

### Two readings.

Renaissance science owes Islam one of its models of knowledge: the curious idea that nature is (like) a book, ("natura libellum"). This implies that nature has an author, (God), means something outside itself, (metaphysics), is structured in lines, (causality), and that there is an understanding between author and reader of nature, (faith). It is this last implication which merits closer attention.

An author composes specific symbols, (letters, ciphers etc.), into lines so as to form a text. The reader must have learned the meaning of these symbols before reading. To learn this he needs a key which indicates the meaning of the code in which the text is written. According to Islam the author of nature did indeed publish such a key to the code in which nature is written: the Koran. He who wants to decipher nature must have read the Koran.

Renaissance science could not take over this part of the model: it lacked faith in the Koran. But it held a comparable key: Greek mathematics and logic. Of course: the substitution of the Koran by mathematics and logic had as a consequence that the book of nature read by the Renaissance scientists was a different one from the book read by Islamic scientists: its author was no longer a writer of destiny, ("maqtub"), and became a Divine mathematician. But the structure of the model of knowledge did not change during its transference from Spain to Italy: nature was still a book.

This is not to say that the interpretation of scientific knowledge remained unchanged: it changed several times and so radically that the original epistemology, (adequation of intellect to the thing), can hardly be recognized in the various epistemologies now in fashion. But the praxis of scientific knowledge is always the same: nature is read. One first learns the code it is written in, (mathematics and logic), and then one deciphers it step by step, like a text. Science owes its "progressivity", (the fact that it "discovers"), to the linear structure of its book model, and it owes its dialectics between theory and observation to the dialectic between code and message typical of books.

The book model was repressed gradually, as its implications became, one by one, dated: science no longer supposes an author to nature, it no longer believes that nature means anything, and it even doubts its causal, chain-like, structure. In the absence of an author, of a meaning and of linearity, there seems to be little sense in speaking of a book. Still: the model is there, deeply buried underground, because science goes on deciphering nature on the basis of linear codes like mathematics and logic.

The origin of the book model may be variously explained: from the Jewish faith in Divine revelations through texts, from the fact the Medieval scientists were scholars and thus inclined to take books for models,

and so forth. But whatever its explanation; the book model is certain to be of use only for those who expect knowledge to come out of written texts. It is useless for illiterates, and for those, who, like ourselves, have lost confidence in texts. The present crisis of books is also a crisis of the book as a model of scientific knowledge.

This loss of trust in texts permits us to see that the scientific tendency toward the acceptance of a mathematico-logical structure of nature is the equivalent of an "article of faith", like the faith in the Koran. As we no longer participate in such a faith, we may "see through it". For instance thus:

Man may be considered to be a memory which stocks coded information. He experiences, knows, judges and acts in accordance to the information he holds. He is "programmed" by it. He who is programmed by mathematics knows mathematically, and he who is programmed by the Koran knows koranically.

The question as to who programs who, and why, does not arise. The process of information accumulation, ("communication"), is the fundamental network: it is composed of individual information accumulators, ("minds", "intellects"), connected through channels, ("cultural situations"), and it forms a collective memory, ("society"). Thus it is just as true or wrong to say that culture is a product of the mind, as it is to say that mind is a product of culture. "Faith" is not "born within the soul", nor is it imposed by society on the individual: society and the individual are what they are within a fundamental program, and outside that program they are not. One has no program: one is programmed. Or: one has no faith, one is within a faith. It is the network which sustains existence.

Each code has its own method of deciphering. Linear codes are deciphered like necklaces, beads on a string: they are counted one by one, calculated. Messages codified in lines are additions, "tales", "stories". Those who are programmed preferentially by this type of code lead a "historical" form of existence: for them to "be" is to "become", and to "live" is to "go forward". This is the program of Western civilisation. Its latest manifestation is science. Science exhausts the program of Western civilisation by deciphering everything in the linear, calculating method.

This exhaustion of Occidental program may be observed under the form of the crisis of objectivity. Objectivity is the belief in the possibility of unprejudiced judgement. Of a judgement without previous value impingement. It represents the last avatar of Occidental faith. Which is a faith in progressive salvation, a "historical" faith. The way of history leads to God by overcoming sin, it leads to wisdom by overcoming appearances, and so forth. Its last avatar is science: it leads to objective knowledge by overcoming ideologies.

