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1967 Commemorative Annual Edition

Cover Reference: The Feathered Sun, Plains Indian symbol of the Universe

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Edited by F. Clive Ross

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EDITORIAL

by
F. Clive-Ross

AT the beginning of a new year, and with a change in title, we think it advisable to re-state our editorial policy, so that no reader need be under any misapprehension as to our precise position and outlook.

Studies in Comparative Religion is devoted to the exposition of the teachings, spiritual methods, symbolism, and other facets of the religious traditions of the world, together with the traditional arts and sciences which have sprung from those religions. It is not sectarian and, inasmuch as it is not tied to the interests of any particular religious group, it is free to lay stress on the common spirit underlying the various religious forms.

One of our primary aims is to meet the need for accurate information created by the now world-wide interest in the question of 'ecumenical relations' between the great religions, by providing a forum where writers of proven authority can exchange views on various aspects of religious life, doctrinal, historical, artistic and mystical, not forgetting the element of personal experience and reminiscence.

By collecting accurate information about the great religions under their many aspects and rendering them available to interested readers we feel we are fulfilling a very pressing need of our time and also contributing in a practical manner to the cause of inter-religious understanding. If there is to be an effective measure of this under-standing at any level this can only be on the basis of accurate presentation both of teachings and facts. An ill-informed benevolence is no substitute for genuine insight, based on information that is neither willfully distorted nor confined to the surface of things.

In this manner we think that we are best serving the interest of our readers in their search for truth.

Following our change of title we have decided to begin a new series of volumes. This issue thus becomes number one of volume one.

Keys to the Bible

by
Frithjof Schuon

IN order to understand the nature of the Bible and its meaning, it is essential to have recourse to the ideas of both symbolism and revelation. Without an exact and, in the measure necessary, sufficiently profound understanding of these key ideas, the approach to the Bible remains hazardous and risks engendering grave doctrinal, psychological, and historical errors. Here it is above all the idea of revelation which is indispensable, for the literal meaning of the Bible, particularly in the Psalms and in the words of Jesus, affords sufficient food for piety apart from any question of symbolism; but this nourishment would lose all its vitality and all its liberating power without an adequate idea of revelation, or of suprahuman origin.

Other passages, particularly in Genesis though also in texts such as the Song of Songs, remain an enigma in the absence of traditional commentaries. When approaching Scripture one should always pay the greatest attention to rabbinical and kabbalistic commentaries, and in Christianity, to the patristic and mystical commentaries; then will it be seen how the word-for-word meaning practically never suffices by itself, and how apparent naiveties, inconsistencies, and contradictions resolve themselves in a dimension of profundity for which one must possess the key. The literal meaning is frequently a cryptic language that more often veils than reveals, and which is only meant to furnish clues to truths of a cosmological, metaphysical, and mystical order; the Oriental traditions are unanimous concerning this complex and multidimensional interpretation of sacred texts. According to Meister Eckhart, the Holy Ghost teaches all truth; admittedly, there is a literal meaning that the author had in mind, but as God is the author of Holy Scripture, every true meaning is at the same time a literal meaning; for all that is true comes from the Truth itself, is contained in it, springs from it, and is willed by it. And so with Dante in his C*onvivio:* "The Scriptures can be understood, and ought to be explained, principally in four senses. One is called *literal*…The second is called *allegorical*…The third sense is called *moral*…The fourth sense is called *anagogical,* that is, beyond sense *(sovrasenso);* and this is when a Scripture is spiritually expounded, which, while true in its literal sense, refers beyond it to the higher things of the eternal Glory, as we may see in that Psalm of the Prophet, where he says that when Israel went out of Egypt Judaea became holy and free. Which, although manifestly true according to the letter, is none the less true in its spiritual meaning—viz., that the soul, in forsaking its sins, is made holy and free in its powers" (*Trattato Secondo,* I).

As regards biblical style—setting aside certain variations which are of no importance here—it has to be understood that the sacred or suprahuman character of the text could never be manifested in an absolute way through language, which perforce is human; the divine quality referred to appears rather through the wealth of superposed meanings, and in the theurgic power of the text when it is thought and pronounced and written.

Equally important is the fact that the Scriptures are sacred, not because of their subject matter and the way in which it is dealt with, but because of their degree of inspiration, or what amounts to the same, their divine origin; it is this which determines the contents of the book, and not the inverse. The Bible can speak of a multitude of things other than God without being the less sacred for it, whereas other books can deal with God and exalted matters and still not be the Divine Word

The apparent incoherency in certain sacred texts results ultimately from the disproportion between Divine Truth and human language: it is as if this language under the pressure of the Infinite were shattered into a thousand pieces, or as if God had at His disposal no more than a

few words to express a thousand truths, thus obliging Him to use all sorts of ellipses and paraphrases. According to the Rabbis, "God speaks succinctly": this also explains the syntheses in sacred language which are incomprehensible *a priori,* as well as the super-position of meanings already mentioned. The role of the orthodox and inspired commentators is to intercalate in sentences, when too elliptic, the implied and unexpressed clauses, or to indicate in what way or in what sense a certain statement should be taken, besides explaining the different symbolisms, and so forth, It is the orthodox commentary and not the word-for-word meaning of the Torah that acts as law: the Torah is said to be "closed" and the sages "open" it; and it is precisely this "closed" nature of the Torah which renders necessary from the start the Mishnah or commentary that was given in the Tabernacle, when Joshua transmitted it to the Sanhedrin. It is also said that God gave the Torah during the day, and the Mishnah during the night; and that the Torah is infinite in itself, whereas the Mishnah is inexhaustible as it flows forth in duration. It should also be noted that there are two principle degrees of inspiration, or even three if the orthodox commentaries are included; Judaism expresses the difference between the first two degrees by comparing the inspiration of Moses to a bright mirror, and that of the other prophets to a dark mirror.

The two keys to the Bible are as already stated the ideas of symbolism and revelation. Too often has revelation been approached in a psycho-logical, hence purely naturalistic and relativistic, sense. In reality revelation is the fulgurant irruption of a knowledge that comes, not from an individual or collective subconscious, but on the contrary from a supraconsciousness, which though latent in all beings nonetheless immensely surpasses its individual and psychological crystallizations. In saying that "the kingdom of God is within you," Jesus Christ means, not that heaven, or God, is of a psychological order, but simply that the access to spiritual and divine realities is to be found at the center of our being; and it is from this center precisely that revelation springs forth, when the human ambiance offers a sufficient reason for it to do so, and when therefore a predestined human vehicle presents itself, namely, one capable of conveying this outflow.

But clearly the most important basis for what we have just spoken of is the admission that a world of intelligible light exists, both subjacent and transcendent to our consciousness. The knowledge of this world, or sphere, entails as a consequence the negation of all psychologism and likewise all evolutionism. In other words, psychologism and evolutionism are nothing but makeshift hypotheses to compensate for the absence of this knowledge.

To affirm that the Bible is both symbolistic and revealed means, then, on the one hand that it expresses complex truths in a language that is indirect and full of imagery, and on the other that its source is neither the sensorial world nor the psychological or rational plane, but rather a sphere of reality which transcends these planes and immensely envelops them, while yet in principle being accessible to man through the intellective and mystical center of his being, or through the "heart," if one prefers, or pure "intellect." It is the intellect which comprises in its very substance the evidence for the sphere of reality that we are speaking of, and which thus contains the proof of it, if this word can have a meaning in the domain of direct and participative perception. Indeed the "classical" prejudice of scientism, or the fault in its method if one wishes, is to deny any mode of knowledge that is suprasensorial and suprarational, and in consequence to deny the planes of reality to which these modes refer, and which precisely constitute the sources both of revelation and of intellection.

Intellection in principle is for man what revelation is for the collectivity ; in principle, we say, for in fact man cannot have access to direct intellection—or gnosis—except by virtue of the pre-existent scriptural revelation. What the Bible describes as the fall of man or the loss of Paradise coincides with our separation from total Intelligence. This is why it is said that "the kingdom of God is within you," and again: "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." The Bible

itself is the multiple and mysterious objectivation of this Intellect or Logos: it is thus by way of images and enigmas the projection of what we carry in a quasi-inaccessible depth at the bottom of our heart; and the facts of sacred history—where nothing is left to chance—are themselves cosmic projections of the unfathomable Divine Truth.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

(Ptolemy) desired Eleazar the priest to send him the Old Testament, whereof he had heard great commendations, and therefore he meant to put it into his famous library. Eleazar sent it in Hebrew, and then he desired interpreters of him, and he sent him seventy-two, six of every tribe, all most perfect in the Greek and Hebrew. Their translation (into Greek) do we now usually call the Septuagint. The report of their divine concord therein is admirable: for Ptolemy having (to try their faith) made each one translate by himself, there was not one word of difference between them, either in sense or order, but all was one, as if only one had done it all, because indeed there was but one spirit in them all.

