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THE EXOTIC — AN EXAMPLE OF A DIAGONAL CATEGORY

BY

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A paradox: the world is getting smaller (McLuhan sees it transformed into a village only, because of television). Time shrinks (becoming a continuous present). Distances (not only geographical ones) shorten (relatively, of course). And however, the exotic, the reflex of the "big" world, of huge distances, and of time in its passing from the past to the present, does not diminish either in man's usual existence or in forms of expression with an aesthetic value. On the contrary.

Being aware of this paradox, we have good reasons to believe that — contrary to the opinions stated — the exotic is conditioned otherwise than geographically or historically. It is worth coming to know how. Among the reasons justifying such an endeavour is the fact that dealing with the problem of the exotic in art and literature as well as in other fields connected with the aesthetics, we can clear-up certain problems related to the status of the Aesthetics itself. Today, more than ever during its history, it oscillates between a general philosophy of art (creation, communication, reception, valuation) and a science of art — in which latter case it obviously resorts to methods and concepts of the authority and competence of science.

Clearly, the exotic does not spring from the aesthetic, and it is not restricted to the field of the latter. There is a psychological determination, a sociological one, even a moral determination (for instance the attraction of primitive exotic models) and a political one (with examples related to extremist tendencies, too up-to-date in fact). The idea of the congenital impurity of the Aesthetics reasserts itself, resulting from the multiple conditionings of its subject and object.

Studying the forms of manifestation of the exotic, and the distinct possibility of its penetrating into different fields of human objectification we reach another, more productive model of the aesthetics, that of a *diagonal subject* (or science even). The good luck of diagonal sciences is that they do not need readjustments or reconsiderations of the field — once the aesthetics used to be only a science of the beautiful, the definition which the evolution of the aesthetic conscience forms has considerably surpassed. As a diagonal science, the aesthetics does not only cover subjects traditionally connected with it, such as the history and theory of art and literature, or the psychology of art but also history in

general, philosophy, geography even, ethics and politics, anthropology, ethnography (to mention the most important only). The *Kalokagathon* concept — representing the unity between the *beautiful* and the *good* in the Greek thought — was only anticipating the revelation of the aesthetics as a diagonal science revelation brought about by the exotic, and also by other concepts such as humanism. The aesthetics cannot certainly be disinterested in the aesthetic satisfaction of tourism (irrespective whether it accepts or not Hegel's view on the natural beautiful) which is no less significant than that of visiting museums (in fact, usually, connected with it). It cannot be disinterested in the aesthetic condition of industrial products either, or in the aesthetics of different forms of amusement. In order to conclude this argumentation on the interest for such types of concepts it seems enough to say that the need for diagonal categories * corresponds to the present stage of the syncretism of human existence (as well as to the various forms of alienation). The exotic is, certainly, such a category.

The Meanings of the Exotic. The first we should consider implies the etymology of the word, that is its Greek root. At a first approximation, *exotikos* is used for foreign. Being more attentive at shades of meaning and considering the word with its historical flavour, it will mean: the one outside the stronghold, and thus generally speaking, the barbarians. But the boundary of the "polis" is a language boundary, barbarians being considered those outside the Greek civilization. The meaning of a language boundary, which we reached, is significant both for the exoticism of those times and for that of today. Accumulating facts in their evolution, we notice that the prestige of the Greek spirit operates on the Latin war genius with the charm of an exotic realm. The Roman patricians will compete in the slave market to acquire Greek artists and scribes. Finally, before exhausting this first meaning, let us notice that the Mediterranean is a traditional contact area for foreign countries through wars, trade, navigation, exploration.

Being more accurate we will establish that $\epsilon\acute{\xi}\omega$ means "outside", orientation outside the proper world, towards something foreign but however wished for being $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\xi \tau\acute{o} \epsilon\acute{\xi}\omicron\tau\epsilon\rho\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}\nu$. And thus, two conditions follow: a) relating; b) maintaining the distance (the alterity in a broader sense) projected on the existence axiom, which although evident today, in the Greek world — of "elements" — seemed however so new: the universe is *not homogeneous*, the world is a *world of worlds*.

