

Essay

On Atheist Spirituality Part V: Extended Harmony, Atheist Spirituality, Mysticism and Mystery

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Abstract

In this series of essays, I explore and discuss spiritualization of materialistic atheism in support of Andre Comte-Sponville. These essays are further dedicated to Marie-Louise Nykamp. This essay contains: Extended Harmony, and Growing Up at Last ...; On Chapter Three : Can There Be an Atheist Spirituality ? On Mysticism and Mystery: For How Longer Are We to Be Bound to Unfortunately Misplaced Words?

Extended Harmony, and Growing Up at Last ...

It is a rather unique, and at the same time widely spread inborn human gift to be musical. More precisely, most humans instantly, and quite unpleasantly notice when in some melody even one single false note occurs. Of course, what is found to be melodious may differ in various cultures. And yet, certain successions of musical sounds are just about universally found to be out of tune, so to say ...

In this regard, it would be quite instructive to embark upon a research involving infants across various cultures, and see whether before they may be influenced by the specific ways of musical harmony of their cultural background, one may find with them an inborn more universal sense of such musical harmony ...

However, what we are concerned here is a rather more extended, in fact, one may say maximally extended sense of harmony, one that goes far beyond the usual merely musical one.

Now, if and when wondering about the meaning of detachment mentioned by Meister Eckhart, for instance, and even more so, about the ways one may ever reach such a state of Being, one first step may perhaps be an ability to attain to an extended sense of harmony. One that it is not circumscribed and conditioned even by an anthropocentric position, let alone by cultural or civilizational ones ...

But, is there indeed any possibility for such more extended sense of harmony ?

Well, one of the extraordinary and unprecedented aspects of hard science is precisely in the fact that it does represent such an ever extending harmony. As they say, music is a universal language. Well, Mathematics, Physics, and other hard sciences are all equally, if not in fact, far more universal. And in fact, in their very essence, they are supposed to go far far beyond any anthropocentric positions. This is, after all, that very essence which makes hard science so universally valid, far beyond the specifics of humanity, Planet Earth, the Solar system, the Milky Way Galaxy, and so on ...

The problem with hard sciences is that they concern themselves with rather limited aspects of reality, aspects in which anthropocentrism does in fact have not much, if any at all, place. And this is precisely one of the main reasons in the unfortunate emergence of the so called two cultures. In short, one of these two cultures tends to be as much disjoint of anthropocentrism as possible, while the other one is so insistently - if not in fact, proudly - keeping itself arrested not only in anthropocentrism, but within

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far more narrow, so called, cultural or civilizational camps, not to mention various, political, religious, ethnic or racial ones ...

As for Meister Eckhart's detachment, clearly, it is beyond that of hard science as well ...

And needless to say, it is beyond the two cultures as well ...

Thus it is no wonder that it cannot significantly be accessed based on any way practiced by the elite chattering class ...

And then, what are we left with, what are we facing here ?

Well, one reason for the difficulties involved in reaching detachment - a reason no doubt, extremely hard to consider, let alone, accept by many - is that we may have a rather wrong concept about being grown up ...

Indeed, while growing up, most individuals tend strongly to see it happening with themselves at an earlier age than older persons who know them may acknowledge it. And so often, growing up is reduced by both sides merely to sexual maturity in its strict biological sense, plus the ability to earn a living, and thus be able to live on one's own. In this regard, in our times, there are tendencies to further claim younger and younger ages at which individuals can be considered grown up. For instance, in parts of the Western world, there are advocates of giving the right to vote in political elections to persons of younger and younger age ...

Well, as it happens, and becomes quite obvious at a more careful consideration, sexual maturity in biological sense and the ability to support oneself materially are significantly less than indeed being grown up in a sufficiently reliable sense ...

Now, one may object that a more demanding sense of being grown up would leave a vast majority of humanity outside, and quite likely, for the whole of their lifetime. Such an argument, however, is not quite serious, since it is nothing else but moving the goal posts, so that we may claim to have a vast majority of humans grown up, say, by the age of twenty, or certainly, thirty. Well, if it would come only to voting in political elections, perhaps the issue would not be so critical. However, the immaturity of vast numbers of individuals - considered nevertheless to be old enough for being grown up according to custom - can manifest itself in serious consequences not only once in a couple of years, when they may vote in political elections ...

