

FUNDAMENTAL ANCIENT SYMBOLS – EVIDENCE OF ORIGINAL DIALECTIC ORIENTATION OF MANKIND*

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"It is characteristic that new concepts, which are reaching again from the empirical surface to the depths of ontology, are appearing at the time, when thinking is not only tied to human relations with nature, and our effort to rule over the material world, but when the social struggles...force the attention of thinkers to social processes, as a higher, and regarding interpretation, a more demanding form of movement."

From: J. Patočka: *Aristoteles, jeho předchůdci a dědicové*.

Whole generation of European and Western-oriented philosophers and thinkers became self-convinced, that after pre-historical ignorance, human knowledge of the ontological essence of being (the objective reality of the Universe surrounding all mankind), had started to develop and be formulated only slowly and gradually, starting in the cradle of civilization. This occurred only around the 5th century B.C., predominantly in Greece, and, independently, in India and China. Such progress was caused, even conditioned, by the birth and development of philosophical thinking in these three ancient centres of civilization. The beginning and discovery of the first ontological models of being, with subsequent development, formulation and expansion into definite philosophical systems – which culminated in human understanding about being and the notion of the Universe – are primarily attributed to Greek philosophical thinking – notably without philosophical systems of Plato and Aristotle – mankind would not be capable of understanding the true nature of Being, and would not be able to formulate the fundamental philosophical validities about the ontological foundation of this World, nor the forms and processes of its existence. Also without it, as a consequence, there would be no European philosophical development, nor Hegel's philosophical discovery of "ontological movement which creates being and its reality from within". Such convictions, in my opinion, endure to this day.

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I have no desire to lessen the contributions and the tremendous value of classical Greek, and the subsequent modern European philosophy. Without them (probably because of their substance), our civilization could not have developed such exquisite methodology in many important empirical sciences. Maybe, we would not have been able to develop the scope of knowledge which has unlocked the secrets of the material world, thereby enabling us to control it with such incredible ingenuity, and yet, simultaneously, often to exploit it without any consideration. However, with good intentions, in this contribution I will dare to cast doubts about such infallible outlooks of the World, which stem only from European civilization. Such doubts are warranted after comparative studies to understand the fundamental specifics of Chinese, and to a large extent Indian, philosophical concepts and ontological foundations, and a study of the changes in Hebrew, Greek, European and even all modern Western civilizations. This search has eventually led me deep into the pre-philosophical, even pre-historical eras, when the original fundamental choice within mankind took place about the future characteristics of their outlook to the World and the theory of Being – including ontological, philosophical and ideological characteristics.

If we can detach ourselves, just for a moment, from our traditional convictions and ideological dogmas of any kind, we could see quite a different World than as seen through the traditional prism of our European “apriorisms”. It will enrich our knowledge with new, non-traditional experiences. And this is the real purpose of this lecture.

Many millennia ago, long before any philosophical thought had been formulated, hence well before the 5th century B.C., two truly independent centres of thinking beings, now labelled “Homo sapiens”, gradually started to develop on the Eurasian continent. One centre developed in the Far East, in the watershed of the Yellow River. Because of the surrounding huge natural obstacles, it was virtually hermetically sealed from the rest of the Eurasian inhabitants, and for many millennia, it was locked inside its own specific world. Qualitatively, this centre was the most expressive focus of the so-called Mongoloid race of Humans for millennia. Simultaneously, on the other side of the Eurasian continent, in similar geographical latitudes, in the area of Volga River and Caucasian mountains, another – so-called Caucasian – race of Humans had been autonomously developing for a long time. However, their geographical location did not prevent expansion to other parts of Europe, Near Asia, the Mediterranean and North Africa, and in another direction, to the Hindustan River delta. (Naturally, there were other centres of developing Human races, e.g. Black, Australoid, and others, yet their developments are not a subject of this lecture.)