The great number of connotations noticed in the course of time, up to our days, corresponds to the fact that the forms of relating have been diversified, new types of *distances* have been imposed (therefore not only among languages or geographical distances), the principle of *unity in diversity* proving highly productive from the perspective of the exotic.

* After having mentioned humanism, we will notice that the beautiful has also such a condition. A full list of diagonal categories will also include, to give only some examples, refinement, snobbism, conceptualism, etc. We believe that the model of diagonal category is represented by the sublime so as it was conceived by Kant, an extension of the physical and mathematical.

Forms of the Exotic. Admitting a relativity premise, we can see that a reaction against limitations corrupting the European conscience is being expressed through exoticism. The relativity we are talking about takes into account that on any non-European territory, exoticism (with respect to Europe) means also a reaction against characteristic limitations which does not mean, for instance, that an exoticism with respect to oneself is impossible (we shall discuss this later).

Foreign countries were first projected to the Europeans in a mythical light. In this respect we should mention fauna and flora elements as well as certain characters, some of which have also been kept in folklore representations (the winged horse, the miraculous bird, the dragon...). Then the two civilizations on the shores of the Mediterranean come into touch — and we should not forget, timorous with the 2,000 years which have passed, that the Bible represents Judaism on the Southern shore, while on the European one it represents Christianity. The Bible is an exotic book bringing the man of the Greek-Latin world another sky, other characters (prophets, apostles, heroes), another legislation, another mental structure. Even in representations such as Pythagoras's philosophy of numbers or Plato's philosophy of ideas, which have similar degrees of abstraction, Divinity, as well as dying for it, first strikes one as being exotic. The Roman soldier, searching the well hidden God among the temple's ruins and discovering the empty shrine, expresses this fact clearly. The propagation of these representations in the political framework of the Roman Empire gives them this empire's capacity of comprising. Things were not fundamentally different with other civilizations either (Hindoo, Japanese, etc.). Phenomena of spiritual *refraction*, at the border of two cultures, take place in other fields as well — even today — the proof being that positive symbols in the Orient get negative values in Europe (the dragon, the snake).

No important changes, as regards the forms of the exotic, can be noticed up to the Renaissance. During this period, we can see a different direction of the general effort of cognition, both in strictly political and economic activities, and in those meant for the spirit. At that time travelling was a profession: the discoverers of America, the conquistadors, the adventurers, the missionaries, the scientists. The feeling of distance, the vision of new lands, the taste for adventures and mystery, the primary exercise of curiosity are being brought and amplified at the same time with gold. The exotic asserts itself as a deviated function of a cognitive effort. The painting and sculpture of the epoch reflect this condition in their own way.

Europe is no longer just a shore on the Mediterranean. Italy and Spain are exotic for England, Shakespeare does not only portray Othello, the Moor, but also characters such as Cleopatra, Shylock or Cymbeline.

Before him, the Elizabethan theatre had very much cultivated the taste for the exotic either through books — Marlowe wrote *Tamburlaine the Great* influenced by Seneca — or through the mirage effect of the exoticism of princely courts, of ecclesiastic ceremonies à l'italienne: *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi* by Webster.

Romanticism will deepen the feeling of the exotic, exploring the perspective of a totality, stating the aspiration to the primary unity

of the world. The Renaissance had stopped at the antiquity, enlarging the framework of the exotic from the geographic to the historic. Romanticism goes even further in time, it discovers the myths, the northern epics with an enthusiasm which in fact is not exhausted even today. Orientalism in art is only the reflex of the political reality of the epoch, not also the sign of restricting the interest to other areas. As a school of contrasts, Romanticism cultivates the exotic principle of Eros (mixed marriages, another type of morals, another code of sexual relationships, etc.). The ruins overgrown with vegetation are motives of exoticism, — but of an exoticism with respect to oneself —, on the coordinate of distance in time, the reintegration in nature being a steady motive of exoticism.