And then, what should one consider as represented by the description of being grown up in more genuine ways ?

A first idea which can come to one's mind is that one should be wise enough ...

Well, this does not seem to clarify much the problem, since the definition of wisdom recalls that of a good wine : I cannot tell you what a good wine is, but certainly, I can recognize it when I drink one ...

Let us, therefore, try a more effective and less empirical definition of wisdom. And in this regard, we can start with a simple and well known analogy. A person trained in martial arts can easily defeat anybody else who may be far more strong, but is not similarly trained. This is well known for ages, and it is one of the reasons martial arts, and persons trained in it, elicit such an interest among large numbers of people.

And what is martial arts training all about ?

Simple, very simple indeed : Do not use your physical power just as it may come to you instinctually, and do not think that your success in fight is proportional with your inborn and untrained physical power. Instead, use your physical power as intelligently as possible. And such an intelligent use is quite different from what your instincts may tell you. Hence the need for special training, one that may free you from the manifest ineffective use of your physical power when left alone to your instincts.

Well, the conclusion is that an intelligent use of physical power is a considerable multiplier of that power, when it comes to effects ...

And then, how about an intelligent use of one's intelligence ?

Amusingly, it appears that among intelligent persons fewer seem to be aware of the immense advantages in using their own intelligence intelligently, and not merely as it may come to them upon instincts, than may be aware of the advantages of being trained in martial arts when using one's physical power. Thus being aware of the multiplier effect of using intelligently one's physical power is far more widely known about than the same kind of multiplier effect when using intelligently one's own intelligence ...

No wonder, being born physically strong can lead to considerable pride, confidence and other forms of ego trips ...

Nothing to compare, however, with the pride, confidence and all sorts of ego trips, when born intelligent and knowing about it ...

It is, therefore, so often that the more intelligent one considers oneself to be, the less one cares about anything else than using that intelligence just as it may come. And so it happens that intelligence ends up so often becoming in fact the mere obedient slave of emotions ...

Well, if one is ready to give some consideration to the above, and specifically, to the possibility that most of us humans do not really grow up before we die, then it may be quite appropriate to try some sort of mental experiment by wondering about stories in the Old Testament, for instance, where certain individuals are mentioned who had lived hundreds and hundreds of years, before God decided that humans should not live longer than hundred twenty years.

Indeed, just imagine what kind of understanding of life one may possibly attain after living in more or less normal conditions for, say, five hundred years ?

And it may not even be necessary to live so long for that purpose ...

The story of Enoch, for instance, is remarkable in this regard. He was merely three hundred odd years old, when according to Genesis 5:24, in the Old Testament, he went to Heaven : "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

And then, how does the issue of evil may look, as well as many other issues, including the issue of whether God - whatever the elite chattering class may throw up as a definition - exists or not, when one has attained enough detachment, wisdom, and possibly, also a more extended sense of harmony ?

So then, when one asks why an assumed to be perfect and loving God allows so much evil in Creation, one may as well recall in the Old Testament the verse in Deuteronomy 30:29 :

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing : therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.”

The assumed perfection and love of God is, in His own words, in the very potential given to us humans, the potential to choose life ...

And if it happens that, much unlike Enoch, we do not manage to bring about a proper choice within the time given to us, then who is to blame ?

When we look around at the living creatures on our Planet Earth, when we look at plants and animals, we see that individuals do matter less than the whole of the species to which they happen to belong. It is, indeed, only with us, humans, that individuals start to matter, that each and every individual does so ...

It is again in the Old Testament, in Genesis 1:26-28, that no less than four times, and one after the other, it is written than humans were made in the image of God. This is the only statement made four times in the whole of the Old Testament. On top of it, it is repeated one after the other. And furthermore, it is made up front, as soon at the very beginning of the book, as humans are mentioned to be created in the sixth day. It may therefore be seen as by far the most important statement in the whole of the Old Testament, except for the name of God in Exodus 3:14, and possibly, the mentioned statement about Enoch in Genesis 5:24.