From the centre of the Mongoloid race in the Far East, at the turn of 4th and 3rd millennia B.C., a well-developed agrarian civilization emerged. Despite being absolutely isolated from the rest of the World, excellent natural conditions around the Yellow River and its huge surrounding area, enabled this civilization to

remain in one place, despite the population explosion. Thus, while the populated areas kept expanding, the unchanging human conditions – focused on agriculture – was not under pressure to change. Agriculture revolved around plants crops; the early discovery of soybeans, which compensated for the need to consume dairy and albumen components of animals, the abundant nutrients of rice, and cultivation of the silkworm for the fabrication of cloth, for millennia helped a formation of such archetype humans, who did not become estranged or frightened in their relationship with nature. Therefore, other means of human endeavour, such as crafts or trade, became only a sideline, supplemental economic activities. In fact, in the ancient Chinese past, they were held in disrespect, and were tolerated only as a means of obtaining luxury items. Until the 1st century B.C., foreign trade was conducted only with outlying nomadic tribes, and only as barter. For a long time the Chinese were unaware of the existence of other civilizations in the World. In the Orient, in its undisturbed and very unique circumstances, an authentic agrarian civilization developed for thousands of years. It was linked with Nature, even became voluntarily subordinated to Nature in the most deterministic forms of human practice.

It is interesting, and probably not by chance, that in primeval Chinese society, long before the time of Lao Tzu and his *Tao Te ching*, and even Confucius, yet around 3,000 years B.C., the shamans started to use the trigrams of *pa-kua* in everyday practice. These trigrams are but a graphic illustration of the processes of transformation of the natural dialectic Yin-Yang. They illustrate this notion in a circular symbol of two overlapping antagonistic waves of energy of Heavens (the Universe). This ontological symbol of the ancient Chinese theory of Being, in its graphical illustration of Yin-Yang, surrounded by eight trigrams to symbolize the circular developmental process of the energy transformations of Being “in itself and from itself”, on the basis of its own dialectic bi-polarity, did not require any other philosophical interpretations. The symbol was clear, and to the knowledgeable people it was ontologically understood. So, when at the turn of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. Lao Tzu (the Old Master) wrote *Tao Te ching*, in which he defined The Way Tao and Its creative energy Te, he did not discover – even ontologically – anything new. He only philosophically defined and described in detail what was already known. Lao Tzu provided philosophical commentary on the most fundamental viewpoint of the World, which had existed in this civilization since time immemorial. Yet, it is seldom noted that Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te ching* and the whole subsequent history of classical Chinese philosophy is the only example in the history of all human civilizations, which did not betray the original symbol of its civilization’s world-view, and, from the ontological viewpoint, has remained faithful to it in the following centuries, even through millennia of its philosophical development. However, Chinese civilization is also the only one in the World which, throughout its entire existence – that is for at least ten thousand years – survives in the original geographical area where had been

born and in unchanged objective conditions of its fundamental time-space existence.

The above insight automatically provokes one to conduct similar analyses to discover some specific symbols of other important civilizations about their viewpoint of the World and their fundamental ideology. In this context, it is interesting to decipher the symbol of another important ancient swastika, which became so sadly and unfortunately ideologically misused, and in our modern history it is known as the Nazi cross. This ancient Indo-European symbol was preserved from its common cradle in the Transcaucasian-Volga region in the cultural consciousness of both ancient Germans, as well as ancient Indians. It may not be a coincidence, that in the Transcaucasian-Volga region, where the graphical illustration of the swastika was probably born, the climatic conditions were similar to those in the region of the birth and development of Chinese civilization around the Yellow River: the temperate climate of Palearctic Eurasia, with its rich vegetation and four seasonal changes, from the reawakening of Nature in the spring to the withering of all vegetation in winter, in the uniform natural law of cyclical transformations of life. In the ancient Volga region, in similar conditions at its birth, an authentic human society had started to develop, totally dependent on Nature, which, on the territory of its initial existence, did not come into conflict or become estranged with Nature. This society was fully dependent on Nature for its existence, therefore, it followed the laws and demands of Nature. At this stage, the consciousness of an Indo-European did not have reason to develop subjectively-programmed forms of human exertion. The Transcaucasian people were natural people, hunters, shepherds and gatherers of berries. And these people invented their swastika symbol: the cross with four equal arms bent at right angle.