Reversing the binoculars, the French Enlightenment will also present a critical function of the exotic. "Our world seen by the others", Victor Segalen writes¹ "seems to be exactly what another world is seen by ourselves" — an explanatory statement for that character portrayed by Montesquieu, a Persian seeing Europe, as well as for Zadig, Micromegas and others in Voltaire's work, or for similar characters in Diderot's and Chateaubriand's works. Persians, Indians from America and so many others are meant to look into our world and then the familiar universe of our manners and behaviour appears as foreign to us. Thus we come to see ourselves, as some exotic beings, discovering at the same time the real gap between two worlds which are not identical, or the gap between an ideal and a real world. This constitutes the critical function we have just mentioned. It is associated with the fact that the exotic proves to be an examination of the *identity with yourself*, an examination of the *conscience*. Much later, Keyserling² will notice: "The shortest way towards oneself is around the world."

The further evolution of the forms of culture will bring about a diversification of the exotic type interest. The forms exoticism will assume will be extremely varied, the climax being marked by the first attempts to define it, a reflex of its introduction into the aesthetic conscience. Travel literature, logs, the huge loads brought from the colonies — all these belongs to the accumulation stage, sometimes so clearly illustrated in museum collections (the British Museum, the Louvre, the Pergamon, "Pushkin" Museum, etc.). Looking for some landmarks regarding the evolution of the forms of the exotic and their objectification as aesthetic means or ends we are obliged to distinguish between the accidental import (of impressions, images or objects) — leading occasionally to the reproduction of isolated forms (for instance, the Flemings' mania for Oriental carpets, the neo-Greek style architecture in America; the extremely Oriental music motives in pop music, etc.) — and the relating, underlying the difference the exotic supposes. The *integration* forms, irrespective of what kind they are, take away from the exotic brilliancy, consume the tension corresponding to some living irreducible forms. Impressionism partly understood this truth — a proof is even the last period of Cézanne's activity, or part of Debussy's musical creation; expressionism knew this truth very well, looking for primitive sources of expres-

¹ Segalen, Victor, *About Exoticism*, quoted by Dan Hăulică, "Secolul XX", no. 12, 1973.

² Keyserling, *Jurnal de călătorie al unui filosof*, Cf. P. Creția.

sion where they existed, but avoiding to transcribe the essentially exotic literature, painting and sculpture into European terms. As regards the contemporary evolution, it in fact does no longer allow a taxonomy of the forms of the exotic. It is however clear that the abstract expression (in painting as well as in literature) is born through the incidence of some cultures which are reciprocally exotic, and the same stands true for the new ideals of harmony (in music, but also in poetics).

The exoticism of discoveries under the sign of the big infinite (space travels are converted, because of mass-media, into shows at the level of the globe) finds its correlative in the exotic of the small infinite, of the microcosm. This draws our attention to the recoil of the exotic in the aesthetics as well, a proof that the diagonal dimension of the category corresponds also to the reciprocal relations among the fields of human activity. Here we can recall the aesthetic interferences in the process of science theorization. Thus art is not only a "violon d'Ingres" for the physicist and mathematician, but a model reflected in the formal condition of scientific enunciations (spatial-temporal symmetries, for instance). Such a scientist as Dirac promoted an art for art's sake attitude: equations which express profound laws of nature should be beautiful — a reflex of the world harmony concept — an attitude which is of course exotic in a field specifically dealing with truth, and not with artistic emotions. What we have here is not just enthusiasm, but the attempt to conquer the unknown, what lies *beyond what we already know*, through an aesthetic extension, only apparently formal. At the time when the concept of the plane world was dominant, the model of the semispheres, that is the model based on the genuine symmetry of the globe, was exotic. The symmetry of certain equations (as those of Dirac's theory of the quantification of electricity and magnetism) is not only the result of the need for beauty and harmony, but it reflects the internal logic of the forms, it translates a criterium of organizing. Here, as well, the exotic — primarily as an attitude — gives expression to a deviated function of the cognitive process.