A consequence is that all humans are equal before God ...

And yet, if we humans can raise a major objection against the Bible, be it the Old or the New Testament, or against other old holy books, is that none of them goes further to state that we have individual human rights as well ...

Individual human rights, and in particular, equality not only before God, but before the law as well, before the humans made laws, is a relatively new development brought about in the last few centuries in England, America and France ...

So that, the human project, so to say, is clearly far from being completed to any satisfactory extent ...

And then, why stand up and complain - even if with an assumed cheerful desperation - and then take ill founded major ontological decisions and act upon them, just because we got born at a certain time and in some place, and we do not happen to live long enough, in order to reach better stages in the grander scheme of the human project ?

And if you happen not care much about that human project, well then, do you have no any other conceivable choice than to jump straight to the opposite, and like a good solipsist, see absolutely everything centered around yourself, or even reduced to yourself ?

Or in case you may happen to be more generous, to see everything focused on, and reduced to the human generations that existed so far, and those whose similar future you may claim to foresee ?

Perhaps, you may also conceive of the choice when you may have already reached a certain stage in detachment ...

And you may, therefore, be detached enough of time and space as well ...

And if not, then certainly, you should try to be so, and first of all, be detached of time, of your usual concept of time ...

And once you may manage that, well, try to see then how all those fundamental issues which so much trouble you now will feel ...

And try to remember that, some of us have been, and are like the good old baron von Muenchausen, and can indeed pull ourselves out of troubles ...

Or even better, simply avoid getting into them ...

Remember Pope John Paul II, who passed away recently ?

In the quarter or so of century of his tenure, nearly five hundred Catholics were declared saints. Several related aspects are remarkable, and totally unprecedented in fact, although few Catholics of any rank have managed to become aware of their true significance. First perhaps, all, or nearly all those declared to be saints lived in recent times, and there were quite a few Catholics still alive who knew them well and could testify on their behalf. Further, the number of those declared saints is larger than those declared so by all popes over the previous five centuries. Also, Pope John Paul II did set up a permanent committee which was in charge with the selection of candidates for sainthood. And that committee has, among others, distinguished lay members, some of them well known medical doctors, for instance. Last, but not least, several serious commentators, some of them not Catholics, who analyzed the workings of that committee found that, in fact, the committee was rather severe, and that, given their declared criteria, they could have accepted perhaps twice the number of candidates they did.

Well, the message is so simple and direct, indeed : saints do live in our own times as well, and quite a few of them ...

And if one considers those over one thousand three hundred who were beatified, which is the preliminary stage to sainthood, plus those over four hundred eighty who were canonized, that is, declared saints, then it turns out that, among Catholics in our own days there may be more than one per a million who could end up being, after their death, declared a saint according to the criteria of that committee ...

And needless to say, it is not only Catholics who can count among their own ranks such, shall we say, fully grown up human beings ...
Certainly, persons not only dead but also still alive, adepts of any of the other religions, denominations, and so on, not to mention persons not belonging to any of them, may qualify according to the criteria of John Paul II ...

The only other, even if only most vaguely comparable, such process of recognition is that by which the Queen of England hands out titles of nobility in each year. Unfortunately however, the respective selection is heavily influenced by political and other considerations which, needless to say, have absolutely nothing to do with any more commendable human quality ...

And what are the criteria of that Catholic committee which selects saints ?

One of the more important ones is the ability of the candidate to produce miracles, among them, miraculous healing.

As for miracles, one should be clear - whether one happens to be religious, atheist, agnostic, or of any other conceivable a priory fixed and prejudiced position - that there are only two possible alternatives :

- Either everything is a miracle, or on the contrary, nothing is a miracle !