What is the cross with arms bent at right angle, as this ancient Indo-European symbol of the swastika? Its philosophical explanation is provided by classical Indian philosophy, whose representative – classical Indian civilization – found, in their new homeland in the Hindus River watershed, equally favourable natural conditions for the development of an agrarian civilization, such as those enjoyed by the Chinese civilization around the Yellow River. The awareness of Indian society, even after its gradual migration from their ancient Indo-European homeland to the Hindus River in southwestern Asia, did not have to, and did not experience a discontinuity in viewpoint, which would be forced by a completely new and qualitatively different reality of life. The cross with bent arms, as a world-viewed swastika symbol of the fundamental nature of Being, did not loose also in these new geographical territories anything from its primal philosophical principle and reality. This symbol is, fundamentally, a graphic illustration of rays, starting from the anti-poles of energy beaming from a central core of existence, that is, from its primary initial emergence. The whole symbol is actually a representation of pure ontological movement, for whose core of existence the subsequent Indian philosophy later developed the ontological category called “shunya” or “empti-

ness". The ontological category "emptiness" is not an ontological form of nihilism; it is only a "nihility" of its substantive existence within a given time-space. The ontological being of "shunya", just as the ontological being of its Chinese parallel, the Way of Tao, had existed before the existence of time-space. And the existence of time-space, in all its diverse forms, is actually ontologically determined and initiated by the pure energy of "shunya" or the Way of Tao. "Shunya" or the Way of Tao is determined, and being born, by its own dialectic bipolarity, is so continuously created from itself, and within itself. Therefore, the Indo-European swastika symbol is not a cross of straight rays, beaming from its centre towards infinity, but a cross of broken lines, pointing to each other, whose beams of bipolar energy jets continuously create fields of tension, of dialectic "repulsion-attraction", which cause the energy of Being to be continuously created and eternally polarized. That much we can derive from the analysis of the Indo-European swastika cross with the bent arms.

However, the Indo-European cross does not complete the set of ancient swastika symbols which reflect the original dialectic orientations of mankind. There is another important swastika symbol, the six-pointed Hebrew star. This symbol, in its graphical image, is a likeness of two even-sided triangles, mutually opposing and piercing each other in such a way that each triangle is in an equal, yet diametrically opposing function. Together, they form a bipolar unity, just as it was formed in the Chinese swastika symbol by the waves of Yin-Yang, or in the Indo-European symbol by the bent arms of the cross. From the analysis of Hebrew swastika symbol one could claim that at the time of inventing and adopting its fundamental symbol, the Hebrew nation still accepted the bipolar dialectic viewpoint that Being is the unity of the opposite polarity of fundamental energy of objective reality. (Maybe, some remnants of this originally dialectic viewpoint can be traced even in modern Hebrew language. For example, it has no expression for "man has a soul", only that "man is a soul and a body". This illustrates one of the fundamental axioms of the bipolar dialectic, that opposites are mutually non-divisible parts of the non-divisible bipolar unity.)

The six-pointed Hebrew star, therefore, is a symbolic viewpoint of the macrocosm and the microcosm as an organic unity of Being as a form of the energy of opposites. It is simultaneously the Universe, and also the microcosm. It is the macro-Subject (Jehovah), and the micro-subject (Man). It is a fusion of organic unities of its substantial and non-substantial (spiritual-material) existence. The star symbolizes the existential substance of man and God, Earth and Heaven, in both subjective and objective perceptions in the unity of Universe.

From this viewpoint, it would be interesting to perform one more important analysis, on how the Hebrew opinion of the World has changed after the migration of the Jews to a new location and into different conditions of life. It forced a re-definition of Hebrews' fundamental character of predominant human objective practice, and the adoption of an artificial, non-dialectic outlook toward life.