De Civitate Dei, XVIII, *xlii*

* * *

Meister Eckhart says, and so do other masters, that in the course of nature it is really the higher which is ever more ready to pour its power out into the lower than the lower is ready to receive it. The highest heaven, for instance, is turning far more rapidly than the rest which run against it. However fast the lower heavens race against the upper, in order to receive the influx from it, the highest heaven will go harder still both as to pace and influx. So God is vastly quicker to pour out his grace than man to take it in. There is no dearth of God with us; what dearth there is wholly ours who make not ready to receive his grace.

On Meditation

by
Dom Aelred Graham, O.S.B.

An address to the Society of St. John the Evangelist, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A., 10 November 1965.

HOW is one to approach, before an audience such as this, the subject of Meditation? One might devote the limited time at our disposal to recalling what some of the saints and masters of the spiritual life have said on the topic;—but that could be to turn out a very sketchy anthology of familiar texts. Or one might attempt a brief theological analysis, with a view to elucidating some of the principles that underlie religious meditation;—but this could prove to be too abstract and rather boring. Or, again, one might launch into an exhortation on the importance of the practice;—but this would surely be somewhat oppressive to listen to, besides being in other respects out of place.

Instead, I propose to speak about meditation in the experience of one particular individual, as this is the area I feel least incompetent about. If I refer to him in the third person, that is not intended to deceive anyone—only to provide a thin covering of respectability to a piece of egotistical exhibitionism.

Take, then, a young man who entered a Benedictine monastery at the age of 23. Brought up all his life in the Roman Catholic faith, he had not been consistently pious (rather the reverse), nor had he up to that age, or since, undergone anything that might be described as a spectacular religious experience or personal conversion. However, from the age of 20, while still "in the world" (as we say), he came under Jesuit influence and was much affected by the meditation system of St. Ignatius Loyola. This led to a period of considerable personal austerity: hair shirts, fastings, disciplines and the like: which together produced, or seemed to produce, a highly conscious devotion to the person of our Lord in his sacred humanity. It produced also a desire to be virtuous and to engage in some apostolic work for the spread of God's kingdom.

Looking back on that period from the sophisticated level of later years, our non-hero was grateful for the insights gained, but became persuaded that those insights were not sufficiently profound to sustain the deeper life of the spirit. This for two chief reasons: (i) the Ignatian method, in its subject matter, did not seem to engage the intellect: it remained within the sphere of the pictorial imagination—i.e., imaginative reconstructions of the life of our Lord etc.; (ii) the stress is on the will and effortless striving—without a proportionate mental illumination to elicit or direct that striving.

However, he would still say that most young men—particularly those who find their emotions and passions getting out of hand—could probably profit, at some stage in their spiritual careers, from a judiciously administered dose of Ignatian spirituality.

On entering the monastery he found the atmosphere quite different—with a strong, perhaps unreasonably strong, anti-Ignatian bias. The type of spirituality aimed at being corporate rather than individual, it was centered on the Mass and the Divine Office in choir. But always there was required at least one half hour's mental prayer or meditation each day. Not much definite instruction was given about this. One found oneself toying with a verse from the Psalms or the New Testament, a saying of St. John of the Cross, an aspiration from Father Augustine Baker—or else, more than likely, just falling asleep.

Certain convictions, however, did begin to take shape in his mind in those early years of Benedictine life. One conviction was that being attentive in church was not enough; that was desirable—but more important was the need to be recollected and generally aware outside church: in one's dealings with people and situations around one. Another conviction was the

importance of solitude, to have resources within oneself so that one could be happy alone. Also it seemed to him that recollectedness and fruitful solitude in some way were linked with meditation. If one failed to meditate the mind would dissipate itself and one could never experience even the beginnings of what Plotinus (for he had read Plotinus, in a sort of way, at an early stage) calls—"the flight of the alone to the Alone."

Coming to the study of theology, with the Dominicans at Oxford, he made further discoveries. The *Summa Theologica,* besides providing a magnificent doctrinal framework, seemed to convey two incidental lessons bearing upon religious meditation. One lesson was—the inadequacy of verbal statements either to express what is in the mind or to describe what lies outside it. The other lesson concerned the *realism* of credal statements: by this I mean, St. Thomas's position that the act of faith is not simply an assent to a verbal proposition, but a movement of the mind to that to which the proposition relates. Thus, when we say, "Credo in unum Deum" *(in* with the accusative)—the mind, as it were, moves towards God in an act of vital apprehension.

When all this was linked with the Augustinian-Thomist psychology bearing upon God's indwelling within the soul: the immanent presence of the Holy Trinity within the human spirit—our student gained a deeper insight into the rewarding possibilities of meditation. One had only to make purified acts of faith and love to be in direct, though obscure, contact with God. by sanctifying grace, according to Thomas, the soul is equipped with the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Granted sufficient fidelity, then, one could experience something of the Divine. With the presumptuousness of youth, this particular student began to fancy that he knew what St. Thomas meant when he spoke of his own theological *Summa* being so much "straw" compared to what he had seen in vision.

The cautionary lesson here appeared to be that there is a heady intellectualism, even in divinity, which needs to be corrected by an awareness of the creature's nothingness before God—and by the realization that the test of a Christian is not the heights of contemplative prayer as he may suppose himself to have reached, but the degree of his non-self-righteousness, and of his charity and compassion towards those around him.

A book which had an enormous effect on him at that time was the famous 14th century spiritual treatise, *The Cloud of Unknowing.* The doctrine in that work, which still lingers in his mind, is the extreme simplicity to which private prayer may be reduced—perhaps to no more than the mental utterance of the single word: God, or Jesus. The *Cloud* holds out as a goal, which still seems to him realistic if as yet far from being attained, the possibility of being aware of "Ultimate Reality" by way of an almost continuous state. (I quote from Chapter 71 of the *Cloud):*

> ...there are some who by grace are so sensitive spiritually and so at home with God in this grace of contemplation that they may have it when they like and under normal spiritual working conditions, whether they are sitting, walking, standing, kneeling. And at these times they are in full control of their faculties, both physical and spiritual, and can use them if they wish...

Parallel to his preoccupation with Christian theology and his attempts at mental prayer, our monastic student has been taking an amateur's interest in the spirituality stemming from India, especially Buddhism. (And at this point I propose to drop the perhaps irritating allusive device and switch to the first person singular.) Of the institutional and ritualistic aspects of Buddhism I am not qualified to speak. What seem to me of great interest to Christians are the Buddhist insight and manner of meditation. by the Buddhist insight I mean roughly what is indicated in Gautama's Holy Truths, and by meditation I mean the kind of physical and mental discipline practised by Zen Buddhists.

In the few brief remarks I shall make on this subject, I don't propose at every stage, or indeed at any stage, to establish the obvious parallels (as they appear to me) with Christianity. Suffice it to say that I think those parallels are incontestable, and that my (admittedly very limited) contacts with Buddhism and Buddhists, which have always been sympathetic and often almost reverential, have not had the slightest weakening effect on the traditional spirituality, as I have learnt it, of Catholicism.

Buddhism accepts as the basic fact of life the omnipresence of suffering, in the sense of frustration. We live in a vale of tears. Things never go right for long. We are faced with death—eventually our own, but continuously other peoples—with sickness, ill-health, poverty, or just those every-day hour-by-hour setbacks and annoyances of being in uncongenial company, having unsuitable work, living with disagreeable people—or, at the subjective level, living with our own depressions, guilt feelings and general sense of inadequacy.