After all, the concept of miracle is obviously essentially relative. Relative to what we happen to consider normal, that is, natural, and thus not at all miraculous. Just think about the way your great-great-grand parents, for instance, would feel in your own house today if they were to come back to life suddenly, and live there: electricity powering all sorts of devices, not to mention radio, television, computers, mobile phones, and so on, and so on ...

There is also a second most important aspect of miracles, namely, assuming that they do indeed exist, we humans keep being unaware of any number of miracles which do actually happen to us in our day to day lives ...

Well, miracle healings are also not miracles, and they are indeed not, precisely to the extent that they manage to deliver a genuine and lasting healing. What may happen in such cases is that the respective healer has access to, or contact with sources and methods we, as of now, do not yet know about, just like our great-great-grand parents did not know even about electricity, not to mention many other things which we do not at all consider miracles ...

There is, thus, not much point in talking about supernatural phenomena, effects, and so on. After all, either nature contains everything, or not. And by its proper definition, nature is all, absolutely all that exists. And this is supposed to be even more so for atheists, agnostics, and other of the kind of persons who enjoy - or for that matter, do not quite, like for instance those cheerful desperates - being fixed for evermore into a prejudiced ontological position ...

Anyhow, either we like it or not, the most likely alternative regarding miracles is none of the above two, but the following third one :

- Everything, and at the same time, nothing is a miracle ...

After all, the very fact that you have been born is - from probability point of view - a miracle. And related to it, just consider the following most basic ontological asymmetry :

- You are born, and you are aware of it.
- On the other hand, had you not been born, would you be aware of not being born ?

And to add to it, one may as well ask :

- Being born as a usual human being, and being aware of it, does it mean that one is born to absolutely everything that exists, that one is aware of absolutely everything that exists ?

Certainly, throughout the ages, there was an awareness that one should rather answer “no” to the above question ...

And as we do not so much like to live with such a rather unsettling answer, all that we were not supposed to be aware of was attempted to be neatly packed away into an awesome and miraculous concept of God ...

At least, so it was done by monotheists ...

But then, we started to mess with the situation, and ended up with any number of confusions, problems, and even disasters like religious wars, or the present emergence of Moslem terrorism ...

For instance, it was not so easy to disregard completely that assumed to be utterly separate and inaccessible entity called God ...

No, we were tempted to relate to It in some ways, ways possibly convenient for us ...

And then sacrifices and prayers were invented, and later theologies, till more near to our own days, we have the elite chattering class ...

The class which can only define itself by some sort of negation of that age old initially attempted solution : a-theist, a-gnostic, nihil-ist, and so on ...

But then again, what kind of definition can be given by a mere negation ?

And even if it could be given, well, how come that you are happy to define and identify yourself merely by negating what you do not like ?

How come, indeed, that in the name you choose for yourself, that what you do not like is essentially present ?

Strange are the ways of the Lord, one could say, recalling a saying from those good old times which you now so much claim to have left behind ...

But let us return to the ability to produce so called miraculous healing. What may, indeed, be involved in it ?

Medical science has for long been aware of the phenomenon which goes by the name of placebo. And it is worth recalling the cases of it when neither the medical doctor, nor the patient is aware that an inert substance is administered under the pretense of being a genuine medicine, yet the effect is a manifest healing.

In such cases one is left to assume only that the personal belief of the patient in the healing effect of the alleged medicine, and that belief alone, is the cause of the resulting healing.

By the way, in the New Testament, Jesus himself, whenever he elicits such a miraculous healing, makes the remark to the respective patient that “your faith has healed you”, as can be seen in Mark 5:34, 10:52, Luke 8:40-48, 18.42, for instance. In such cases, it appears that the respective patients were not even given any sort of genuine or placebo medicine. And it was only their own belief or faith, as elicited by Jesus, which produced the healing. And in fact, such healing can take even more strange and yet more indirect forms, Like for instance, when Jesus heals the servant of a Roman officer, a servant who is somewhere faraway, and thus the healing happens through that officer who requests it from Jesus.