Contrary to the Chinese and Indian civilizations which remained typically agrarian throughout the times of their classical development, the ancient Western-Semitic tribes of nomadic Hebrew shepherds, retreating before waves of other nomadic tribes, arrived into Palestine around 2,000 B.C. On a relatively narrow strip of land between the Mediterranean and the Syrian desert, which offered only limited means for prosperity and the rise of an agrarian society, they started with mixed agriculture. However, new settlements at the crossroads of three important political spheres: Mezopotamian, Hittite and Egyptian, opened new possibilities for this ethnic tribe to enrich its traditional economy. A substantial part of the Hebrew population gradually transformed from shepherds and farmers to industrious craftsmen and traders. And, over time, these new forms of labour became predominant in their national economy. The original unity and natural blending of Semitic people with the circulation of Nature was thus disturbed. People in the Hebrew social reality started to live according to their own, subjectivistic way of existence, from which they then also subjectivized the laws of their objective reality.

The consequences of these economic changes on the outlook of the inhabitants of ancient Palestine are clearly allegorized in the Bible, in the Book of Job: Job, a rich shepherd, originally lives the way his ancestor did. He believed in an absolute subordination to the laws of Nature, which the traditions of his ancestors personified in the religious image of God, Jehovah. Suddenly, Job's life undergoes a significant existential change. A Messenger's news about the destruction and death of his herds convince him of the end of his normal means of earning a livelihood; other news about the death of his children convince him about the end of his procreation; and an illness – a Messenger of death in his own body – convinces him of the end of his own existence. Job faces a critical situation: either he will passively surrender to fate and become reconciled with the status of a "beggar, dying in the dump", or start to think, "open his mouth", and fight for his salvation. And so begins his great battle with God (objective Being) for his subjective right to existence. However, he simultaneously documents a break in his fundamental outlooks. He stops to feel his objective reality (Jehovah) as a harmonious unity with his existence, with which he dialectically coheres. He starts to perceive Jehovah as an opposite, whom he has to fight for survival. This objective reality becomes something which is not good to him, something which he has to combat. At this moment, the Hebrew swastika symbol – the bipolar star – becomes for all Hebrew-Jobs only a formal mystic symbol. The natural, harmonious link Job-Nature (Jehovah) becomes an estranged struggle of Job and Jehovah, the struggle of a Hebrew man against Nature (Jehovah) for freedom of action, an expression of subjectivistic insubordination against the objective laws of life's reality, which otherwise would not give him a chance to survive.

If we follow the subsequent history of the Hebrew nation, this important break in belief soon resulted in an ideological tension, culminating in the birth of a new

starting viewpoint, represented by the historical personage of Jesus of Nazareth, and the gradual formation of Christianity. Because, even if it sounds like a paradox, the bipolar-dialectic principle of creative co-ordination of all contradictions and opposites of Being is alien to Christianity. Christianity became the ideology of the global-viewpoint of the Creator, born in the new geophysical conditions of the Hebrew ethnos in Palestine and reflecting the new life experiences of man-producer. Objectivized consciousness of man, subordinated by natural laws, is replaced by a viewpoint which subjectivizes the object-Universe and gives it the characteristics defined by the subject. The bipolar dialectic swastika symbol of a six-pointed star no longer corresponds with the principle of the Creator. From the two interlocking and opposing triangles, Christianity started to revere only one – the spiritual one – attributing to it the Father-Messiah-Spirit symbolism of the Creator. Around the same period (although few centuries earlier), a similar discontinuity occurred in the consciousness of the Greek culture. There, a similar change in lifestyle had taken place, and many descendants of nature-oriented hunters and farmers became city dwellers. The Greeks, as expressed through the thoughts of their philosophers, started to realize the superiority of humans over material world. They also became estranged from the dialectical process of natural harmony, and replaced it with the Platonic-Aristotelian “mathematical system of the World”. This model was from the practical viewpoint much more useful to the man-producer than the eternal flow of uncontrollable transformations of the dialectic world. In the new structure of society of the Near East and the Mediterranean, the ancient swastika symbol of bipolar energy of dialectic transformations became incomprehensible. For the Jews, the ancient symbol became only mystically-formal and, for Christianity, it became reduced to only one opposite.

