

A bridge between Science and Spirituality: Theosophy as unifying element of the knowledge¹

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The relation between Spirituality and Science is somehow like the one between Science and Philosophy. This fully involves Theosophy, too.

At heart, there is the need to find a least common denominator that brings the man closer to the dimension both of Knowledge and of Being.

Before delving into the subject, it is necessary to dwell on the meanings we need to give to Theosophy and Science in this context. For this reason we also need to take a digression into the meaning of Religion, too.

With regard to Theosophy, the etymology of which means “*divine wisdom*”, its intellectual foundations, based on two essential tripartitions, can be recognized through its history and its thought². The first one concerns a vision of the world synthesized in the following three hypotheses in principle:

- 1) the existence of a supreme intelligence and of a one and only immanent and transcendent reality;
- 2) the existence of the evolution at every existing level;
- 3) the existence of a balancing cosmic law (*karma*)

The second tripartition is about the method, synthesized in observation, maieutics, and meditation³. All these elements put together bring to a spiritual dynamics according to which H.P. Blavatsky expresses some fundamental trends in her “*Secret Doctrine*”:

- 1) the refusal of the “*idols*” as real expression of spirituality (*nastika*);
- 2) the reality of the Logos–Creator and of the universal laws of nature;
- 3) the existence of a Universal Mind (cosmic Conscience);
- 4) the claim of the principle of the Oneness of Life and of the presence of the spirit in the matter;
- 5) the existence of a force “*inside*” the phenomena.

The theosophical view is therefore not only antidogmatic, but also has a strong holistic approach. It considers the possibility of the existence of an eternal wisdom which is at the bottom of the religious and philosophical concepts of mankind with its universal principles.

As to Science instead (in Greek ἐπιστήμη, in Latin *Scientia*), we could quote the philosopher Nicola Abbagnano: “*It is a knowledge that implies, in any way or measure, a guarantee of its validity*”⁴.

¹ Lecture delivered at the 37th European Congress – 30 July to 3 August – Paris, France.

² A. Girardi, “*Neoplatonismo e Teosofia*”, in Atti del 92° Congresso Nazionale della Società Teosofica Italiana, tenutosi a Pescia nel giugno 2006 sul tema: “*Il pensiero teosofico nella filosofia antica*”, pag. 27-31.

³ Idem ibidem, pag. 31.

⁴ N. Abbagnano, “*Dizionario di Filosofia*”, UTET, Torino, Edizione del 1984, pag. 770.

This is a modern definition of a kind of Science without pretensions of absoluteness.

Science is therefore something opposite to “*opinion*”.

The different concepts of Science are distinguished according to their acknowledged guaranteed validity.

That guarantee consists:

1. in demonstration (the so-called scientific conclusions must therefore be demonstrable and “*reproducible*”);
2. in descriptions (Newtonian method of analysis);
3. from a contemporary point of view the following aspects are ever-increasingly important:
 - a. relation (relations and their relating laws). H. Dingler states: “*The main task of Science is to reach as many laws as possible*”⁵.
 - b. The concept of self-correction. Morris R. Cohen writes in this regard: “*We can define Science as a self-correcting system.... Science induces doubts*”⁶.

E M. Black states: “*The same principles of the scientific method must be considered as provisional and subject to further corrections too ...*”⁷.

We finally also quote K. Popper who, in “*The Logic of scientific Discovery*” (1935) affirmed that the apparatus of Science doesn’t aim at verifying the scientific propositions, yet at “*falsifying*” them.

Let’s go back now to the concept of Religion, the etymology of which is not Greek for in that culture λατρεία would rather be mentioned. That meant “divine service” and not “Religion” as we understand it.

‘Religion’ therefore derives from Latin and there are two different theories on its etymological root. Cicero derives it from “*relegere*” and talks about the religious people who “*reread*” the acts of the divine cult⁸. Lactantius and Saint Augustine instead derive the term from “*religare*”, giving to it a meaning closer to “to tie” and, in a figurative sense, to “to reunite”.