Amusingly, the typical human reaction, even in our own days, to such healings is to see them as being indeed miraculous, and then, to drastically displace and misplace their cause which becomes identified with the person who elicited them, or with the so called holy place where it happened, a place that often becomes the destination of pilgrimages by masses of people seeking miraculous healing ...

But then, it is but one of the typical human failures to tend to identify the message with the messenger, the process with the one implementing it, and so on ...

And we are so often ready to kill the messenger that brings bad news ...

So then, what is so surprising about seeing the one whose mediation led to a miraculous healing as being the healing agent himself or herself ?

And needless to say, various religions are only glad to use and abuse such a widespread tendency to thoroughly misunderstand what actually takes place ...

Then, of course, come the atheists, agnostics, and their kind, and further ridicule religions and the religious, without however trying to look more carefully into what may actually be going on ...

Yet, does anybody really care to try to understand what may indeed go on during such a process ?

Of course, hardly at all, since just about everybody already assumes to know perfectly well the answer, or alternatively, dismisses the whole thing as yet another silly superstition ...

The problem with saints, or rather, with sainthood, is that, unfortunately, the leaders in Christianity, and even more so in Catholicism, have been very much afraid of living saints. And this fear is certainly not there in Hindu, Jewish, Buddhist, or Moslem traditions. The Hindus and Buddhists use for their living saints the term “enlightened” or “seers”, while the Jewish term is “righteous”, for instance. And such persons are seen to be more important for their communities while they are still alive. The reasons Catholics, in particular, accept for sainthood only persons who are dead already may be several. One of them, quite obvious however, comes from the highly hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church. And advancement in that hierarchy, as two millennia of history shows it, is hardly ever related mainly to qualities which may be essentially appropriate for a saint. Therefore, a living saint may, even unwillingly and simply by his or her very way of being, pose a manifest challenge to the authority of the existing hierarchy.

And it should be noted that such wise, or rather, more truly grown up humans can be quite young in years, can be endowed with very simple minds and souls, can be uneducated, and in short, can come from just about every walk of life ...

Be it, as it may, the potential for becoming a person who in the case of Christians is called a saint, and in the case of other religions has certain other names, is clearly there in each generation, including in our present one ...

This is most likely the main message Pope John Paul II intended with his promotion to sainthood of such considerable number of persons who had lived in recent memory ...

And just as the Catholics are not the only ones, so to say, to produce saints, in the same way, it is of course not the monopoly of religions as such to be the only human ventures to facilitate the emergence of wise persons, persons whom one can indeed consider to be more truly grown up ...

After all, neither Socrates, nor Plato belonged to any more important known religion, and fortunately, none of the two started one, or was expropriated by one ...

And then, when it comes to issues such as the existence of evil, or the existence or inexistence of God, whatever that may be supposed to mean, perhaps, the proper approach is to wait quite a bit longer than merely reaching sexual maturity from biological point of view, or reaching the ability to support oneself materially ...

And if one may happen to die “young” from the point of view of a more proper meaning of the concept of being grown up, well then, one may remind oneself that with us humans, although the individual counts, it is still not that each and every individual must do so ...

As the saying goes “Man knows how many seeds are in an apple, but only God knows how many apples are in a seed ...”

And each of us humans is given a seed when we are born ...
Do we take care of it properly ?
Well, so far, it appears that in far too many cases God only can tell ...

And yet, in this regard, we are ways ahead of animals, where the species as a whole counts far more than any individual, although even the whole species does not count for much in the scheme of the biosphere. However, this does not at all mean that each and every human individual is supposed to reach his or her perfection in life. After all, even the human species as a whole does not seem to have a guarantee for reaching such a perfection ...

And contrary to what many may think, and especially those who in one way or another are religious, there is nothing wrong with understanding and accepting the lack of such a guarantee given on the level of the whole human species ...

By the way, in the Old Testament, after the Flood, God promises not to visit upon humans another such Destruction by Waters. But God never promises not send a no less deadly Destruction by Fire ...

And in the Talmud it is written that God made the world about forty times, and each time had to destroy it, since He made it upon Law only, and thus it turned out not to be good. This time, that is, with the world in which we are, He decided to make it upon both Law and Mercy. And then the Talmud comments as an kind of afterthought : “Let us hope that it will stand ...”

