far in space and time and we should annotate them in space and time. When we speak of the Occident we refer to Europe, which is more homogenized despite its diversities. Its culture, simplified, comes from two roots, Greek and Hebrew and its religion, with a variation of rites and differences in the interpretation of the texts is Christianity. These roots in turn were nurtured by previous cultures, Egypt, Babylon ... The Greek roots being pagan, do not speak of the Being, because it exists in everything. The Greeks did not recognize the nothing, nothing doesn't exist, everything flows, nothing can emerge from where there is nothing, but what there is negates the nothing. On the other hand the Hebrew or Jewish roots give us a creator, which is not creation and so the nothing existed before this as opposed to a creator, and man –his child- the only objective of

the universe, has to dominate nature and put it to his service. In the orient there is not a homogenized philosophy, ethic and /or religious order: Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Brahmanism, Sintoism are not the same because of the different nuances. This limits us to China where all these forms of ethics have coexisted.

Religious structures, the composition of society and its habits, ecology and many more factors are the product of a great many of all types of dynamics and also religions condition the form of capturing the realities surrounding the inhabitants of a zone. There are millions of people who continue to think according to the Greeks of the past and there are, who knows, millions more who continue reacting in accord with the Taoist concepts and or Confucians of the orient.

M. Heidegger in one of his writings mentions that “the confrontation with Asiatics was, for the Greeks, a fertile necessity, today it is for us, in a completely different way and in much greater dimensions, what will decide the future of Europe, and of what we call the occidental world.

And you encounter, as in my case, two types of actual medicine which, who knows, in the past were not so remote.

The greater mobility and the undoubted facility of movements allow that anyone who wants to could get to know the other. This in general brings preconceived concepts, common prejudices that inevitably condition what we see. And if the spirit is tolerant and intellectually lively the judgment will be positive.. .these Orientals !... And I imagine that they would say these Occidentals!... A definition of what signifies being Occidental isn't easy because above all it escapes imprecise racial limits. For example Australians in the middle of the Pacific are Occidentals when a little more to the north you find Indonesian archipelagoes inhabited by people of an oriental race, religion and customs that we visit with Occidental interest for its exoticness.

The economic factor is no small issue, as apart from the Japanese, Orientals don't come to see what we have here, they can't, if they come it's because they are attracted by the commercial and labour possibilities, for the well-being of the Occident which is enviable, above all that of the enviable occidentals, since there are legions of people in that part of the world who cannot be envied.

Cultural and Social Fabrics

The individual attitude reflects a collective attitude, intrinsic characteristics of every community, every social group and the reverse. I don't have the arrogance to want to define the concept of culture, but to reason a little about this will help us to understand each other. Culture leads us to etymological relatives, cult (worship), cultivation...

Every one individually and in all societies are confronted by "the unknown" "the other" which at the very least awakens curiosity, distrust, astonishment. We try to control this new host, this new surrounding, the unknown, the mysterious.

To this end an effort is necessary. If it involves a group, guidelines should be established and laws passed to enforce events and relationships in order to co-exist. In societies a pact and an organization are established which determine acts and official communication: the cult (sometimes even sacrificial) to communicate with "the other". This is all very well but it won't advance if we don't *cultivate* these rites and that signifies rules that should call for periodic reiteration. So with the cult and cultivation of these we establish customs that convert into tradition, transmission, culture. Included in this are beliefs, religions with their collective and individual components. If a "religion" doesn't initiate its followers in the first place into the "knowing of oneself" it will only be a system of politically useful beliefs and cults that will obtain that which is looked for from the people but is sterile in other ways.

In a closer Orient, with Islam resisted strongly by us, civilization and culture assimilates into a tree, roots, trunk foliage, they say specifically that the foliage is the variety of Islam, leaves to communicate with the exterior, be pollinated, and if this foliage is cut all the tree could die. Metaphors that we would like to be reality.

I can't speak of philosophy. But I am capable of knowing that the Chinese thinking is far from the European rationalism of Descartes, although we consider Descartes a "newcomer" in the large history of Occidental thought, which imposed the *cogito ergo sum*, so influential and not always for the good, in the theory and practice of medicine.

