

# A New Model of Civilization

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One of the most astounding things about ancient civilizations is the unity of their way of life. In the Art Institute of Chicago, for example, there is a beautiful stele from the Mayan ruins of Calakmul in Mexico. This stele presents a ruler in his task as a high priest, dressed in ceremonial garbs, holding ritual objects and clearly executing an important ritual. The ritual in question, we believe, is related to the closing of a ten-year cycle in the Mayan calendar, which was measured to such preciseness, that today we can determine the exact date of the ritual. This stele, therefore, is artistic in its presentation, religious in its significance, political in its authority and scientific in its measurements.

Ancient Egypt is another perfect example of the unity displayed by ancient civilizations. Religion and its consequent morality was seamlessly integrated in their culture. While religion was understood in varying depths, all people were religious to some degree. Politics and religion were inseparable. The Pharaoh was also the high priest, and participated in many ceremonies throughout the year. His authority to rule came from his obedience to the gods, and especially to Ma'at, the goddess of Justice. At the same time, Egypt was a highly scientific society. To build their magnificently aligned and constructed temples and pyramids, they must have had intimate knowledge of advanced engineering and astronomy, and used some type of technology. The fact is that to this day, there is a continuous debate among archeologists on how the Egyptians were able to realize these achievements. And finally, Egyptian art reflected both religion and politics, and was based on highly accurate mathematical proportions, which were strictly observed.

Inspired by these ancient civilizations, and with a vision of adapting their principles to our humanity, the philosopher and founder of New Acropolis, Jorge Livraga, proposed a pyramidal model of civilization based on four aspects of the human realm – Science, religion, politics and art.

## **Science, Religion, Politics and Art**

In the simplest terms possible, science can be defined as the pursuit of truth. In the western world, influenced by a strong Aristotelian tradition, science focuses almost exclusively on the physical realm, the part of nature which can be perceived by the senses. In the East, however, there has been a long tradition, much more similar to the Platonic view, that the physical universe is essentially Maya, an illusion, in the sense that it is in constant flux, in constant movement.

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According to this view our senses cannot be fully relied on as harbingers of truth. Therefore there is a strong scientific tradition which emphasizes the investigation of the inner, subjective world, through reflection and meditation. Obviously both these paths can be positive, if viewed as complementary, and if they serve the wellbeing of humanity above all financial or other personal interests that may be appropriate for commerce, but not for science.

Religion, which is usually contraposed with science, has got a significant amount of bad reputation in the last hundred years. It is frequently accused of all the evils of the world, of countless wars and genocides, discrimination and dogmatism.

It is true, without doubt, that many evils were realized "in the name of god". But to blame the idea and concept of religion for the evils carried out by its so-called adherents is as ridiculous as blaming science for the atom bomb, chemical warfare, digital hatred or drone strikes.

Both religion and science have been aspects of human existence since the beginning of time, and they have been used for good and evil, depending on those who claimed to use them. One can even say, that their misuse results exactly from separating the one from the other. Religion without science becomes dogma and prejudice. It focuses on literal interpretations and the thoughtless, fanatic observation of every comma in the sacred books. Science without religion, however, becomes a bureaucratic pursuit of the smallest details, lacking vision or any consideration of moral consequences. This leads the scientist to labor for big interests which don't exactly have the good of humanity in mind.

Without religion, many of the treasures of humanity, such as the Altamira cave art, the Pyramids, the Capela Sistina, the Bhagavad Gita and the Renaissance art, would not have existed, not to mention the works of the great idealists of the 20th century, such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

But what is religion? A wonderful definition comes from the pen of Albert Einstein: "A religious person is devout in the sense that he has no doubt of the significance of those super-personal objects and goals which neither require nor are capable of rational foundation ... In this