The practical everyday, and in fact, moment by moment issue, as well as the fundamental ontological one, therefore, seems to be how to balance the detachment suggested by Meister Eckhart, with an involvement which Simone Weil and the author of C-S, for instance, are so generous by their nature to pursue with a manifest dedication ...

On Chapter Three : Can There Be an Atheist Spirituality ?

It is indeed amusing to see C-S start in its third and last chapter with : “Let us conclude that what, to my mind, is most important of all - not God, not religion, not atheism, but spiritual life ...”

Well, the comments presented so far in the above lines may perhaps give a certain indication about likely answers to this third question raised in C-S from its start, namely, the possibility, or otherwise, of an atheist spirituality ...

And most certainly we would wish to mention again that all these lines presented here are aimed in support for the intended message of Comte-Sponville, a message which can be seen as highlighting the widespread deficiency in present Western society, a deficiency that may be called spiritual poverty ...

But let us once again try to follow some of the more important points in C-S, and this time in its last chapter ...

With its very first sentence, cited above, C-S is again falling for a long established and rigid terminology, one that, among others, injects a most dramatic separation and quintessential difference between realms and ways assumed to be, so called, spiritual, and on the contrary, those which are clearly supposed to be not ...

Taking one step away from such a way of thinking is, perhaps, facilitated by the concept of spiritual poverty. Indeed, poverty is a rather well understood concept which has quite clear possibilities to ascertain it. And no doubt, there are many realms in which poverty can occur, realms beyond the material one. It follows that the only somewhat vague entity in the suggested concept of spiritual poverty, is that assumed to be described by the adjective “spiritual” ...

Well, this is certainly true, and one may proceed with the respective clarifications later ...

The advantage of the concept of spiritual poverty, however, is in the fact that poverty is a concept which naturally admits some gradations. In other words, it does not correspond to any one single, given and rigidly fixed chasm between two incompatible realms or ways of being.

And then, as a further step, this time towards the clarification of the adjective “spiritual”, we may suggest that one important aspect of spiritual poverty is the poverty in one’s awareness of context, of the context which is in fact truly relevant to one’s existence and wellbeing.

For the time being, therefore, let us talk not about spiritual, spirituality, or even spiritual poverty, but about the extent of one’s context awareness, or simply, about one’s context awareness ...

In C-S, what follows the above cited first sentence, is an attempt to define spirituality, or the adjective spiritual. And it is quite amusing to see the rather puerile way this is done in quite a number of ways ...

There are, of course, classical time honoured attempts aiming to do that, attempts which may be worth considering instead. One of the remarkable ones is in the New Testament, in John 3:8, namely, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

And by the way, if we are at remarkable attempts to define more subtle fundamental concepts, here it is worth recalling that of faith, given in the New Testament, in Hebrews 11:1, according to which “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Back to C-S, several statements follow which are quite edifying. For instance “Today ... when people talk about spirituality they are usually referring to a rather limited part of our inner life ... the part that involves the absolute, the infinite and the eternal ...”

But then C-S follows with old and petrified, rather hopelessly extreme dichotomies, such as “... we are finite beings who open onto infinity ... we are ephemeral beings who open to eternity, and relative beings who open on to the absolute ... This ‘openness’ is the spirit itself ...”

The next statements are, however, remarkable, namely “Metaphysics means thinking about these things; spirituality means experiencing them, exercising them, living them ... All religions involve spirituality, at least to some extent, but all forms of spirituality are not religious ...”

Well, the example of Socrates and Plato does most obviously confirm the above ...

Somewhat later, C-S writes “Everyone is free to choose their own vocabulary, and know of none that are faultless ...”

But of course, we are quite free when it comes to vocabularies, especially those which we happen to use in our own private, inner thinking ...

However, such a freedom does by no means come without unexpected, undesirable and unwanted consequences ...

And when it comes to the spirit, to spirituality, we better recall John 3:8, which tells us that being born of the spirit is being like that wind which one can feel and hear, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes ...