The Chinese thinker is more of a sage, erudite, learned (Confucian) and a good connoisseur (Taoist) of life and nature. To the Chinese in ancient times it was clear that knowledge in itself did not serve as

simple conjecture, but rather that its utility lies in helping to understand life itself and establish rules of behaviour that facilitate it.

Large and detailed psychological studies of groups of Occidentals, of Orientals and emigrants in one or the other place who keep strong social ties with their origins, show the differences; in the Occident it is necessary to measure everything and furthermore show it. However, although this isn't bad, it occurred to me that differences are born with the world so it is impossible that everything is equal in all places because when it is day here it is night there and it is as well the following day, this circumstance establishes differences, and it conditions, because it occurs during millenniums, so that even as much as we go on learning co-existence or the closeness of both hemispheres and their interchanges are not new. I would like to give some guidelines that can help us understand the differences in thought and also language and in many other cultural expressions, using the term *culture* with the idea, as I said from the beginning, of transmitting cultivation to the cult.

We as Occidental inheritors of Greek thought do not accept contradiction, we cannot accept it, it's either black or white and in medicine doctors live with the opposites benign/malignant for example or acute/chronic, something cannot be one thing and the opposite at the same time.

I know little of philosophy but I understand that this attitude derives from the thinking of Aristotle who established categories that subdivided the thinking and knowledge that existed in that epoch. It was the Greeks who were great observers of nature but their interpretation of this differs from that of the Chinese. It is a lineal way of thinking, of cause and effect that gives rise to this or that occurring for some reason. However in Greece there were some very original thinkers like Democrito who in his *Fragment 9* maintains: "we in reality know nothing true, only the changes which are produced according to the disposition of the body and that which is introduced into it or offers resistance". A shared thought with other fellow Orientals.

Between the Chinese, as far as we understand, things are not like this. Firstly, contradiction is essential; if all were equal there would be no dynamism, movement, interchange. In the Greek classic Heraclito of Efeso the concept of contraries is assimilated into a dialectical notion of reality, but the idea didn't get transcendence despite its originality in that epoch.

The observation of nature indicates to the Chinese the circulation and return of movement, things move and have the tendency to regress, spring always comes back, for example, or the polar star turns in the sky according to a rhythm which will be the same each year as it was in the previous year, man is born, grows, reproduces, dies... This dynamism has maximums and minimums, we could call tides, which is a clear example of what is meant. If the Greeks think in a straight line, the Chinese do in a circle, almost I would say in a spiral, things turn, go away and return not perhaps to the same place but very close. The idea of a being without its counterpart of Non-being doesn't exist nor the idea of above without under. This theme leads to more differences. The Occidental in his environment looks at objects, stresses individuality, the Greeks established democracy to realize the role of the individual, there are social relations and relatives but personal interest represses the rest.

The Oriental looks globally and associates with environments, for him relationship is important, he associates with nature as well as society, he doesn't place importance on objects, it's an overall look, details will come later, if they arise.

These forms of looking at one another establish, for example, a type of writing and on the other hand the writer teaches one to look in a manner convenient to him. All civilizations begin by expressing themselves with small drawings, ideograms but only China, Japan and Korea emphasize the conservation of this form of writing and lectures.

Curiously despite the resistance that the ideograms unleashed in the Occident (the French alphabetized Vietnamese hieroglyphics, few colonial functionaries knew the local language) they copied these. I know it isn't the same but ideograms are signals, syntheses, indications, like those that we see in airports, railways, public places, graphics without words explaining a service. Airplanes shown facing upwards leaving, airplanes facing downwards arriving, and anything else we want to interpret.. It is clear that this system between us does not permit abstract concepts, the truth, the patience, justice, liberty ... but surely this was how many ideograms developed. That is to say with a global view, it incorporates, it grasps a message. In Occidental language it has to be spelled out, to look at one letter after another, usage accelerates the process, but studies of the theme show that before a painting, the oriental looks at the whole, at best he is not capable

of recording or describing details, but the Occidental cannot talk of the relation between levels without describing objects.

When Nissan wanted to make itself known in the States they put advertisements on T.V. of landscapes, trees, stones, very attractive places where one could drive to in a car and at the end of the ad came a brief image of the car. But what increased by a lot was the sale of trees, rocks and bamboo but not sales of the car. A lesson for the Japanese.