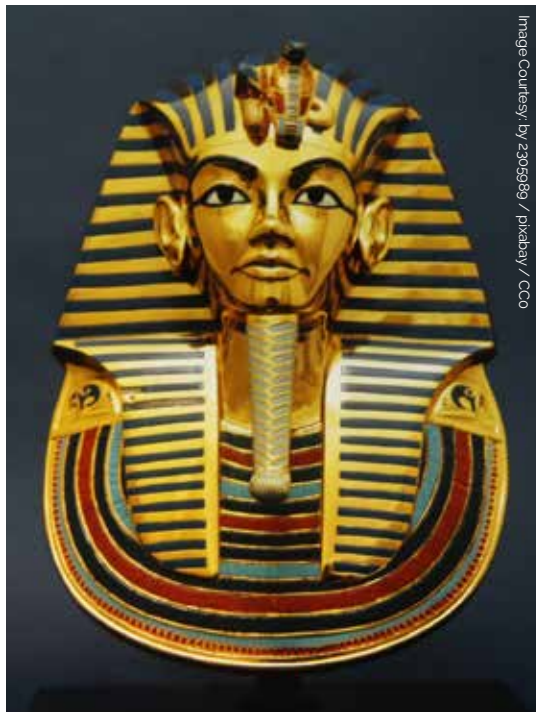


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sense religion is the age-old endeavor of mankind to become clearly and completely conscious of these values and goals and constantly to strengthen and extend their effect. If one conceives of religion and science according to these definitions then a conflict between them appears impossible. For science can only ascertain what is, but not what should be..."

Or in a more general sense, as Jorge Livraga defines it – religion is everything that unites: Man with God and nature, man with man, man with himself or herself.

Thirdly, politics can be defined as the science and art of leadership. Science because it deals with human beings, who function according to certain natural laws, psychological mechanisms, and mental principles. Art, because it deals with human beings, not robots, human beings who have emotions, needs, and dreams, and are constantly in their own inner battle to harmonize the different aspects of their being.

Leadership is not manipulation, but to call out the higher aspects of those led, in a pursuit of a higher goal or ideal. Those who lead are not perfect human beings, but have the higher vantage point, they have

a vision. They can see a possible better future that others can't see and they have trained the skills, and honed the qualities required to personify this future, to be a living example of the vision they channel.

Without this vision, we don't have leaders but in the best case just a "boss", an administrator or a bureaucrat, and in the worst case... well, just look around.

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Politics, just like religion, has got the "stink" of those who wielded it for their own personal ends. But let us not be mistaken, without the true use of politics, society is not possible. Any progress, any collective movement forward was enabled by true leaders, or in other words, people who wielded politics for its natural use.

Last but not least we have art. It is difficult to speak of art as a solitary concept, as each of us has her or his own tastes in art, which themselves change and evolve in time.

Nevertheless, for the sake of simplicity, we can define art as the pursuit of beauty. Some say that "beauty is in the eyes of the beholder", and while this is somewhat true, there are some things in life which are universally admired as beautiful.

I have never met a person who said that sunsets and butterflies are ugly, and I don't expect to do so. That is, while there are varying tastes and cultural backgrounds, there are probably also some universal aspects for beauty.

What can we definitely say about beauty? That it makes an impact, that it takes our breath away. It is not rational. It cannot be explained with words nor is it necessary to do so. In the presence of beauty, all words end, there's no need to point out or to put up a sign "clap, because this is beautiful" – beauty speaks for itself.

But to perceive beauty we need to have the inner walls removed, to allow that magnificent impact of beauty penetrate within us. If we are coarse within, then the eyes of the soul are covered by a veil of darkness which even beauty cannot penetrate.

And the artist? The artist is the lucky, or perhaps unlucky, chap who can directly perceive that beauty that comes from somewhere else, and to realize it through forms that can be perceived by the rest of us mortals.

Science, Religion, Politics and Art.

But there is still one thing missing. These four paths must be unified by the thread of philosophy, the love of wisdom, which is the only discipline that can show us that behind the words, behind the misunderstandings, these four elements share an important and essential element – the human being and his path.

So let us start imagining a different future. Because if we keep on sowing the same seeds we cannot expect different fruits.

Let us imagine a future where the different aspects of human life are united and not separated, a future where science, religion, politics and art, work together towards a better world. ★★★