In order to better understand the relationship among Religion, Theosophy, and Science it has to be considered that “Religion” can be understood at least in four different acceptations:

- a. as “*revelation*” of supernatural and spiritual aspects;
- b. as a combination of myths, cults and beliefs;
- c. in its social-political and economic power aspects;
- d. religion, so to speak, “*atheistic*” as knowledge of the mind and of the reality (as in the Buddhism at its beginning).

Bergson’s strong affirmation with regard to religion has to be highlighted: “*The authentic Religion is the mysticism. If external resemblances between Christian mystics may be due to a common tradition or a common training, their deep-seated agreement is a sign of an identity of intuition which would find its simplest explanation in the actual existence of the Being with whom they believe themselves to be communicating*”.

⁵ H. Dingler, “*Die Methode der Physik*”, 1937 I, paragrafo 9.

⁶ M. R. Cohen, “*Studies in Philosophy and Science*”, 1949, pag. 50.

⁷ M. Black, “*Problems of Analysis*”, 1954, pag. 23.

⁸ M. T. Cicerone, “*De Rerum Deorum II*”, 28, 72.

To end this part we can affirm that Theosophy is not a Religion, nor a science, but it has certainly something to do with them concerning the theme of the *real knowledge* of the man and of the cosmos.

How can we then not remember that, over the millennia, there were times when spiritual and scientific research were all one and the same!

Let's think of Pythagoras, Democritus, Epicurus, Heraclitus.

And, why not, about many philosophers of the Renaissance, such as Pico della Mirandola, Tommaso Campanella or Teophrastus Bombastus from Hohenheim.

Indeed, we can draw some concepts that are dear to us, such as the Oneness of Life, from the works of these philosophers of the Renaissance.

Let's now think about the impact that Theosophy and the theosophical movement had in the cultural world at the end of last century, so permeated by the preconceived idea that the modern scientific method could be the only one able to guarantee a correct outlook on the world.

The effect was certainly sensational, mainly because at the end of the nineteenth century the so-called "*scientific vision*" largely left room for a more prosaic "*technological vision*".

The consequences of the scientific discoveries were actually mistaken for the "*truth*", as they were able, so to say, to change the world.

The modern theosophical movement intervenes therefore to "*break*" the cultural schemes of the time and to describe the reality in a definitely more complex and complete way than the academic science did.

The theosophical outlook suggests a world constantly influenced by the structured movement of *karma* and made real by the law of evolution.

The theosophical and the spiritual approaches are sometimes in a too banal way mistaken by the official culture for the exaltation of spiritualism and phenomena.

Indeed, the theosophists of the first decades made a significant effort to bring the knowledge back to unity, without restricting its dimension to the visible and testable plane.

The work of H.P. Blavatsky in this sense is fundamental and *The Secret Doctrine* can be seen as one of the most extensive and conscious attempts to bring back to unity the dimension of knowledge and of the human consciousness.

H.P. Blavatsky's example will be followed by many great theosophists and these facts clearly show a strict consistency with what comes out from the "*The Mahātma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*"⁹.

At this point, it becomes but necessary to put ourselves a further question.

"Are" the "*descriptions*" of the world, as the Science puts them or as they appear in the theosophical and spiritual literature, really the world?

Is the used language proper to describe a presumed "*truth*"?

In other words, one of the questions that we should ask ourselves is whether Theosophy and spiritual knowledge can be encoded in an ensemble of affirmations that uses the language as description of the world.

⁹ "*Lettere dei Mahātma ad A.P. Sinnett*", Edizioni Teosofiche Italiane, Vicenza 2010.

We can find a clear answer in the history of the theosophical tradition and of the Theosophical Society: neither the Founders nor the Pioneers of the Theosophical Society have ever given a dogmatic definition of it.

This unequivocally appears as an emphasizing of the dynamic expression that distinguishes the theosophical research, very far from any form of dogmatism.

By integrating all the above with Krishnamurti's vision, which detects in the codified descriptions of the world one of the impediments to the achievement of the indescribable dimension of the Sacred and of the Truth, it will be clear why the former World President of the Theosophical Society Radha Burnier talks about "*human regeneration*", and Joy Mills dwells upon the theurgic dynamics of Theosophy.