Social relations in the Orient are very intense, among other reasons, in my opinion it is because there are so many inhabitants it makes individualism and to pass unnoticed very difficult. One has of necessity to take heed of the other. In the Occident we look for isolation, the island lost in the sea where there is only us and no one else. The Chinese look for the circle, the family, the neighborhood, the district, the city... For the Chinese the concept of change is basic, nothing is permanent; the only permanent thing is change.

When Chinese medicine occupied itself with the organism, its structure and composition, it was given priority and described in great detail, the study of the movements of energy, that is to say the function, the processes, the physiology, more than anatomy which cannot be described when it is isolated from the dynamic Yinyang and Wuxing. Naturally, despite its theoretical content, both concepts are linked to material organic elements, the base for the development of physiology. Yinyang are the opposite and complementary terms of unidualism, they are two but form a unit which, if broken, signifies the disappearance of that which is represented. Wuxing, which means five phases, are the five movements of energy inside nature (and as well inside the human body) during the year and in every moment of the day, that is to say, action movement.

And as Prof. Gustavo Pis-Diez so finely defined in a personal communication “ anatomy in China is “a verb” and in Greece a “noun”. Where the sustained thinks itself separated from the sustainer.

Regarding this statement, which I share, maybe a brief comparative digression on nouns and verbs is helpful as seen from Greek culture and Chinese thinking.

The Greeks, with Aristotle as champion, classified the world in a

manner distinct from the Chinese. For the Greeks if things coincided in attributes they passed as belonging to the same class, which came to be called horizontal thinking. But for the Chinese things fell into one classification when they were influencing one another through resonance.

For example in the system of the five phases the categories of autumn, west, drought, metal and white all influenced each other and as so belonged to the same class and are represented vertically, vertical thinking.

If the climate changed everything else changed as well. It was the similarity between classes and not the similarity between individuals that interested the Orientals, they were not preoccupied with the relation between an individual of a class (fish) with the class in toto (vertebrates).

In one of his writings Zhuang Zi tells us “.. to classify or limit knowledge breaks down greater knowledge”. The Chinese conceived the world as composed of continuous substances, so a relation of opposition between part/whole made sense. For the Greeks the world was composed of objects so that they encountered it natural an individual/class connection. That is to say when they knew that an object belonged to a specific category that possessed a specific attribute it could be deduced that other objects of the same class shared the same attribute.

As Richard Nisbett so relevantly exemplified in *The Geography of Thought* (N.B.London 2003), if a mammal has a liver it is reasonable to think that all mammals have them. To center oneself on the categorization in the Greek fashion of one/many, brings by inference the knowledge beginning from the category individual/class but it doesn't fit in with the representation part/whole. Objects in themselves were not the unit of analysis for the Chinese, they were their interrelation, mutual influence and resonance (verb, action).

In regard to this Jorge L.Borges (*Otras Inquisiciones, El Idioma Analítico de John Wilkins*, Alianza Emece, Madrid. 1960) he attributes to a Chinese encyclopedia *Emporio Celestial de Conocimientos Benévolos*, that animals are divided into those that a) belonged to the Emperor; b) embalmed; c) trained; d) sucklings; e) sirens; f) fabulous; g) dogs on the loose; h) also included in this classification; i) those that agitate as if crazy; j) innumerable; k) that are drawn with a fine camelhair brush; l) etcetera; m) that have just broken a jar; n) that from afar look like flies. This is an impossible product of

an Aristotlian Greek mind because these animals do not share any similar attributes to constitute a classification.

The above mentioned brings one to understand the large lists of questions related between them, the result of the movements between the five Wuxing phases.

I could enumerate many other psychological studies or stories of individual or collective observations and answers which assert these differences, but maybe it would be convenient if I keep to the theme which was proposed to me by the organization of the Conferences of the Solstices: Is there a reciprocal attraction, that is mirrored between the Orient and the Occident?