Now nothing that we do can make these experiences other than they are, but what tends to make them intolerable is what Guatama denotes as "craving"—"craving accompanied by delight and greed, seeking its delight now here, now there; i.e., craving for sensuous experience, craving to perpetuate oneself, craving for extinction." The source of this trouble, be it noted, the very heart of human distress, is not the thing craved for—sensuous experience, for example—but the craving itself. A person may and should enjoy himself in the appropriate context; where he goes wrong is when he is possessed by an obsessive longing for such enjoyment.

The way to deal with this problem, according to Buddhism, is to get rid of (or be relieved from) the craving—"the withdrawal from it, the renouncing of it, liberation from it, non-attachment to it." To achieve this state of liberation (which is enlightenment, Buddhahood) is the point and purpose of human existence: it implies an ethical way of life, and specifically for Buddhism—the holy (or noble) eightfold path, consisting in "right views, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration."

But to lead the appropriate kind of life, we need the appropriate thoughts, or more accurately, the appropriate attitude of mind or spirit. The proximate means for bringing this about is by meditation. And from this point I shall speak of meditation, not in a specifically Buddhist sense, but in a way that is equally applicable to Christians—those Christians, at least, who are concerned with the spiritual life at its deepest or maturest level.

When discussing meditation, we commonly think of meditating on or about something. We have a theme for our meditation. This makes sense as giving a focus to our minds. But whatever theme we choose, even the most exalted, we usually find that it turns out to be rather banal, and that it cannot hold our attention. So we become distracted, our mind wanders, we day-dream—which is a form of wishful thinking, of craving therefore—and meditation becomes as frustrating as, perhaps more frustrating than, any of our normal every-day activities.

Here I would suggest that the fine point of meditation is not to think about something, however edifying, but just to *be* something—in this case to be our true selves. Whenever we are doing anything that requires external action—necessary as it is that we should be concerned with external activity almost all day long—we are never quite our true selves. We are actors, doers, assuming some necessary role or other, though it could be a highly virtuous, even an heroic role.

Yet at times we need just to be ourselves—for it is only when a man's actions flow out, so to speak, from his true being that they make acceptable sense. It is commonly admitted, I think, that we are our best selves when we are wide awake and aware. Not self-consciously aware, in an egoistic self-preoccupied sense, but in so far as our consciousness is actualized—"existentially" (to use a current phrase)—so that in some quite indefinable way our being and our knowledge merge. Momentarily freed from distractions—we just *are*.

To achieve this condition implies, not that we should think about something, but rather that we should think about *nothing* (no-thing). However, our minds being what they are, this seems

almost impossible. As soon as we strive to think about *nothing,* that too becomes a thing (perhaps an image of a circle, or an empty hole), and we are as badly off as ever. What we can do, though, if we are sufficiently alert, is not to cling to any thought—to let all thoughts flow by, detach ourselves from them, so allowing them to fade away into nothingness from lack of attention.

Someone may be tempted to ask—what has all this to do with religion? The answer is, a great deal. Paul Tillich has pointed out (truly, I think) that "Religion is not a special function of man's spiritual life, but it is the dimension of depth in all of its functions". Again, it has been well said that the only secular thing on earth is the secular heart of man. When we are not reminiscing vainly about the past, or gazing hopefully into the future, but facing present reality—of which, as T. S. Eliot observed, we cannot bear too much—our attitude cannot but be in some way religious: because our mind is then in touch, however obscurely, with the Source of our being. Be it remembered that we cannot, strictly speaking, think about God; we can only think about an idea of God in our minds, or a picture of God in our imagination—and neither the idea nor the image is God, or even a remotely adequate representation of God. "What God actually is always remains hidden from us," writes St. Thomas Aquinas (in his *De Veritate)*. "And this is the highest knowledge we can have of God in this life, that we know him to be above every thought we are able to think of him."

Aquinas uses the spatial metaphor of God being "above" our thought. It is, of course, the sense of God's "aboveness" or "otherness" which colours a great deal of Christian spirituality. God is transcendent. But no less Christian is the sense of God's nearness, His immanence, God's indwelling within man's spirit. Listen to St. Augustine commenting on St. John: *(In Joan Evangel., xxiii,* 10): "Recognize in thyself something within, within thyself. Leave thou abroad both thy clothing and thy flesh; descend into thyself: go to thy secret chamber, thy mind. If thou be far from thine own self, how canst thou draw near to God? For not in the body but in the mind was man made in the image of God. In his own similitude let us seek God: in his own image recognize the Creator." Something of what Augustine says here, I believe, may be realized in the quiet of meditation. And this leads naturally for me to say a word about bodily posture during meditation. The kneeling position, so natural to Christians, is, one might say, the physical response to God's transcendence. We kneel in suppliancy before our Creator. Yet the Divine indwelling has also its appropriate response;—and this seems to be the sitting posture associated with the forms of meditation deriving from India.

Anyone, not least a believing Catholic Christian, who has learned to sit, with body upright, the eyes downcast though not closed, the limbs folded into the center, the breathing so slow and regular as to be hardly perceptible, will testify to a remarkable heightening of consciousness. Mentally, one seems in an indescribable way to be in touch with the Ultimate—and for anyone brought up in the Christian tradition, such periods of meditation, even though practiced with Buddhists (as has been my privilege from time to time)—the Ultimate, in so far as it tends to be mentally formulated, is always in terms of the God manifested in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, before concluding, I should say a word on the subject of Yoga. Yoga, as we know, means union, and in itself has little to do with bodily posture. Nevertheless, there are certain simple exercises of hatha yoga which many people, including myself, have found of great benefit. We are coming more and more to realize the closeness of the union between body and spirit. It is therefore to be expected that more attention should be given to the kind of physical discipline which has proved itself, through many centuries, to harmonize with, possibly even to promote, deep spirituality.

As I am addressing members of a religious Community, perhaps a word should be said about the practical side of all this—the more so as I have some responsibility for a religious Community myself. First, I would say that this is a field where respect for individual liberty of

spirit is paramount. No one should be obliged to meditational practices with which they are out of sympathy or to which they feel no particular calling. Thus I have never spoken about these matters—even to the limited extent that I am doing here—in the weekly conference I give to my own Community. One or two of the younger members have come of their accord to ask me to show them what I do—and of course one is glad to oblige. Similarly, when one gives retreats to other Communities there are usually a few who feel that they might profit spiritually by such exercises. But the most rewarding experience of all in this respect, incidentally, has been with a small group of Prep school youngsters—who have come along entirely on their own volition—and sat in what has been called Zen Catholic meditation for half an hour of their own time every Sunday evening.

Let me conclude by making the point that in this short address nothing is being advocated. I am not in any sense a man with a message. The matters I have touched on seem to me of great importance; but in the case I know, or think I know best, I'm not sure that these practices have brought much improvement in the one sphere that counts—that comprised by insight, humility, charity and compassion. The most that can be said is that there has been engendered a keen sense of the need for these qualities and an aspiration towards them.

Everything lies, it seems to me, in compassionate insight. We live at a time when "ecumenism" of a sort has become fashionable; but we all know that something more is required than the camaraderie of interdenominational dialogue. To a realistic eye it might appear that, beneath the surface of friendly gestures and manifest good will, there still remain, standing as solidly as ever, the age-old impediments of hereditary and ethnical prejudices, together with corporate ecclesiastical vested interests, effectively blocking any effort to reunite what is left of Christendom. In any case, is the right approach really at the organizational level, the meeting of hierarch with hierarch, the search for mutual understanding with respect to doctrine, the finding of the comprehensive formula? If we can reach the deeper level of an ecumenism of the spirit, we shall not expect differences of Church organization and doctrinal formulations to disappear. We shall find, perhaps, that they do not matter very much.

Thanks are due to the Editor of "COWLEY," 80 *Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Mass., for kind permission to reproduce this talk on Meditation.*

Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay in *Studies:*

Thankfulness means that you should not disobey God by means of the favour which He has bestowed on you, nor make of His favour a source of disobedience.

Jonaid-e Baghdadi.

Extracts from the Letters of Shaikh Al-`Arabī Ad-Darqāwī

Translated by
Titus Burckhardt

THE DARQĀWI ORDER OF SUFIS

THE first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* published in 1913, while admitting the importance of the Darqāwī order (see *Derkāwā*) in Morocco and Algeria adds: "There are also a few *zawāyā*[1] of little importance in Tunisia, Tripolitania and the East." The second edition which is now being published, far from correcting this belittlement has cut down the article (this time under *Darkāwā*) to about one seventh of its original length, and does not even mention the influence of this order outside Morocco and Algeria; and while admitting that the order still exists, it tells us how many members it had in Algeria at the end of the last century and how many it had in Morocco in 1939, without any indication as to how many there might have been in 1965 when the article was published!