As the scholars of semantics and structuralism well know, the description of the world is not the world itself. Moreover, we clearly know that all systems founded on thought may work regardless of their "*truth*".

Let's think of Copernicus and about what had happened before him.

Isn't it true that the ancients could sail with expertise although their knowledge was partly incorrect? Actually, even if they thought that the sun revolved round the earth, sailors made prodigious journeys.

Then Copernicus affirmed the heliocentric theory, broadening mankind's consciousness, like many others after him. Not to mention Aristarchus of Samos who had already explicitly theorised the heliocentrism in the III century b.C.

The vision of the world and man's consciousness itself cannot be crystallized, but they are in a state of continuous expansion.

Clearly, the just described process concerns also Science and, more widely, the concept of "*knowledge*" itself.

What can we learn from this?

Probably that the process of mental knowledge is endless and that the progress of knowledge is not bound up either with language, or with time, or with dogmas: it somehow negates them in order to widen the sphere of the known.

Therefore theosophy doesn't appear *tout court* as a Religion, as a Science or a Philosophy, although noble, but as a spiritual research that tries to go beyond time and space; as an impulse towards the Infinity, as an attempt to bring the Inexpressible and the Real into History.

As we saw at the beginning, science too is increasingly abandoning the dogmatic outlooks of the world and its solipsistic approach.

Maybe it is time to return to a unitary vision of Life. Many scientists (let's think of the so-called "*Gnosis of Princeton*") and many philosophers understood it.

Will we understand it too?

Will the whole mankind understand it too?

Some elements induce us to be optimist about it.

Let's think, for example, of the so-called superstring theory.

According to this intuition, reality is only partially approachable through the "*strings*" of knowledge that form a nine-dimension model, which is still largely not known.

Moreover, this theory maintains that the universe is crossed by billions of invisible “strings”, the different frequencies of which originate matter and energy.

Let’s then think of Einstein’s relativity, which reminds us of the dimension of *maya* and of the deception of the senses.

Let’s think, again, about the value given to intuition in Henry Bergson’s philosophy; according to him - affirms Giuseppe Faggin – *“science and metaphysics, when both rooted in the ground of intuition, don’t form two heterogeneous and incommunicable areas anymore, but end up with being identical”*¹⁰.

We also need to consider the studies on cosmic forces of Professor Giorgio Piccardi of the University of Florence. He demonstrated how such forces influence and change fluids and certain colloidal solutions.¹¹

Let’s finally think of the holistic approach, aiming at establishing a connection between the different segments of the known. That approach almost creates the conditions for the overcoming of the mental knowledge, put back into perspective by the royal British astronomer Martin Röss, who said *“Our universe is only an atom of an infinite complex, a small island in a cosmic archipelago”*.

As soon as the discovery of the Higgs boson confirmed as fundamental what was known about the structure of matter in physics, the astronomers gathered numerous elements indicating that the universe is mostly made of something that is unknown and still inexplicable. We recommend the good article on this subject by Carlo Rovelli, published by *“La Repubblica”* some years ago. Rovelli, after dwelling on the various hypotheses aiming at defining the dark matter (from the most simple to the most daring: powder clouds, extinguished celestial bodies, dark and solitary planets, black holes, swarms of neutrinos, etc) concludes that, on the subject, *“for the time being we don’t have sound answers. We have a brilliant conceptual picture, confirmed by experiments, which describes very well all the visible matter of the universe. Yet we are discovering that the universe is maybe mostly made by something else... I believe it is a wonderful lesson of humility, which arrives at the very moment of the triumph”*. Recalling Isaac Newton, who wrote he felt like a child who had played with pebbles on the beach in front of the immense sea of all what was still left to discover, Rovelli wisely concludes that it is also necessary *“to admit our very vast ignorance and to accept it”*.

If all these considerations were valid, what should we do with all our scientific, philosophic, and religious knowledge?

I think that one of the first issues regards the “non-conditioning” process.

It’s not about rejecting knowledge, but about becoming aware of its relative value and about the fact that it must be transcended, so that the Beautiful, the Good, the Sacred can “be”.