And certainly, vocabularies are in this regard far less than ... spiritual ...

Well, the awareness of the relevant context of one’s being can far less be confined to any vocabulary ...

Far less than one may hope for ...

On Mysticism and Mystery : For How Longer Are We to Be Bound to Unfortunately

Misplaced Words ?

C-S states on page 141 that "... at its outmost, spiritual life verges on mysticism ..."
 Fortunately, after describing in some detail the intimate personal struggles of its author, related to mysticism and mystery, C-S comes to the conclusion that "The real mystery is not in words but in the world."

Well well now, is this not about anything else but that most simple and obvious fact that none of us humans as an individual, and quite likely, neither our species as a whole, may ever become aware of everything which may in fact be relevant to our existence ?

What is, then, there to ... philosophize so much about ?

Why give funny and misleading names, like mysticism or mystery, to what seems to be so obvious ?

Why not simply state the following simple identity : mysticism is the recognition of the human situation mentioned above ?

Namely that, by far most of the realms that may be relevant to the existence of a human individual, or of the humans species as such, will remain a mystery to us ?

And then, once we cut the nonsense of inadequate and misleading vocabularies, we may simply come to the conclusion that a mystic is none other than a human being which is aware of the above, and nevertheless still tries to establish a two way interaction with mystery, that is, with all those realms that may be important to him, to her, or to humanity as a whole, yet about which none of us shall ever have any other awareness, except that we shall never become aware of them directly enough, if at all ...

And to the extent that one may indeed allow the unprecedented spirit of our times to enter and dwell in oneself, the spirit of ever new and undreamt of relevant realms which are brought by hard science into our awareness, well then, one may indeed start to realize that, no matter how eternal and inevitable mystery may remain in the whole life of a human individual, or even during the whole existence of the human species, the fact which we can know by now quite clearly is that the realms of that mystery can move, and do in fact move significantly, and they keep contracting quite a bit, and do so under our own eyes ...

Therefore, mystery is not something utterly fixed and inaccessible for ever more ...

And thus a mystic is in some ways less and less a mystic, although he or she is inevitably bound to remain so for the rest of his or her life, just as the whole of humans kind is, shall we say, condemned to such a fate ...

Sic transit Gloria mundi ... would say a Latin commentator ...

And such a commentator would only in part be right ...

And he or she would be wrong precisely to the extent that some of us humans, like for instance, the saints, the enlightened, or the righteous ones, have all along known - and do know in our own days as well - that the real glory is in the fact that, nevertheless, one may enter into a two way interaction with mystery, and thus avoid the above mentioned condemnation ...

Here, it may perhaps be good to recall that in Jewish tradition it is stated that God made the world for the sake of the righteous ones, and consulted with them before He made it ...

Whatever such a statement may be worth, one thing is clear, namely, it may be worthwhile contemplating on it for somewhat longer ...

Just imagine for a moment how such righteous persons may see the world, how they see, for instance, the issue of evil, or for that matter, that of whether or not God exists ...

After all, the world was not only made for them, but they were consulted when it was made for their benefit ...

Can such persons ever be indulging themselves in views anywhere near to those of the elite chattering

class ?

Can such persons reduce themselves to the position of a cheerful desperation ?

Can they be like some confused and rather spoilt whingeing infants when it comes to the fundamental issues of ontology ?

What may, indeed, be the nature and level of maturity, of being properly grown up of such persons ?

Do we ever care enough to try to find some answers to such questions ?

Yes indeed, it seems that the saints, the enlightened, or the righteous ones reach a state of being grown up in which their awareness, their usual awareness, they moment to moment awareness is at least as different from that of the rest of us, the so called grown up humans, as is the awareness of the latter from that of our infants ...

So much for the problem of evil, or for the issue of the existence, or otherwise, of God ...

But now, do we, in fact, have any kind of evidence, let alone proof, that what is at present considered to be the normal standard of being a grown up adult is anywhere near to what is maximally available potentially to individuals in the human species ?