Perhaps the authors of the articles in question did not know that not every branch of the Darqāwā call themselves by that name. For example, the full name of the Madanī branch is *At-Tarīqat al-Madaniyyat ad-Darqāwiyyat ash-Shādhiliyyah,* for Mawlāy al-'Arabī ad-Darqāwī', the founder of the order and the author of the epistles which follow, was himself a *Shādhili.* But in practice only one name is used: some members of this particular branch call themselves *Madaniyyah,* others call themselves *Shādhiliyyah,* but they are all none the less *Darqāwā,* reciting the litanies of that order, performing its sacred dance (which differs from those of the Shādhiliyyah who are not Darqāwā), and referring to Mawlāy al-'Arabī ad-Darqāwī as "the Shaikh of our Shaikhs." It is ironical that it should be one aspect, and not the least aspect, of his greatness, the fact that he had such a wealth of great disciples, which has caused him to be underestimated in orientalist opinion. Some of these were recognised by him as "autonomous" Shaikhs. Amongst such was his favourite disciple, the Sharīf Mawlāy Muhammad al-Būzīdī, who was to have succeeded him but who died before him, and whose disciple Ahmad ibn 'Ajībah was the author of some remarkable Sufi treatises.

Mawlāy al-'Arabī was succeeded in Morocco by his son Mawlāy at-Tayyib ad-Darqāwī from whom the present Moroccan head of the order is descended. Another of Mawlāy al-'Arabī's successors was Muhammad al-Fāsī, who founded one Darqāwī Zāwiyah in Cairo and another in Colombo. Many if not all the Shādhiliyyah of Ceylon are in fact Darqāwā and look to the Cairo centre of the Fāsiyyah-Darqāwā as being their mother *zāwiyah.*

Another successor of Mawlāy al-'Arabī was Muhammad Hasan Zāfir al-Madanī (the founder of the already mentioned *Madaniyyah*) who had originally come from Medina in search of a spiritual Master and who had taken guidance from many Shaikhs, until he finally met the founder of the Darqāwā himself. The Shaikh al-Madanī's, son, also named Muhammad Zāfir, writing at the end of the last century, tells how his father met Mawlāy al-'Arabī in 1809 and adds: "He took the path from him and his heart was opened under his guidance, and if it be asked who was my father's Shaikh, it was Mawlāy al-'Arabī ad-Darqāwī."

The Shaikh al-Madanī had a large following and founded many *zawāyā,* the chief of which was at Misurata in Libya where he is buried. He was succeeded by his son who went to Istanbul

[1] Plural of *zāwiyah,* literally "corner," the name given to the place where the members of an order congregate.

where it is said that he was the Shaikh of the Sultan 'Abd al-Hamīd. However this may be, there can be no doubt that he had considerable influence in Turkey, and it was there, in 1879, that he wrote his book on the order, *al-Anwār al-Qudsiyyah,* published in Istanbul in 1884. Another of his father's successors, named 'Abd al-Qādir, founded a *zāwiyah* in Alexandria. These Darqāwā are thus as it were "first cousins" to the Darqāwā of Cairo. But it was no doubt through yet another successor, the Sharīf 'Alī Nur ad-Din al-Yashrutī, that the Madanī branch had its widest expansion. This eminent Sufi, who was born in 1793 and died at the age of 105 in 1898, spent several years with his Shaikh at Misurata and then migrated to Acre in Palestine. His daughter, Sayyidah Fātimah, who lives in Beirut, is thus the child of a man who was born in the 18th century (there must be few others alive today who can make such a claim) and her book about her father and the order in general, *Rihlah ila 'l-Haqq,* published about 1954, is a precious link with the past. During his long life, which spanned the whole of the 19th century but for two years, this spiritual grandson of the Shaikh ad-Darqāwī founded many *zawāyā* centring on Acre, the most important of these being at Jerusalem, Damascus, Beirut and Aleppo. Today the order is particularly wide-spread in the Lebanon from where it has also taken root in Mozambique, where it has thousands of members.

But even more than the Madanī—Yashrutī branch, it is probably the 'Alawī branch of the Darqāwā which has given that order its fullest flowering outside Morocco. Shaikh Ahmad al-'Alawī was descended from Mawlāy al-'Arabī by quite a different line from those already mentioned. by the time of his death, in 1934, his disciples in Algeria (including North Africans in Paris and Marseilles), Tunis, the Yemen, Abyssinia, Syria, Palestine and elsewhere were said to be well over 200,000 in number. After his death, under the head of his Damascus *zāwiyah,* the late Shaikh Muhammad al-Hāshimī, 'Alawī-Darqawī zawāyān were founded in Aleppo, Horns, Hama, Latakia and Amman. In Aleppo, at some seasons even more than once a week, one may find as many as 5,000 'Alawiyya—Darqāwā congregated at the tomb of the Prophet Zachariah in the great Omayyad Mosque.

If the new *Encyclopaedia of Islam* had had an article on the Shaikh al-'Alawī, this could have done much to make up for its shortcoming as regards the Darqāwā. But his altogether remarkable figure has been passed over in complete silence. Is it too much to hope that this might be remedied in a supplement?

MARTIN LINGS.

EXTRACTS

THE sickness afflicting your heart, *faqīr,* comes from the passions which pass through you; if you were to abandon them and concern yourself with what God ordains for you, your heart would not suffer as it suffers now. So listen to what I say to you and may God take you by the hand. Each time your soul attacks you, if you were to be quick to do what God orders and were to abandon your will entirely to Him, you would most certainly be saved from psychic and satanic suggestions and from all trials. But if you begin to reflect in these moments when your soul attacks you, to weigh the factors for and against, and sink into inner chatter, then psychic and satanic suggestions will flow back towards you in waves until you are overwhelmed and drowned, and no good will be left in you, but only evil. May God guide us and you on the path of His Saints, Amen.

The Venerable Master, Saint Ibn 'Atā-Illāh says in his *Hikam*: "Since you know that the Devil will never forget you, it is your business not to forget Him who 'leads you by the

forelock.'" (Koran XI, 59).[2] And our Master used to say: "The true way to hurt the enemy is to be occupied with the love of the Friend; on the other hand, if you engage in war with the enemy, he will have obtained what he wanted from you and at the same time you will have lost the opportunity of loving the Friend." And we say: All good is in the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God, and the only way that leads towards Him is through renunciation of the world, keeping apart from people, inner and outer discipline. "Nothing is more useful to the heart than solitude, thanks to which it enters the arena of meditation," as the Venerable Master Ibn 'Atā-Illāh says in his *Hikam*. And we say: Nothing is of more profit to the heart than renunciation of the world and the fact of being seated between the hands of God's Saints.

Dethronement of the ego is a necessary condition, according to us and according to all the Masters of the Way, and in this respect one of them said: "The very thing you fear from me is what my heart desires." But you, *faqīr,* should not say this before having said it to your own soul and having forced it to follow this road and no other.

* * *

As to this professor you told me about who is unable to find the state of presence,[3] tell him not to look towards the past nor towards the future, to become the son of the moment, and to take death as the target before his eyes. Then he will find this state, God willing.

We said to one of our brothers: Let him who wishes to be in a perpetual state of presence restrain his tongue. And we advise you: if you are in a state of perplexity (*hayrah*)[4], do not hasten to cling to anything, either by writing or by anything else, lest you close the door of necessity with your own hand, because for you this state takes the place of the supreme Name; but God is wiser. Ibn 'Atā-Illāh says in his *Hikam*: "Sudden distress heralds feast days for one who aspires"; and again: "Distress is the key to spiritual gifts"; and again: "You will perhaps find a benefit in distress which you have not been able to find in fasting nor in prayer; therefore when it descends upon you, defend yourself no longer and do not be concerned with searching for some remedy, lest you drive away the good which comes toward you freely, and give up your will entirely to your Lord; then you will see marvels." Our Master used to say when someone was overcome with dismay: "Relax your mind and learn to swim."