Reciprocally, as we said, the models of the microcosm led to the art of optical effects (Vasarely), which is also exotic. The "happening" (J. Cage) assimilated to the aesthetic expression had similar consequences. The attraction of paradox, in science and art, corresponds to the same action of the exotic. Finally, the art of computers, proposing the idea of the aesthetic value of programming, also demonstrates a tendency of an exotic colouring, connected with a new instrument of the artistic process.

The Conscience of the Exotic. It could certainly be debatable whether Theophile Gautier is the founder of aesthetic exoticism through his *Mademoiselle Maupin* (1836). Anyway, it is obvious that here he transforms history and geography into an alchemical formula, structuring an incantatory and emblematic aesthetic universe. The pattern of Aristotelian mimesis is largely defeated through exoticism. In fact, from Victor Hugo, Baudelaire and Rimbaud (of "Bateau ivre") a whole line is made obvious uniting names of writers such as Paul Claudel, Victor Segalen, St. John Perse, Gottfried Benn, Blaise Cendrars, André Malraux, Michaux. These are joined by — an exhaustive enumeration seems impossible — Sherwood

Anderson, D. H. Lawrence, Andrew Marvell, along his own line — which we shall mention again — G. K. Chesterton, James Joyce, American writers of the post-modern period (starting with Vladimir Nabokov and finishing with W. H. Gass, Hawkes, Coover, John Barth). A clearer sequence asserts itself in fine arts; we shall only mention a few landmarks, not accidentally starting with Gauguin — a limit case — continuing with Van Gogh, Picasso, Brancusi, Modigliani, Moore, Kadinsky, Klee, to consider afterwards whole trends (such as action-painting) or groups as representative for expressing the aesthetic conscience of the exotic. Eventually, in music, the transition from appearance — the Oriental motive, the African one or of a different exotic source (for instance the folklore motive in the case of Bártok or Stravinsky) — to a different way of structuring the sonorous material — in Schönberg's dodecaphonism — to the reconsideration of the view on harmony and counterpoint.

Thus, we do not deal with accidental manifestations, but with well defined concepts reflecting a determined aesthetic conscience. Here we would like to underline the fact that in the diagonal category of the exotic we frequently come across several types of relating *the real and the imaginary*, but there is no identity between the relation real-imaginary and the exotic image in any of the cases.

In fact, literature records few attempts of a theoretical analysis of the exotic, the category being frequently defined implicitly, through the work itself. Even Victor Segalen, who compiles notes for a book on the exoticism, arrives at figurative phrases as well. Basically, he maintains "the theory of exoticism as a source of spiritual energy"³, and, as opposed to Loti, Saint-Paul Roux or Claudel, he does not take upon himself to analyse the influence of the environment on the traveller, but the reaction of the traveller on the living environment (writing, as he himself puts it: "rhythmic, dense, condensed prose like a sonnet.") He is thus preoccupied by passing from *the Exotic* to the Exot who violates it — and if we did not have another example available, the photographic mania of the Americans and Japanese would speak for itself — awakens it — some ethnographically interesting regions are brought up-to-date — and disturbs it. This last action he ascribes to the *Diversity-sensation Procurers*, as he calls them, and is well illustrated by Tahiti, Hawaii and so many other regions in the world demonstratively turned into reservations. We can notice, of course, the lucidity of the analysis of the way in which the contrast between civilizations, along the lines of reciprocal knowing and towards a genuine syncretism, can give birth to certain monstrous forms. The aesthetics of Kitsch will profit by the categorial analysis of the exotic. The setting of a fair, with palm-trees and camels in the background, with props appropriate to the colonial helmet, black skins and the exotic of the yellow race — also belong to a function deviation of cognition. As an Aesthetics of the Varied, exoticism draws tourism towards the general problems of the aesthetics. However, there is a fundamental remark to be made: exoticism is not the kaleidoscopic