Is it true that there exists attraction between both worlds that focuses on the reality in a disparate form? There are individual sensitivities, but some people keep trapped in Occidental forms or the opposite, which seems more common, that the sensitive Occidental tries to understand the Oriental form of thinking and life different to ours. I see that multitudes travel in planes, boats, traveling kms, in long uncomfortable voyages to sunbathe when the sun also shines here, to see, buy and return satisfied to their house, very satisfied with their lifestyle. And all in exchange for anonymity, rest without anyone annoying them. I believe that among the Japanese, who are economically the most stable and at this point of time do not travel to emigrate, the same thing occurs. At the moment the countries of the extreme east are on the route to Occidentalism but without involving their essences, that is to say copying, they imitate to survive, and from what I could confirm, they try to fulfill in an exterior way, they see themselves committed to this, globalization is an economic reality and the economy is all powerful. The U.S. designed the Japanese constitution after the 2nd war, but the great democracy of the North had to necessarily include the monarchy into the system, it would not have been viable in any other way. And to copy does not appear to be in itself censurable because to copy one has to learn, understand the theory of that which is being copied and as learning is not static it follows that frontiers of knowledge will be amplified. In China copies have always been made, say of famous paintings, with the intention of attaining the same excellence as the original, if one is capable of reproducing such, if it is to the level of the grandmaster then it is emulated, it is perpetuated. Also in the Occident roman strategies were criticized for “appropriating” visual Greek

culture and this critical attitude impeded for a long time the appreciation of the artistic merits of the Romans. Roman copies, exact or freehand not only reproduced Greek works, but also parodied them, referring to and above all emulating them in successful rivalry. Now in China they continue copying at an industrial level and they maintain that intellectual ownership should be, for example, that car manufacturers pay for the rights of design to the horses or to the carts. In every way there is an intense battle going on for the payment of rights.

The interchange became more active at the end of the XVI century, with the Jesuits as prominent protagonists. The attempt at evangelization was not successful, it also triggered off various controversies in the Vatican. Finally the transcendental spirituality of the Orient came to resemble the meditation and trances of our mystic Catholics. For example the “quietism” of Miguel de Molinos, who was persecuted and died in prison because he encouraged introspection minimizing the observance of the rituals of the Catholic church, which was considered a “nihilist” deviation. That is to say he eliminated the theological fundamentals; looking at it from religion and from the vantage point of “correct thinking” this deviation is the essence of oriental doctrines. To resume it appears that “quietism” questions the hierarchy of the church and even more resembles the oriental doctrines where there is no creator, nor origin: beliefs without god. This circumstance coincided with the disapproval to the attitude of the Jesuits because in order to assimilate they attempted to participate in civic-religious rites of the Chinese, The Chinese Lord Of the Heavens was not the equivalent of the Catholic Lord of the Heavens. They reproached them that in forcing the Chinese texts they wanted to find in themselves an equivalent of God the Creator which characterized Christianity. That is to say our foundations (notions of truth, being, evolution) are not comparable, there are other ways of thinking, to which was added the concept of void that impregnates the oriental philosophies. The Occident fled from the void, as if it signified lack of foundations, the loss of theological tutorage of a Christian God who assured these foundations as a reference. Following this loss of tutelage, the world of Reason developed apparently equally sound which appears to have substituted theological ministry. But Reason opened new perspectives, new perplexities. The *horror vacui* continues to horrify. There were important dichotomies in the XVII and XVIII centuries when the physic notion of void was accepted after the definitions of Torricelli, Galileo, Newton , but the intellectuals, laity or religious, could not accept the void as it was accepted in the Middle Ages, there was no room in the cosmos for the Void, the void was

impossible. For the Orientals only nothingness and the void constituted the principle of all things. In the Occident fear of losing confidence in absolute truths, or in secure foundations, is a eurocentric critical attitude, the product of ignorance and leads to nihilism, which is a reproachable flight before the horror of nothing. All these truths, which are not universal, will lose their equilibrium if we approach the orient. How can you convince an oriental that he should repent for original sin when not only has he not committed this but has never heard of it?

There are numerous Occidental thinkers who are attracted by Oriental concepts, they try to understand and interpret the similarities and differences between the two worlds. It is clear that when one looks for something outside one's habitual environment it is because this environment is not satisfying ones needs..