It can now be seen that objectivity is both an impossible and an undesirable ideal. It is impossible, because one can only know what one is interested in, (has judged of value). And it would be undesirable, because to suspend value judgement is to amputate one human dimension and become a monster. The impossibility of objectivity has been shown both in theory and in scientific praxis. Its undesirability has been shown in phenomena like medical experimentation ~~and~~ concentration camps, nuclear physics studied at military institutions, technocrats working for totalitarian systems. "Pure science" as a means of salvation has lost credibility, and faith in objectivity has become bad faith. But the aim of the entire Occidental program is "pure science": because it articulates fully the code which dominated that program: linear, textual writing. Thus the crisis of objectivity is a manifestation of the exhaustion of the Occidental program.

Not the only manifestation. Our program can be seen to be menaced all around us, in all the aspects of our codified world, and therefore with our innermost center as well. It is not this or that factor of Western "faith" which is felt to tremble: it is the very foundation of Occidental existence, of that conceptual, calculating, progressive, dramatic, in sum "historical" being which is ours. Still: THE CRISIS OF THE FAITH in science illuminates our situation with an especially penetrating light, because the last generations were programmed for faith in science, like the medieval generations had been programmed for faith in the Church. We believe even now that scientific<sup>ic</sup> propositions are valid "always, everywhere and for everybody", (that they are "catholic"), although we now know that they are codified in a very special code, and can only be deciphered by those who hold the key to that code, (who are "believers"). Thus the crisis of the faith in science goes very deep into the general crisis we are in, which is a crisis of our program.

This crisis permits us to see science in a context. Namely as one of various points of view with regard to nature. A point of view which projects a mathematical vision, as the Islamic point of view projects a Koranic vision, and the point of view of the Kra Indians a magical vision. No use trying to distinguish between more or less "true" visions. For those programmed for science only scientific truth is valid, as only the truth of myths is valid for those programmed for Kra magic. Thus there is no "miracle" involved in the fact that nature behaves mathematically: it does so for us, but not for the Kra Indians, nor, necessarily, for our grandchildren. But of course; there is the argument as to more or less efficient points of view. It seems that scientific techniques work better than Koranic alchemy or Kra magic. The question is: what is the meaning of "better" ? (It shall be dealt with in the second part of this paper.)

Now to see science in a context involves much more than tolerant

indifference. To have lost faith in science is a far more radical catastrophe than the one suffered by 18th century "atheistic" illuminism. Because one may see that every point of view includes all the other ones, since all the other ones lie in its field of vision. One may explain scientifically both the Islamic astrology and Kra magic, as one may condemn keranically both Kra magic and scientific methods. Thus not only has each point of view its own truth, its own value, and its own world experience, but each point of view is universally "valid". Therefore loss of faith in science does not imply the statement: "science is wrong", but the statement: "science may explain correctly everything, as may any other point of view". Thus not "the book is a bad model for knowledge of nature", but "the book is a good model for knowledge, but it is a model".

The crumbling of our program permits us to jump from point of view to point of view, and thus experience how they work; that they do not "show", but "project". The point of view of science projects the universe of science, as the point of view of the Church projects the world Christians live in. These are not two ~~visions~~ of the "same" world, but two worlds, each of which includes entirely the other one. And this jumping also permits to experience that we are what we are, only if we stand on a point of view, ("scientists", "Christians"), and that we are nothing while jumping. It is the points of view which are the concrete "realities" while the views and the viewers, (the "world" and "myself"), are abstract horizons. Thus: the more one jumps the more one is. (Which is not, in itself, a program to substitute for the one that is crumbling.)

Also: the solidity of points of view may be experienced as a function of the number of those who occupy them. The scientific point of view is more solid than the point of view of theosophy, because more people occupy it. Truth, value, and experience thus become statistical functions of the number of their participants, "intersubjective" functions. The substitution of objectivity by intersubjectivity is thus the substitution of the "search for salvation" by the "search of the other". (Which, again, does not constitute a new program for living.)

But it does constitute a new type of reading. Curiously enough; it does not do away with the first one, it includes it. Science remains "valid" even after the loss of "faith" in it, even after the model which sustains it having been "seen through". But of course: its "validity" is different. This is what is so difficult about the situation we are in: we have no program to integrate science in, and thus verify how far it is valid.