* * *

Do not give nourishment to all that arises in your heart, but throw it far away from you and do not be concerned with fostering it, forgetting your Lord the while, as most people do, thus going astray, wandering, losing their way in a mirage; if they understood, they would say: what an astonishing thing, the heart; in one instant it gives birth to countless sons, some legitimate, others illegitimate and yet others whose nature one cannot discern…How then could anyone who spends his time feeding all this offspring be available for his Lord? What a sorry creature, this son of Adam, who effaces the Cosmos until not a trace of it remains and whom the Cosmos in its

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[2] Grasp of the forelock: an Arabic idiom, referring to a horse's forelock. The man who grasps it has complete power over the horse and for the horse the forelock is as it were the crown of his beauty, the sum of his power of self-assertion.

[3] *Hudūr:* the state of presence before God, concentration on God.

[4] *Hayrah:* Dismay or perplexity in the face of a situation apparently without issue; or again, in face of truths which cannot rationally be reconciled; a mental crisis, when the mind comes up against its own limit. If we understand *hayrah* on the mental plane the advice given here by the Shaikh ad-Darqāwī is reminiscent of the Zen method of the *koan,* that is, of persistent meditation on certain paradoxes in order to provoke a mental crisis, an utter perplexity, which may open out into supra-rational intuition.

turn will obliterate until not a trace of him remains, save a faint odor which in a little while fades away altogether.

If you love your Lord, *faqīr,* leave your self and your world, and people, except the man whose state uplifts you and who shows you God by his words. But beware, beware lest you allow yourself to be deceived by someone, for how many are they who appear to be preaching for God when in reality they are only preaching for their desires. The celebrated Saint, *Sayyidī* Abū-sh-Shitā (may God let us obtain profit through him) says in respect to this: "by God, we call 'My Lord,' or 'Son of My Lord,' only him who cuts off our fetters." The fact is not hidden from you, *faqīr,* that what imprisons a man in this world, which is the world of corruption, and holds him fast, is nothing but illusion (*al-wahm*); but if a man gets rid of this illusion, he passes into the world of purity from which he came; and God brings every stranger back to his homeland.

* * *

Certainly all things are hidden in their opposites—gain in loss and gift in refusal, honour in humiliation, wealth in poverty, strength in weakness, abundance in restriction, rising up in falling down, life in death, victory in defeat, power in powerlessness and so on. Therefore, if a man wishes to find, let him be content to lose; if he wishes a gift, let him be content with refusal; he who desires honour must accept humiliation and he who desires wealth must be satisfied with poverty; let him who wishes to be strong be content to be weak; let him who wishes abundance be resigned to restriction; he who wishes to be raised up must allow himself to be cast down; he who desires life must accept death; he who wishes to conquer must be content to be conquered and he who desires power must be content with impotence. Which is to say, let him who wishes to be free rejoice in servitude, as his Prophet, friend and Lord (God bless him and give him peace) rejoiced in it; let him choose it as the Prophet chose it and not be proud nor rebel against his condition, for the servant is the servant and the Lord is the Lord…

* * *

A strong man is one who rejoices to see that the world is slipping from his hands, leaving him and fleeing, from him; who rejoices that people despise him, and speak ill of him and is satisfied with his knowledge of God. The Venerable Master, Saint Ibn 'Atā-Illāh (may God be pleased with him) says of this, in his *Hikam*: "If the fact that people turn away from you or speak ill of you causes you suffering, return towards the knowledge of God in you; if this knowledge is not sufficient, then lack of satisfaction in the knowledge of God is a far greater trial than that people speak ill of you. The purpose of this slander is that you should not rely on people; God wishes to bring you back from all things so that nothing may distract you from Him."

* * *

by God, my brothers, I did not believe that a learned man could deny a vision—in the waking state—of the Prophet (God bless him and give him peace), until the day I met some learned men in the Qarawīn Mosque and had a conversation with them on this matter. They said to me: "However is it possible to see the Prophet when one is awake, since he has been dead for over 1,200 years? It is only possible to see him in a dream, since he himself said: 'He who sees me, that is to say in a dream, sees me in reality, for the Devil cannot imitate me,'" I answered: "Of necessity, he can be seen in the waking state only by one whose mind—or let us say, whose

thoughts—have transported him from this corporeal world into the world of Spirits; there will he see the Prophet without the slightest doubt; there he will see all his friends." They were silent and said not a word when I added: "Indeed he can be seen in the world of Spirits." But after a while they said to me: "Explain how this is so." I answered: "Tell me yourselves where the world of Spirits is in relation to the world of bodies." They did not know what to reply. And then I said: "There where the world of bodies is, there also is the world of Spirits there where the world of corruption is, there also is the world of purity; there where is the world of the kingdom (*mulk*), there also is the world of kingship (*malakūt*); in the very place where the lower worlds are, there are to be found the higher worlds and the totality of worlds. It has been said that there exist ten thousand worlds, each one like this world, (as recounted in the 'Adornment of the Saints') and all these are contained in man, without his being conscious of it. Only he whom God sanctifies by absorbing his qualities into His own, his attributes into His own, is conscious of this. Now, God sanctifies many of his servants and does not cease from sanctifying them until their end."

The Venerable Master and saintly Lord Ibn al-Bannā (may God be satisfied with him) says in his "Inquiries":

Understand, for thou art a copy of Existence
For God, so that nothing of Existence is lacking in thee.
The Throne and the Pedestal, are they not in thee?
The higher world and also the lower world?
The Cosmos is but a man on a big scale,
And thou, thou art the Cosmos in miniature.

And the venerable Master, Saint al-Mursī (may God be satisfied with him) said:

"O thou who goest astray in the understanding of thine own secret,
Look, for thou shalt find in thee the whole of existence;
Thou art the Infinite, seen as the Way and seen as the Truth,
O thou synthesis of the Divine Mystery in Its Totality."

For men whose spiritual station (*maqām*) *is* extinction (*fanā*), the divine qualities are but the Essence (*dhāt*) of God, for when these men are extinguished in God, they contemplate His Essence only; they no sooner contemplate It, than they see nothing outside of It; and this is why they are called *dhātiyun* ("essential"). Now the Divine Essence possesses such infinitude, such beauty and goodness that even the most perfect intelligences among the elect are bewildered, to say nothing of the majority; for It becomes so subtle and so fine that It vanishes because of excess of subtlety and fineness; and in that state, It says to Itself; My Infinitude, My Beauty, My Goodness, My Splendour, My Penetration, My Elevation, My Exaltation know no bounds. Thus It is unmanifested. But the Infinite is not infinite unless it is at the same time unmanifested and manifested, subtle and solid, near and distant, having simultaneously the qualities of beauty and severity, and so forth; now, when Essence wished to manifest all this, It wondered (while knowing quite well): How shall I manifest it? And It answered Itself: I shall reveal and veil Myself at the same time; and this is what It did. Hence the essences of things, or more exactly, the forms which, as such, are present or absent, subtle or solid, higher or lower, near or distant, spiritual or sensory, merciful or terrible. These are all Essence, or, if you prefer, forms in which the Beauty of the Essence is manifested, although they are unable to manifest the Essence as

such, since in Itself there is nothing but Itself alone and there is nothing outside of It. On this subject, the Masters of the Way among our brothers in the East have said:

> Without any doubt?
> In the absence of doubt, the All is beauty, the beauty of God,
> Doubt's target is but the trace of nothingness.
> O thou who drinkest at the source (*'ayn*), when thou shalt realize, doubt will cease. The Essence is the very essence and source (*'ayn*)[5] of the qualities;
> In this truth there is no doubt.

And many other words have been uttered with the same meaning by the Masters of the Way in the East and in the West. If you understand our allusions, *faqīr,* then may God bless you, and if not, take note of your quality in order that our Lord may expand you by His Quality. And know that Majesty is Essence, whereas Beauty is Qualities; but the Qualities are none other than the Essence, as they recognize who have attained the state of extinction, though the others do not, that is to say, our masters in outer knowledge. Now there is no doubt that the outer is pure severity (*al-jalāl*), whereas the inner is pure clemency (*al-jamāl*)[6]. Yet the outer lends something of its severity to the inner, just as the inner lends some of its clemency to the outer, so that the outer becomes clement severity and the inner severe clemency. However, the outer severity is real and its clemency only borrowed; just as the inner clemency is real, its severity only borrowed. Only he knows this who, as we have done, has studied esoteric knowledge deeply, has submerged himself and been extinguished, as we have been submerged to the point of extinction. (May God be satisfied with us).