³ We feel the need to cite, among others, J. Hytier, *Les Arts de la Littérature*, Paris, Charlot, 1945: "Le roman met en jeu des événements, des personnages et un milieu localisé dans lequel ils se situent" (p. 122).

state of the tourist, of the mediocre spectator, but the intense reaction of a powerful personality, shocked by an objectivity which penetrates and enjoys the distance: "The difference can be perceived, Segalen writes, only by those endowed with a powerful individuality". In fact, exoticism does not mean adjustment or absorption, but keen and immediate perception of an everlasting *incomprehensibility*.

G. K. Chesterton, at the opposite pole, — as he refuses the very idea of travelling — considers "man's activity during a day of intense living full of possible surprises, as mysterious and interesting." *Ulysses* by James Joyce is in fact the image of this model. The idea of an inner exoticism appears thus due to a city writer (Notting Hill district in London, where he used to live, is his "world"); this idea is a reflex of accepting the well-known Socratic invitation: "Come to know yourself". Therefore not the phantom ship, nor the treasure island, nor Aladin's lamp or the magic carpet, but the *hiperreality* of "The Club of Strange Trades" or "Napoleon of Notting Hill". The same with Franz Kafka — and hence the line of the vast allegorical literature, leading to *Under the Volcano* by Malcolm Lowry or to *Heliopolis* by Ernst Jünger, not to mention the fantastic in Dino Buzzatti's prose or, even more obvious, in that of Borges. Kafka had actually written: "When there are no more steps, they are further born if we tread", and here he intuited the *tragic character of diversity* perceived outside the rational, because it is in fact irrational. Initially, the reading of Dostoevsky and his modern followers (Solzhenitsyn not being last) was done from an exotic perspective. The same holds true for the reading of the new French novel (la nouvelle vague) or the interest for this type of cinema. In a sentence such as Marshal M. Luhan's "Media is the message" we can also find expressed an aesthetics of the exotic, as it supposes the transition from an analytic European type of perception (Western generally) to another one, very Oriental, which is synthetic. Between the book as a coherent discursive system, and the book as a unique metasign there is the distance, certainly exotic, of passing from a mentality specific to the civilization of the printing-press, to that of generalized mass-media.

A consistent concept of the exotic. The acceptation of the exotic as subordinated to a geographic suggestion (everything far away) belongs to the material distance. However, from the beginning of our study, we noticed the paradox that distances shorten in our times, and the exotic does not diminish. Therefore, we have here something else, much deeper and we could say, resorting to unanimously accepted examples, that what offers the attribute of exotic is the *ideal* gap between two ways of being or appearing. In this case we understand through *something else* what is beyond our normal possibility of knowing or understanding. Geography, as a product of the ages on our space of existence, represented the first exotic source. However, "the Earth is not only space but also time" (Ortega y Gasset), and travelling associates to both forms. We are not only separated from things from somewhere else, but also