Although many centuries later, a similar fate has befallen also the other two ancient swastika symbols: the Chinese Yin-Yang symbol of the harmonious unity of the opposites was redefined by modern Marxist-Communist-Maoist ideology into a potentially very dangerous and, for humanity, disastrous symbol of the battle of the opposites, which – as an ideological weapon – is capable of bringing our Planet to the brink of an absurd catastrophe. And the Indo-European cross with the bent arms, which the Nazist ideology borrowed as its sacred symbol not so long ago (probably being ignorant of its true meaning), is reduced by neo-Germanic ideology (I assume, with their full awareness) into an axial cross in a circle. The axial cross with its straight arms has nothing in common with the Christian belief (as some fraudulently claim). Actually, it is the modern swastika symbol of modern German philosophy, particularly Hegel’s philosophical model and idea of an “Absolute Spirit”. This idea is convenient to neo-German longing for an emerging the self-conscious Greater Germany. For them, the “axial cross in the circle” symbolizes the inexhaustible potential of creative energy of an Absolute Spirit, forever capable of beaming and creatively exercising itself as a

"Demiurge". Such energy, in their viewpoint, does not need to renew itself by dialectic bipolarity.

Today, we again live in a period of discontinuity from the global viewpoint, when mankind is at a crossroad between two contrasts: the ontological models of dialectic and of creation. Which viewpoint modern civilization will eventually adopt, is a question for the future. But, it is also a question of our empirical experience and intellectual maturity. This essay has only attempted to analyse the situation at the starting points of the formation of ancient outlooks about the World, and to emphasize that there is another, nowadays largely forgotten viewpoint of the fundamental principles of the Universe, which could also suit our whole existence and future.

In closing, I would like to include, in my translation, an excerpt describing the original, ancient dialectic viewpoint, as it was philosophically defined in the 5th century B.C., by the Chinese Philosopher Lao Tzu in his *Tao Te ching*:

There was something, a whirling flow, before the Heavens and the Earth were born.
Oh, how lonely and desolate it endured its (eternal) unipotence without change.
Blending in circles, without concern for any menace.
Perhaps, that's why it became the Mother of Twilights.
I do not know the name, therefore I use a symbol: The Way.
And if I am forced to call it by name, I would call it: Immense.
Whatever is immense, one can presume that it is expanding.
Whatever is expanding, one can presume that it will become infinite.
Whatever is infinite, one can presume that it is returning.
Therefore:
The Way of Tao is Immense,
the Heavens are Immense,
the Earth is Immense,
Man is immensely Great!
Hence, at the core of this delimitation are four Immensities and Man is one of them!
The laws of Man are determined by Earth,
the laws of Earth are determined by the Heavens,
the laws of the Heavens are determined by the Way of Tao
and the Way of Tao is unto itself!

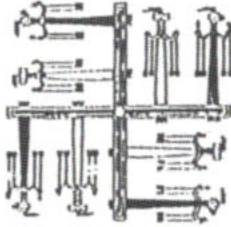
For example, with this illustration, I could almost believe that the global viewpoint of the future will become the third option: a symbiosis of Dialectic-Creator, accepting the Harmony of the unity of opposites, and rejecting their mutual self-destructing conflict. Perhaps that will nurture the hope that our human civilization will survive, as long as it can discard its ideologic prejudices and accept the world-view contradictions which can forge global unity.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Ancient swastikas



Chinese swastika

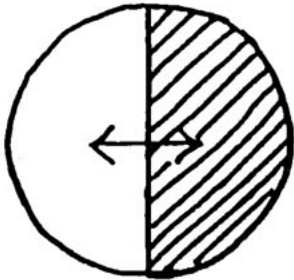


Indo-European swastika

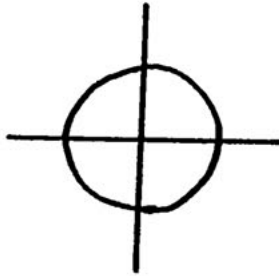


Hebrew swastika

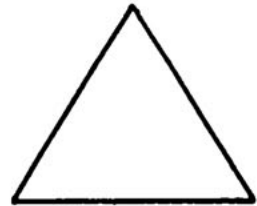
Later reductions



Marxist-Communist-Maoist
substantive dialectic
of the battle of the opposites



neo-Germanic



Christian

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