Hear, *faqīr,* what the venerable Master and Saint, Abū 'Abd-Allāh Muhammad Ibn Ahmad al-Ansāri as-Suhayli says in his book entitled *The Highest Degree of the Spiritual Traveller in the Revelation of the Ways*. "Know (and may God illumine our hearts with the light of gnosis and lead us on the path of all holy gnostics) that gnosis is the degree of *ihsān*[7] and the last step of the gnostic. God (be He exalted) said: 'They have not valued God according to his right measure' (Koran XXII, 73), that is to say, they have not truly known Him. He also says: 'Thou wilt see how their eyes overflow with tears because of what they perceive of the Truth.' (Koran V, 86). And the Prophet says: 'The pillar is the support of the house and the pillar of the just is the knowledge of God.' Now we understand by gnosis (*ma'rifah*) the fixing of contemplation in a state of sobriety, accompanied by the exercise of justice and wisdom ; and this is something quite different from the definition of knowledge (*ma'rifah*) given by doctors of the Law, who see nothing beyond the knowledge of dogma. Although in principle gnosis includes all knowledge, including therefore theological knowledge insofar as it is knowledge, nevertheless the knowledge of God is distinct from all other knowledge because it concerns the significance of the Divine Names and Qualities, not in an analytical way, but without any separation between the Qualities and the Essence. This is the knowledge which gushes from the spring of union, which is derived from perfect purity and which comes to light by dwelling unceasingly in

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[5] *Adh-dhāt:* is the Essence in the absolute meaning of the word, the ultimate reality to which all qualities relate; as for *al-'ayn,* which is used here as a synonym of *adh-dhāt,* it means more exactly essential determination, archetype; at the same time, the word '*ayn* includes the meaning `source' and `eye', which makes it even more suggestive in this context.

[6] The divine Qualities can be divided into two groups relating respectively to Majesty *(al jalāl)* and Beauty *(al jamāl)*. Majesty, the revelation of which burns and consumes the worlds, is in one aspect rigorous, severe, whereas Beauty is the synthesis of mercy, generosity, compassion and all analogous qualities. In Hinduism, Shiva and Vishnu have respectively the same functions. Earlier in this text, we translated *jalāl* and *jamāl* by "majesty" and "beauty"; in the present context, applied cosmically and psychologically, it is more suitable to speak of "severity," "clemency," and so on.

[7] *al-ihsān:* contemplative virtue, defined by this saying of the Prophet: "Worship God as if you saw Him; if you do not see Him, nevertheless He sees you."

intimate consciousness with God (may He be exalted)…" Finally he says: "If this is acquired, then gnosis is none other than the highest degree of initiates and the goal of those who travel towards God, and this is the quality in which they give their self in exchange for God. And even if nothing is left of them but their name alone, still we will speak of their states and their condition so that you may know, thanks to that, the whole extent of what we have failed to obtain from God (may He be exalted) and so that you may follow that way on which the solitary ones have gone before you, in which the gnostics have been victorious, while the limited ones, the men of outer knowledge, reject it. 'Truly we belong to God and to Him we return.'" (Koran II, 155)

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

The question is, When do the passions perforce obey the mind? The answer Meister Eckhart gives is this. What time the mind is fixed on God and there abides, the senses are obedient to the mind. As one should hang a needle to a magnet and then another needle on to that, until there are four needles, say, depending from the magnet. As long as the first needle stays clinging to the magnet all the other needles will keep clinging on to that but when the leader drops the rest will go as well. So, while the mind keeps fixed on God the senses are subservient to it but if the mind should wander off from God the passions will escape and be unruly.

Introduction to Tibetan Art

by
Marco Pallis

FOR anyone schooled in present-day conventions of artistic appreciation, approach to Tibetan art will not be altogether easy: to catch its real spirit, a considerable readjustment of values is called for. The almost exclusively aesthetic motives evoked in most of us by the word "art," as also the current belief that "self-expression" must necessarily be a primary consideration with every artist, represent notions hardly translatable in Tibetan terms. As far as the Tibetan artist's conscious attitude to the products of his skill is concerned, they one and all come under the heading of utilities, various in kind and degree of significance, "utility" here being taken to cover both the practical use of any particular object of human manufacture and also its symbolical suggestiveness, as a "reminder" of the sacred Doctrine and of the unique opportunity provided by this "human life hard to obtain"; regarded in this way, not only objects obviously serving what one would call "a religious purpose" but also things supplying the humblest needs of everyday life are able to become links between that life and "the one thing needful," that on which all subordinate utilities converge and in which they will find their ultimate fulfillment. Therefore each work of art appears, to the Tibetan mind, as fulfilling this twofold usefulness, at once practical and intellectual; in assessing its quality and value a man will consequently ask himself, firstly, "is this thing well made for its purpose?" and secondly, "is this thing *correctly* made?", that is to say, does it conform to those traditional canons whereby the universal light of the Doctrine is caused to reveal itself through the particular symbolism of the object in question?

There is in fact a twofold way of recognizing such a symbolism, namely through the use for which the object is destined in the first place, whether of eating, clothing, sitting or otherwise, and also through the various ornamental features traditionally associated with its construction: here again, "ornament" must never be interpreted as meaning unnecessary decoration, luxurious in its appeal, but rather as belonging to an artistic algebra, the signs of which can be read by those who speak that particular traditional language. Where then does the aesthetic element come in, it may be asked, seeing that Art must needs have its attractive appeal, otherwise one could hardly call it by that name? The answer is that the element of attractiveness, beauty, is simply taken for granted, as a quality naturally attaching to anything properly made, so that its presence hardly needs to be stressed when discussing the merits of that thing: that is why the Tibetan language, as compared with those of Europe, seems at first sight to be deficient in expressions of aesthetic values of all sorts; it would not be easy to translate an average book of artistic criticism into Tibetan so as to render its thought intelligible to the reader.

As for the Tibetan artist himself, he knows that his own skill, be it great or small, must, on pain of being self-defeating, be both inspired by, and dedicated to, the all-determining spiritual Norm; and this Norm, on its own showing, is ego-negating, it excludes in principle all individualistic exhibitionism. Such is the nature of artistic inspiration in the Tibetan world: the more closely we are able to identify ourselves with this point of view, the nearer we will get to understanding what Tibetan art is all about.

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Historically speaking, the motives figuring in the Tibetan tradition derive mostly from Buddhist India; Chinese influences, which made themselves felt later, only affect accessory features, especially in the field of social amenities such as official dress, cooking and domestic

decoration of various kinds: for instance carpets, used for sitting or for saddlecloths, were an importation from China as proved by the nature of the designs, though these, and also the actual technique, have been characteristically Tibetanised. For certain materials entering into the construction of artistic objects, especially silk which is not produced in Tibet, and certain categories of household requisites, such as porcelain, Tibet has always remained dependent on China as its source of supply; so long as these Chinese products were of good quality, the Tibetans benefited; when, following the Revolution of 1912, the craftwork of China began to deteriorate rapidly, Tibet could not but suffer from the results, both in actual fact and through the effect on public taste. It must, however, be repeated that the basic forms and the most telling motives in Tibetan art, across all their historical transformations, still clearly reflect the original Indian influence that came to Tibet with Buddhism; an influence which subsequently got passed on to the Mongols, whose conversion to the Buddhist faith was the work of Tibetan missionaries round about the 16th century. Mongolian art has always remained an offshoot of the Tibetan artistic stem: in certain departments, such as that of sacred iconography, it is often quite difficult to tell from which of the two regions a particular object derives. Here again, it is the Indo-Buddhist forms that represent the constant element wherever the Lamaic tradition prevails.

Nevertheless, this insistence on the Indian presence must not be taken to imply that Tibetan art has ever lacked originality; the opposite is the truth, for the creative genius of the race never failed to leave its own imprint on anything the Tibetans happened to borrow from whatever quarter. Their conscious intention, however, has always been to adhere to traditional Buddhist models: "originality," in Tibetan parlance, can only mean faithfulness to the origins: the idea of intentional innovation remains alien to the spirit of this artistic-ally gifted people—or did so until, at long last, they became exposed to the disintegrating influence of the modern industrialized civilization, first through commerce and more recently through military invasion; but this is a side of the story that need not be gone into here, though it had to be mentioned lest anybody should think that the state of affairs described in this survey still prevails in any large degree, for unhappily this is no longer the case. The question of what can or cannot be preserved, or else revived, in a predictable future is not one to which a simple answer can be given.