The Taoists constitute of a sort of "anarchism" that observes nature: if one fell ill it was because one had transgressed some natural law and to be cured one had to follow the rhythm of nature. Many times they were considered irresponsible and lazy but it wasn't so, they respected the natural environment in which they lived, sometimes very isolated. Great observers, botanists, zoologists and artists copied them imitating the animal and vegetable life in which they lived. With ideas that they believed similar, the hippie movement of the 60's headed en masse to the orient looking for the sources. There was no need to travel, the source is in oneself, the hippies looked for the forms, the wrappings.

The Confucians understood that man could govern and be governed through laws and rules some of which were taken from nature but others were adapted to daily reality, establishing an order which facilitated life, above all that of the governing class. A society with a social scale, where each one fulfilled his job respecting order. They are the inventors of competitive exams, theirs was an ethical system governed by morals.

Buddhism came 200 years after Christ to a China in a moment of decadence, grave economic crisis and a government distanced from its people submerged in misery. Buddhism maintained equality and reincarnation into better lives. It's not surprising that there would have been followers in a society so castigated. But the upper classes also approved, maintaining Buddhist monasteries so that rebellions were not fomented which the Taoists, more independent, didn't have any qualms in supporting if they found it necessary. Indian texts were translated despite their complexity and abstractionism. But in many

ways they coincided with Taoist ideas and these were translated amalgamating Buddhist notions to the corresponding Taoist ones. Essentially both schools coincided with their search for liberation, liberating oneself from oneself in reality from what we are not: separate individuals. If the self never existed it could not die because it didn't exist, so the fear of dying loses sense. It is true that the Chinese spirit is more concrete and the Indian more abstract. That which the Indians called sunya, void, the Chinese call wu and nivana/samsara passes to become wuwei/you wei. Although the Chinese put greater importance in practical meditation manuals. For us in the Occident to meditate is to concentrate on a certain object and to focus mental activity around it. For the Oriental it is the contrary, not to focus, to let thoughts turn like a carousel of pictures that go disappearing one after the other.

I would like to define the theme recounting my personal experience regarding oriental thought, and in my case, everything relates to medicine, on how medicine is linked to culture. Apart from having lived in Peking I might not have been interested in Chinese medicine and on the supposition that this interest was satisfied it could be that I would not have preserved and practiced this knowledge. What attracted me?

I was attracted by the fertile idea of complementary opposites, the unidualism, the concept that all is relative, that the absolute is Tao which is further away from the differences and embraces them all. This questions God, who, if he is infinitely good, should confront the world, infinitely bad, then he loses his quality of absoluteness. God and the World form a clashing duality.

It is attractive to try and free oneself from that which, inherited from the Greeks, we do not find appropriate to our position, the intolerance before the contradiction, we Occidentals desire precise definitions, fixed, and in life, step by step although if one is neither doctor or philosopher we realize this is not possible. That everything is alternative that nothing is forever, for subtle changes but in the end changes, that things go but return, or on the other hand, that eternity is a temporal instant and not of infinite duration

And to understand Chinese medicine one has to understand yinyang, one of a pair of complementary opposites, a normal form of Chinese thinking, that is to say the acceptance of a creative contradiction,

live, an expression of a natural reality. Day, night, cold, heat, humidity, drought, health, sickness... The practice of applying the thought of yinyang in daily life is another thing, it is difficult to understand, to integrate it into daily reality, and when it comes to applying a diagnosis and treatment for a sick person, the effort is great. The opportunity to simultaneously practice both medicines enriched me, it permitted me to choose which technique was the most adequate at that precise moment. I find this possibility very creative and it makes for better results. We can compare this with the position of a medical intern who has to refer a patient to surgery. He can do no more for the patient, it needs another technician, surgery will treat his illness. And nobody considers this process irregular; the same attitude should be taken in regard to doctors who practice complementary medicines.

If it was a yinyang situation, as we previously described about the Orient and the Occident that are the opposite faces to the same reality, we all have a frontal plane, that of the face, chest, abdomen and we have a posterior plane, the nape, shoulder, buttocks. And all this constitutes a single person, a single anatomy.

For my sensitivity and way of thinking I make use of this method of thought which remains attractive and with the years I am hardly conscious of applying it in every moment of my life, in the beginning I incorporated it as an exercise but with practice it becomes incorporated into one's personality. It isn't arrogance, on the contrary, or I try for it not to be, it is the humility of being able to practice something studied with much effort and be able to give a service.