The ravages which various cultures produce in limiting and polluting, if not in fact, poisoning the awareness of their supposed to be adult and fully grown up followers is an open book not only to anthropologists, but to anyone willing, ready and able to see it, and do so without being unduly conditioned by the alleged equal value and validity of all cultures.

And to consider just one example, and not from some backward part of the world, let us recall the way nearly all prominent Western scientist, who at the time, towards the end of the 1800s, happened to represent just about all of existing modern scientists, saw the state of hard science. Namely, they considered that nearly everything important had already been discovered, and that what was left was mostly the further refinement, and of course, application of the already existing scientific knowledge. An example, and a rather shocking one at that, of that general Western cultural mentality is the suggestion at the time by the head of the American Patent Office, suggestion made to the Congress, to close that office, since there were very few new things left ever to be discovered in the future...

In Physics, for instance, all the leading scientists considered at the time that there had been left unclear on two rather minor issues, namely, the so called black body radiation, and the fact that the Maxwell equations of electro-magnetism, and unlike the Newton equations of Mechanics, were not invariant under the Galilean group of transformations ...

And then, in a most surprising manner, within the first half decade of the 1900s, these two issues, considered earlier as rather unimportant ones, suddenly and literally exploded into the two most important pillars of all of modern Physics, namely, the Quantum Theory of Planck, and the Special, and later, General Relativity of Einstein. Here, by the way, it may be mentioned that in one of his four celebrated papers of 1905, Einstein gave the first application of Planck's quanta introduced in 1900, namely, the explanation of the photo-electric effect. And it was this contribution, and not Relativity Theory, for which Einstein would later, in 1921, get a Nobel Prize for Physics.

So much for what a culture can do even to its top or elite members ...

By the way, Einstein never got a Nobel Prize for his Relativity Theory. And the reason seems to be that the various Nobel committees consider that theory highly controversial for quite a long time to come ...

Certainly, they could have at any time given Einstein a second Nobel Prize for Relativity Theory, after his 1921 prize, as there was already a precedent for such a second prize in the case of the Polish lady physicist and chemist Marie Sklodowska-Curie, who got Nobel Prizes in 1903 and 1911.

Yet for the people in the Nobel committee, the Relativity Theory kept being controversial for quite a while longer ...

And so it comes to pass that the illusion of being really grown up, added to which come the curses of any given culture, keep us under a glass ceiling ...

And who is there to see that glass ?

And who is there to get beyond it ?

These are, of course, just instances of second level ignorance, or perhaps, even worse, namely, of a third one ...

And if you do not much mind, please, you may be the judge of it ...

As for C-S in its third and last chapter, it launches itself into a sequence of citations from celebrity authors, punctuated by short comments, with all of that managing only to have a mostly ... further mystifying ... effect ...

There are, of course, some occasions when, so to say, the nail is hit on, or at least nearer to its head. For instance, Wittgenstein is cited with what in essence is his seventh and last sentence in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, namely “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.” And C-S comments that such a statement brought the mystics nearer to the book’s author ...

Somewhat later, C-S comments that “We are prisoners of the false self-evidence of common awareness, everyday life, routine, ‘been there, done that’ our claimed or real familiarity with everything - prisoners, in a word, of ideology or habit.” And then recalls the remarkably insightful view of Max Weber, according to whom “The world has been disenchanted.” Further C-S states that “Not the Word, but silence. Not meaning, but being. This is the field of spirituality or mysticism, when they break free of religion. Being is mystery, not because it is hidden or because it hides something, but, on the contrary, because self-evidence and mystery are the same thing, because the mystery is being itself.”

And so on, and on, goes the never ending chattering of the elite class, a chattering which is so proficient at further mystifying the mystery and the mystics ...

That mystery which, as mentioned above, is nothing else but the straightforward recognition of the simple, elementary and obvious fact that human individuals, and the whole of the human species as such, will never become aware of all the realms which are relevant to our individual or collective existence ...

And that mystic who, nevertheless, tries to enter into a two way interaction with that fact which some like to call mystery ...

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