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The stage is now set sufficiently to enable one to give brief consideration to each of the arts in which the Tibetans have been pre-eminent, starting with *Architecture:* though the population of Tibet has always been relatively sparse, so that the available labor in any one valley can but rarely have exceeded a few hundreds, the country from end to end was dotted about with monasteries, temples and minor shrines and monuments of all sorts, often constructed on a scale that would be amazing did one not know (if one has lived in the Tibetan world) that the spirit of devotion is able to make up for the absence of material resources in a degree unheard of in places where everything has to be paid for in money; this spirit is not something confined to the distant past, for I myself while in Northern Sikkim have seen the trunks of colossal cedars lying in the forest ready for carrying on men's shoulders —some fifty to a tree—for the repair of the great temple of Sakya, to the northward of Mount Everest: this journey of some sixty odd miles involved a crossing of the main Himalayan range by a pass 18,000 feet high; each village or valley on the way took turns to offer its services, for no reward except the merit accruing to the deed —this was the same spirit in which Chartres was built, visibly being displayed in the middle of the 20th century. Having seen this much, one cannot be surprised at the magnitude of the results in other parts of the country.

Tibetan architects have all along shown a wonderful instinct both in siting their buildings and in taking advantage of the natural features of the ground: a slight slope imparted to the walls, Egyptian fashion, makes the human constructions seem as if they were growing spontaneously out of the ground. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that there exists no example of Tibetan architecture, but amounts to a masterpiece in some degree; many of the small shrines and monasteries vie with the greatest in respect of architectural perfection, and no two of these are alike. These facts give one the measure of the frightful artistic loss consequent on the Chinese Communist occupation of Tibet, with the destruction of religious buildings that followed the fighting in 1959; in the eastern parts of the country where guerilla resistance first arose, this destruction started earlier. It is small consolation to be told that, according to the accepted Communist practice, monuments of recognized "cultural" importance have been spared and even repaired where they had suffered damage in the fighting: the Potala, for instance, and other well-known buildings close to Lhasa, do not stand in any danger at present. This in no wise offsets, however, the far more widespread loss of buildings of no particular renown but not necessarily of lesser artistic merit, many of which, as refugees have testified, have either been destroyed outright, or desecrated and turned into barracks for the troops or else abandoned to the action of the weather and to the desultory quarrying of their materials: the all-over architectural loss is beyond computing.

To imagine what all this amounts to, in artistic wastage, let us for a moment picture an England fallen under similar occupation by a godlessly totalitarian enemy *(quod absit)* who would despoil and destroy most of our parish churches while meticulously preserving as "national monuments," a few specially selected cathedrals: what value would attach to the message vehicled by these few privileged examples once they had been isolated from the whole where properly they belong? Such has been the fate of Tibetan architecture in the last few years; it is only in certain favored districts lying in Indian territory that it survives intact, especially in Ladak (often called "Little Tibet") which is a district attached to Kashmir. To this must be added whatever is to be found in the cis-Himalayan States such as Sikkim and Bhutan, where the architectural style is akin to that of the Tibetan motherland, but modified in various ways in response to climatic differences, such as the replacement by a high pitched roof of the flat roofing usual on the central plateau, where rainfall is very small: in Ladak, on the other hand, conditions are so similar that the buildings there could just as well be found on the plateau itself.

While on the subject of architecture, something should be said about its domestic side: compared to many others, the Tibetans have been very well housed; even people reckoned as being relatively poor have possessed solid dwellings of sun-baked brick or stone or, in mountain districts situated at lower altitudes, of wood after the manner of Alpine chalets. Some of the larger farmhouses, in Ladak and also (judging by photographs) in the eastern region of Kham, are planned on an ample scale and often attain to great architectural beauty. To this must be added the fact that every Tibetan homestead has a focus, at once devotional and artistic, in the shape of the family altar placed either in the principal living-room or else in a room set apart. For the furnishing of this consecrated corner many arts come together; painting, image-casting, wood-block printing (of books), metalwork (bowls and lamps) and rugs for officiating clergy to sit on. From this it will be apparent that artistic participation is something open to people of every degree, it never could become an exclusive luxury of the well-to-do. Though obviously the great feudal manor-houses, splendid edifices disposed round an open court where horses and mules could be tethered, would contain more, and more costly, artifacts than the homes of the ordinary folk, there was no unbridged gulf between the respective ways of living; fundamentally they had a similar character, despite difference of social degree. Life in Tibet may have been simple, and even hard in some respects —for those accustomed to our soft living, the unheated houses of the Tibetans, rich and poor, during the intense winter cold would be trying— but it

was a life full of interest and surrounded by beauty on all sides, both the beauty of Nature and the beauty of man's handiwork under many forms; being always steeped in beauty people had felt no great incentive to define their experience of it in words, any more than fish feel the need to coin a name for the water they swim in. Ugliness has now invaded Tibet on a large scale, as part of the price to be paid for the Chinese Communist "liberation" of what, prior to their coming, was one of the most contented countries in the world.

From architecture the step to *Painting* follows naturally, inasmuch as one of the primary uses of the latter art, in Tibet, has been the covering of the interior walls of temples with scenes from religious history and with the symbolical portrayal of celestial states. Surviving examples of very early Tibetan wall-paintings display a style of Buddhist art of unsurpassable purity and perfection, comparable to that of the cave temples of India. Mrs. Govinda, a gifted Parsee artist who in 1948, in company with her husband, visited Tsaparang in Western Tibet and took tracings of paintings in the old temples there, has thereby preserved for the world a priceless record; these buildings had long been suffering from local neglect, and who knows what may have happened in view of the political upheavals that have occurred since? Fortunately, some examples of this early style are also to be found in Indian territory, notably at Tabo in the Spiti valley. It is to be hoped that the Indian Archaeological Department will do all that is possible to safeguard these unique paintings, thus providentially placed under its care. Given the very dry Tibetan climate, the chief thing needed to preserve a set of ancient paintings is to keep the building in a decent state of repair. In Tibet itself, the chief cause of disappearance of the many fine early paintings that must have existed there is almost certainly their later repainting in a style which, though still good, falls short of the primitive inspiration. The kind of meticulous touching-up by experts, intent on changing as little as possible, which our own "museum-mindedness" rightly demands in such cases is alien to the habits of simple people living entirely in the present and taking their own traditional art for granted; by and large this is a healthy attitude, but "the exception that proves the rule" is difficult to fit in to this otherwise desirable viewpoint. All the world over, priceless things have disappeared from this cause, and it is difficult to see how this could have been prevented.

Passing to our own time, it can fairly be claimed that some quite fine series of wall paintings have been executed by artists who are still living: I am thinking of a particular case, at P'hiyang, in Ladak. Because of the much broader treatment required when dealing with large surfaces, the quality had on an average remained at a better level than in the case of the *thankas,* or painted scrolls mounted on Chinese brocade, that form the other great branch of the painter's art as practiced in Tibet. In the latter case, there is more call for subtlety, both of line and coloring, and likewise more is asked in the way of facial expression where human figures are concerned. It must be admitted that since the turn of the present century this type of painting has been in steady decline, even though many capable professional exponents were still kept fully busy in supplying the needs of the population all over the country; to which number must be added many Lamas of high rank who painted as a spiritual exercise and whose work was by no means amateurish. Among signs of decline that meet the eye in most of these recent *thankas* might be mentioned a generally more stereotyped handling of the traditional forms, a noticeable predilection for cruder (often excessively light) coloring and an almost total disappearance of finer shades of expression in the faces: when one looks back even a hundred years, let alone to the rapturously inspired religious painting of the 17th century, one is made aware of how much quality has been lost meanwhile. *Thankas* are not easy to date with precision; but it is nevertheless roughly true to say that the 18th century still produced a lot of *thanka* painting splendid both in composition and technique, the 19th some that was outstanding and much that conformed to a good average; whereas in the 20th century deterioration on all counts has been

rapid, and favorable exceptions, though not absent, have been comparatively few, especially after the first two decades had passed.