from those of other ages. That is why, the legend form appears as originating in the exotic application. The whole tendency towards archetypes is dominated by the same source, the archetypal theory being a reflexion of our need to explain exoticism. C. G. Jung draws the distinction between *the personal unconscious*⁴ and the *collective substratum*⁵ of the psychic universe — giving the latter an essential part in the organizing of our symbolical aspirations. He will define archetypes as a group of symbolical entities, representing the content of the hidden, collective mind. There is a hint at the depositing of a treasure during the social-historical existence of people, which contains stratified entities. They ought to have contributed effectively and irreversibly to the subtle differentiation of the species. In fact, archetypes are brought up-to-date through images and forms which reach the surface of consciousness. Apparently at least, they lend the exotic their crepuscular character and obscurity. But then we have to consider the distance in time along the evolutionary line of the species. Thus, the minimum conditions described by us are achieved: During the Gothic period the cultural spirit of mankind was describing a *vertical* trajectory; then a *horizontal* stage of human thought followed. In this theory, horizontal extension means application towards empiricism, a positivist orientation of the logical discourse. Such an example was interesting for us because only an immanent function accompanies the exotic, the bringing up-to-date of its own archetypes or of those belonging to other civilizations being a transcendental function. It is imperious to discuss here the relation between exotic and esoteric* — the latter as a doctrine of an exclusive society which is secret and supposes initiation rules. Esoterism can also fall into cliché and Kitsch by means of the exotic (see the literature of detective novels, the modern resurrection of groups following either the freemasonic pattern or that of Oriental secret societies, constantly promoting forms of ritual, etc.). But the Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries (and even the Pythagorean ones) precisely belong to the aesthetic, which was brought to that area through the penetrating force of the exotic. The philosophy or poetry of ancient peoples, or those of peoples that are far away, determine the mentality of their consideration as superior values. Hindu meditation, Japanese haikku, black folklore, Polynesian masks have not only influenced a certain writer, painter or musician, but they continue being a centre of attraction for many. American poetry (the group called “The San Francisco Renaissance”⁶) felt the influence of Zen philosophy in a manner in which it was obvious that the exotic was becoming aesthetic under the pressure of proposing new lyrical structures. Today even Greek culture greatly

* Another relation could be that between exotic and eccentric, which lies however outside the scope of this paper.

⁴ Jung, C. G., *Métamorphose de l'âme et ses symboles*, Genève, 1967.

⁵ Jung, C. G., *L'homme à la découverte de son âme*, Genève, 1967.

⁶ cf. Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta*, Milano, Ed. Valentino Bompiani, 1962. Among others: Jack Kerouac, Ginsberg, Rexroth, Ferlinghetti, McClure, Corso, Gary Snyder, Phyl Lamantia, Philip Whalen.

became exotic, the mysterious grandeur of texts determining the emergence of the performance. We can mention a staging of Euripides's "Medea" at "La Mamma's" in New York in which the original Greek text was spoken in keeping with the rules of the Japanese "Nô" theatre, and therefore the esoterism of the language was amplified. Finally, the wide interest for exotic graphemes is well known, they suggesting an esoteric content as well.

At the other end, that of transparent forms, the resurrection of the bucolic, the idyllic, the pastoral — a phenomenon which is recorded by literature and cinema.

It seems rather an oversimplification to explain this variety, so contradictory in its forms, only through escaping from an immediate reality, which was once Mallarmé's case (who wanted to escape the obsessive rhythm of daily life). Escaping into *une exotique nature* (Mallarmé) or looking for mankind's *Golden Age*, may seem possible only to the naïve. Nothing seems irremediably far, not to be reached, but there is, however, a distance between people that cannot be overcome. The exotic in time, the historical one, grows first of all because of the civilization moving forward, ever greater distances separating it from the preceding periods. Because of the speed which carries us along, even events (or details of events) which happened not long ago, have become exotic: wars, social upheavals and so on. Tools become exotic when related to others; an ordinary tool acquires such a quality because it comes to signify the difference between two ways of working, thus a difference at the social level of knowledge. This is how *something else* seems to come from *somewhere else*. Characters from Westerns have sufficiently illustrated this condition, although we could also give examples from other areas.