Another factor that adds to the attraction of the orient for me is the concept of void, which seems very abstract and difficult to conceive but studied and applied is very creative both in medicine and all orders of life. We see the Greek and Chinese perspective on this theme as I have come to understand.

It took more than 20 centuries, from the V century B.C. until XVII A.D., for the Occident to accept the atomic theories of Leucipo and his disciple Democrito. Both philosophers attempted to explain reality based on a different conception of the Being and the void. That which IS is corporal, this makes more firm than before the identity between Being and corporality and following Meliso of Samos in his Fragment 8 "if indeed there were many beings , it is necessary that these many were similar to one"; despite this was written to uphold the oneness

of Being it was converted in a manner to argue the opposite. Democrito considered the plurality of Being perfectly possible with identical characteristics which unite them. And so as the matter is uniform, only one multiple physis. There exist infinite indivisible (a-tomo) particles of one being. But what separates this “being” distributed in miniscule units? The answer: the void. The void is not because it is not corporal, but at the same time it exists. The void is a non-being related to the being that consists of atoms, and as the void exists it should have the same rights as a solid. With it the qualitative differences in beings are due to the distinct proportions of atoms of which they are composed. That is to say atomists conceived the existence of a unique original matter scattered in infinite particles separated by the vacuum that co-exists with the matter, atom particles which group together or separate by chance, by mechanical forces, but it isn't a mixture, it is related to continuity. For Eleatic atomists who accept the Ionic conception that this movement was a normal happening, it was the void that made possible the movement and with this it was explained why objects did or did not move. It is a constant process that originated an infinity of distinct worlds given that the atoms are infinite in number, and as such there is no reason that they form one world. We see how fertile was the conception of the idea of the atom and the void, which were very advanced theories for that epoch.

Indian Buddhism, imported into China and adapted and modified by Taoism, had luck in its new country because the Taoists already supported the concept of the void, which is not nothing and at the same time is. Of all the Buddhist schools it was the “Doctrina del Vacio” which had the widest repercussion in China. The void is not a reality in itself but more a negative definition that we know as nirvana is a state of vacuity, without mental production, with an interior silence, it is a reality which one tries to attain.

We talked before about the nothing that the Greeks did not accept and the Hebrews acknowledged, and consequently the Christians. But for the Chinese the nothing IS, not ordered, full of potential, everything comes from nothing. The void also exists, look in the dictionary and see that void as a noun is that which contains nothing, as such it infers the existence of a container, it is a noun with the face of an adjective. This is how the Chinese define it, the void of the vessel is that which makes the vessel accomplish its function. The utility of the flute resides in its holes, the void. And so I understood the circulation

of blood, or the digestion, the language of the arterial pulse in the wrist, to give some easy examples.

The concept of the void, is to me, more of a sensation than an idea, as if one could capture it more through feelings than reason, that they are contrary although complimentary. In an exercise of the imagination think of the void not like a negative place but like a constant and living place, alive because it is a space where breath surges, grows and is constant because being there always permits mutations, the void never changes, it is the center of vital strengths where they are born and recreated to carry out a harmonious and lasting mutation.

Heidegger, a well known Occidental philosopher, who is translated in Japan, confronted himself with the concept of void as meditating in the varied idea of vacuity, language has to help us to communicate, vacuity is the Buddhist insubstantiality which establishes a difference between vacuity and nothing but not the negative nothing of the Occidental philosophers which the Orientals call nullity, but as the Asians think: the total present with all its processes and contradictions

Apart from theories and beliefs and elaborate abstracts, the knowledge of nature does not belong to any specific person, one who wants to take control of the world will lose it. It is impossible to keep advances secret, the improvements brought by modern Occidental civilization, and the Asians strive to reach these levels, sometimes in large leaps; therefore the Occident should be disposed to share all the treasures and progressions that there are on earth and to learn with humility numerous concepts which the orient is capable of teaching. Borges, on one occasion, surely in an agnostic moment said that “god is probably something towards which the universe is attracted to ”and “an evolutionary channeling towards perfection.” You manage to love god at the final process of cosmic creation, as an end of a well-trodden road and not before having lived.