“There are two kinds of knowledge. One is mental, and it is limited by many deceptions and by the way other people accept it. The other one has no limits, it is infinite, and flows in you from the inside, through the new channels that gradually open in your consciousness. If you don’t accept the others as they are, if you judge the others, if you don’t love the others, these channels cannot open. Only when you get carried away towards Life, then Life bursts into You, opening new spaces for your consciousness and your knowledge. When you fall in love with another human being, with the heart more than with the senses, you open to the flowing of life. Whoever is scared of loving,

¹⁰ H. Bergson, *“Deux Sources”*, III trad. ital., pag. 270-271, citato da Nicola Abbagnano nel testo di cui alla nota 2.

¹¹ B. del Boca, *“La Dimensione Umana”*, Edizioni Età dell’Acquario, Brescia Editore, Torino 1971, pag. 50 e pag. 340.

*whoever is unable to love, is a still sleeping being and in his sleep he fights against the wrong interpretations of the laws of the good and the bad, of the relativity and of the balance. Whoever lets Life freely flow in himself has the heart as only guide. Therefore, he carries within himself the issues of tomorrow, the things that he still cannot divulge or express. Yet all this, in the heat of his heart, gets ready to flow into the new generations. Life has now sowed in the man as never before ...*¹².

Let's now go back to the term "to be", that is one of the fundamental aspects of this reflection.

"To be" instead of "to become" or "to have": this is the only real possible revolution for the man, the possibility to live in the heart of the Eternal and not to break up time into past, present, and future.

Nothing of all this can happen without "sympathy", that is to say without a sacral way that stops splitting the ethical sphere into "mine" and "yours", between what concerns me or the small or big group I belong to, and the others, between what is right and what is wrong.

Nowadays the hermeneutics, that is to say the interpretation and the study of the ancients' great assertions, has begun enjoying a new vogue.

It is a really interesting way to overcome the barriers of time and to look in the entire knowledge (philosophical, religious, scientific or artistic) for the traces of the Eternal, of what has no time, of what is however alive beyond the passing centuries.

In parallel, our human being casts itself into the dream of future, expressing so also noble possibilities of spiritual realisation.

Between these two dimensions of the past and of the future, there is the present, the living moment. It is precisely here that we have all our chances.

Here the Silence. Here the song of the Soul, player of the Eternal Notes.

With Gampopa we can repeat: *"Rare like a star in broad daylight is this precious human birth"*.

And while reflecting in front of the universe and its mysteries, the words drawn from the "Rig Veda" echo, with which Helena Petrovna Blavatsky starts the comment to the seven "Stanzas of the Book of Dzyan" in "The Secret Doctrine": *Nor Aught nor Nought existed; yon bright sky / Was not, nor heaven's broad roof outstretched above. / What covered all? what sheltered? what concealed? / Was it the water's fathomless abyss? / There was not death -- yet there was nought immortal, / There was no confine betwixt day and night; / The only One breathed breathless by itself, / Other than It there nothing since has been. / Darkness there was, and all at first was veiled / In gloom profound -- an ocean without light -- / The germ that still lay covered in the husk / Burst forth, one nature, from the fervent heat.*

Who knows the secret? who proclaimed it here? / Whence, whence this manifold creation sprang? / The Gods themselves came later into being -- / Who knows from whence this great creation sprang? / That, whence all this great creation came, / Whether Its will created or was mute, / The Most High Seer that is in highest heaven, / He knows it -- or perchance even He knows not." / "Gazing into eternity. / Ere the foundations of the earth were laid,

¹² "La Voce degli Zoiti" in "L'Età dell'Acquario", Rivista sperimentale del nuovo piano di coscienza, nr. 18 settembre-ottobre 1973, pag. 8.

*Thou wert. And when the subterranean flame / Shall burst its prison and devour the frame / Thou shalt be still as Thou wert before / And knew no change, when time shall be no more. / Oh! endless thought, divine ETERNITY.*¹³

¹³ H.P. Blavatsky, “*La Dottrina Segreta*”, *Cosmogenesi*, volume primo, pag. 83.