There is also the concrete, sometimes rough, opposition of climates and races. For the time being, the process of life homogenization at the planetary level has not succeeded in doing away with this type of difference as well. In fact, at an objective level, variety survives also because it surpasses the limits of the earth, the meeting point between anticipation, fantastic and the reality of extra-terrestrial investigations being another source of genuine exotic. The journey which the classical image of the exotic supposes does not need to be real. We can perceive the diversity of the real along imaginary trajectories as well, the range of possible examples being far from exhausted even if we mention the mirific landscapes painted by Rousseau Le Douanier, which brings into discussion the incidence between naïve and exotic: on the one hand naïvity discovered in civilizations which have little, or not at all, participated in the grand transformations of mankind; on the other, the genuine naïve attitude, manifested as such in a world in which, along with candour, it is only an accident once the adolescence is over. The exotic of the art — if one agrees to call it thus — of a series of physically or psychically handicapped people is linked with infantilism, the therapeutic action of art

(along the lines of the psychoanalytical idea of repression) imposing the same imperative of objectifying a certain *alienation* (in this case alienation at the limits of the pathological).

In order to profit by the diagonal character of the category we are dealing with, that is of the way in which it spans various forms of human existence and objectification, we can resort to noticing the difference between the aesthetically objectified exotic, and that of tours and voyages — as a socio-psychological phenomenon so characteristic of this moment in the evolution of mankind. When aesthetically objectified, the exoticism proves the irreducibility of *some other time* (history) and *some other place* (geography) to *now* and *here*. Tourism, setting *exots* on the move (as Segalen had called them) records the opposition of the diversity of the real, but with a view to assimilating, reducing it. Tourist folders advertise comforts similar to those at home. The tourist industry extends the network of hotels, restaurants, shows and transportation comparable to those of large metropolises. The genuine aesthetic exoticism deepens the consciousness of the diversity of the real. Tourist exoticism acts as a leveler. Here is a conclusion: being reversible from the spatial point of view (especially from a geographical one), exoticism is not a given thing, but a way of *seeing*, which makes man aware of *variety*. That is why, for instance, the exotic of poetry starts at a lexical level and becomes unified in a range of opaque structures: the descriptions of Parnassianism, Rimbaud's hallucinatory visions, dadaism, visual poetry (Appolinaire made actual again extremely far away tendencies). Words do not describe a reality, they are rather a curtain of sounds behind which forms and movements can be guessed. The effect is that of *distance*. Faced with such poems the eye and the ear are amazed, overwhelmed as when faced with African dances. *Rational knowledge* is the art of questions; communication is established at another level, where the part played by the intuition is decisive. The imaginative structures of contemporary man, involved because of suprarealistic images as well (themselves reflecting the aesthetic conscience of the exotic) are highly resorted to in such cases.

And this is how, by means of a spiral movement of drawing near to the centre of the exotic attitude, we reach its fundamental relation: the Ego in unity with the varied reality of the world. In fact, two realities are pointed out by means of exoticism, both equally diverse, irreducible: *Myself* and *The Other One*. Their complementary character is also emphasized. This interests us because the exotic supposes the conscience of *complementarity*, all apparent exotic forms being restricted either to assimilation (language, repertoire, perspective) or to imitation. Because of the complementary character of the related elements, the exotic supposes an inner tension and therefore is a source of aesthetic emotion. The discovery of the inaccessible — in time and space — grants it the aspiration value, linked with the sometimes tragic feeling of the impossibility

to go beyond the condition of being outside a certain thing, the perimeter or way of thinking or feeling.

In spite of the several forms it can assume, the exotic has a unique source : the feeling of alterity, with its reflection as a *distance*, between the integral man and man as subjected to the successive alienations he experiences. Even when he returns to the pattern of nature — such is the case of the exotic architecture of Gaudi in Barcelona, suggesting vegetal lines inscribed in concrete — man does not cancel exoticism, because the alterity distance is marked on the path of his becoming, and can no longer be eliminated. The prophets of the day cannot be optimistic. To say that exoticism will spread as a reflection of the alienated man's conscience, subjected to certain deep and irreversible processes of alienation, is only apparently a way of being optimistic. However, corresponding to this hypothesis the need appears to know this category, to define it either in its whole range of manifestations or only, as the case was in this study, within the limits of reality and the aesthetic conscience.