The technique of *thanka* painting follows everywhere much the same pattern: a piece of cotton cloth is inserted into a frame, rather like those used over here for embroidery, where it is kept taut by a thread running all round when the cloth sags, this thread can be further tightened. The surface is then coated with fine plaster mixed with glue, thin enough to allow of its being rolled up on occasion; the plaster, once dried thoroughly, is polished with an agate. After that, figures and other main features of the composition are drawn in, fairly roughly, with charcoal. Painting then begins, in body colors prepared from various earths and other mineral substances including fine gold. When the whole surface has been covered, finer details are added over the existing colors, including the features of the faces, which are among the last details to be put in.

Training for this art involves apprenticeship with a senior artist, who may also be one's spiritual instructor, in the case of a young monk, or else a lay professional. At first the pupil watches his master and aids him in routine jobs such as grinding paints and preparing canvases; almost unconsciously he imbibes many of the technical manipulations he will use later. Drawing will be learned by copying designs and figures either set out by his own teacher or else reproduced in the standard books for the use of painters, where the canonical proportions of each Buddha figure or other sacred motif are given in detail. In fact, every such figure, however free it may appear in the result, fits into a framework determined by the rules of "Sacred Geometry"; relative measurements and points of intersection of the various guiding lines are all laid down. Of particular importance are certain focal points in the figure corresponding to the symbolical centers of consciousness as used in *yogic* meditation; these points are often marked on the back of the canvas (which is semi-transparent), their positions being indicated by a sacred monogram or syllable. The whole creation, though it delights our eye, partakes as much of an exact science as of an art; to a Tibetan eye, the beauty it exudes is but the splendor of the truth there symbolically indicated. In this respect a picture and a book hardly differ for a Tibetan: I remember an occasion when I tried to buy a painting entitled "States of the Way (to Deliverance)" and the owner, who said he did not wish to part with it, added "But I can let you have a book on the same subject. This will come to the same, won't it?"

Closely related to painting, as far as intention and usage are concerned, is the *Plastic Art,* the art of modeling images of Buddhas and Saints, the materials employed being either a kind of *stucco* (especially for larger figures) or else brass, which afterwards is gilt: as in medieval and renaissance Europe, the gilding is charged for separately, according to the amount of gold required. *Stucco* figures are always painted, while in the case of metal ones the hair and certain other features are often picked out in color. True sculpture, by a direct chipping of stone, is an art that has fallen into abeyance with the centuries: magnificent examples in black basalt exist in some of the earlier temples and one meets figures in relief, also of early date, on rock faces in unexpected places; but for the most part the three-dimensional images one sees in Tibet are modeled, not hewn.

The art of *Metal Casting* in Tibet appears to owe much to Newari masters from Nepal, many of whom crossed the Himalaya during past centuries in order to ply their craft in the lands to the north. The iconographical principles governing the making of plastic figures follow the same lines as in painting: symbolical proportions, postures, gestures, weapons and other attributes of each divine image or saintly portrait are all traditionally determined and each has its precise meaning; the art is to give effect to them in the best possible manner so that the message thus to be conveyed shines forth with the brightness of a true icon. Each statue, when the artist has completed his work, receives its "heart" in the shape of a strip of paper bearing a sacred formula, placed in a hollow inside the image which afterwards is sealed. So long as that text is present there, the image is "alive," it can be recipient of the worship intended for whatever

personnage it represents; if, through any accident, this text is taken out of the image (curio dealers often do this thinking they might find jewels there) then the image is "dead," it becomes a mere shell however beautiful it may seem to the profane eye; to "reanimate" it, a fresh dedication by a qualified person is required, which will of course include the insertion, once again of an appropriate text: these details have been given partly for the sake of those who possess or purchase Tibetan figures that have been robbed of their "hearts."

* * *

Having now touched on those major arts that are most closely associated with the religious life of the Tibetans, one can pass on to consider briefly those other arts, such as woodwork, metalwork and weaving, which though not absent from the temple, find their place commonly in the home: to these can be added pottery, which in Tibet was glazed but otherwise undecorated; it deserves mention chiefly because of the classical perfection of its forms, reminiscent of ancient Egypt and Hellas. This art, of which one of the important centres was a certain district in the central Brahmaputra valley, was an entirely domestic amenity, and its products, usually of large size and consequently heavy, rarely found their way outside their country of origin. Hardly any foreign writers about Tibet seem to have noticed these truly splendid examples of the potter's art in very dark bronze or else, for teapots, golden yellow; nor do they figure commonly in our museums. One can do no more than just notice the existence of this craft here.

In all the above mentioned branches of craftsmanship the Tibetans have excelled; indeed there was no Tibetan home, even if only a nomad herdsman's tent, but contained a few examples of craftwork, always of some merit and often outstandingly so. Sharing in what the arts can bring to human life (one cannot say this too often) was a common factor throughout Tibetan society, one that should not be overlooked when trying to estimate, in comparison with what exists elsewhere, the quality of living of this monstrously ill-used people.

Taking *Woodwork* as next on our list: apart from its place in architectural construction, where it supplies the spreading capitals of the supporting piers of temples etc., carved often with great boldness, and also rails, window-frames and other incidental features, this craft is commonly applied to a number of household objects chief among which are the small folding tables called *chogtse,* at which people sit while taking their meals and so on; the back of the table is open, facing the sitter, but the other three sides are solid and these are carved and often pierced and colored as well. To these should be added the chests and cupboards found in Tibetan houses, these being usually painted with attractive floral designs; similar painted decoration is also often to be seen on friezes and pillars both outside and inside the house. Among smaller objects, mention should be made of painted bowls with a lid to contain the *tsampa* or parched barley-meal which, for the Tibetans, takes the place of bread. Every Tibetan possesses a wooden teabowl which he carries about in the pouch formed in his gown above the sash that secures it round the waist; these teabowls are beautifully shaped and when made out of specially fine figured wood they fetch high prices. In some cases they are silver-lined and, more rarely, also mounted in finely worked silver: the latter is rather a Mongolian than a Tibetan custom, commoner therefore in the north-eastern parts of the country. Lastly must be mentioned the use of thick wooden boards to protect the sheaf of long, loose leaves that form the Tibetan book. Each volume is wrapped in silk or cotton and placed between the two boards which are held together with a ribband of some sort. In most cases these boards are carved to some extent, the pattern being picked out with gilding. The great volumes of the Scriptures, whether manuscript or, more commonly, printed from wooden blocks, are often enclosed between boards magnificently carved, showing elaborate figure compositions with Buddhas

occupying the chief positions. Wholesale destruction of books by the Communists as part of their anti-religious campaign must by now have accounted for a very great quantity of these carvings; a number of examples collected by foreign travelers have, however, found a place in museums over here, enough, that is to say, to make one aware of how much more has been lost.

Like woodwork, *Metalwork* plays an important part in everybody's life, supplying as it does, besides altar vessels and lamps, copper and brass vessels of every kind and size, chief among which are the capacious teapots which every Tibetan family is continually using from morning till night; nor must one forget those teapots of huge proportions from which tea is poured out to each monk at stated intervals during the daily services: these pauses for relaxation and refreshment are a regular feature of temple worship and exemplify a certain down-to-earth attitude very characteristic of Tibetan piety. Many smaller teapots are adorned with bands of silver, richly chased: this mixing of metals is a favourite device of the Tibetan smith. Usually the spout is made to issue from between the jaws of a sea monster, while the handle is formed out of a dragon: the variety of forms assumed by this common domestic utensil is very great, as one might expect in view of the place tea-drinking fills in the day-to-day life of the people.

In the same connection, other articles of common use are the copper or silver teacup-stands and lids made to fit Chinese porcelain, or, in exceptional cases, jade cups. In another department of metalwork one might mention knives and weapons of various kinds, of which the hilt and scabbard are often very finely worked. A long sheath-knife, that looks like a dagger, is regularly carried by Tibetan men but, in point of fact, it is a general purposes implement, chiefly for cutting meat while on travel, and has no offensive purpose. The Khambas (of Eastern Tibet), who have a certain warrior tradition behind them that goes with an extreme sense of local and personal independence, carry immense swords, the blades of which are masterpieces of the armourer's craft, with everything else to match. Though excellent craftsmen in metal are to be found in every corner of the Tibetan world, the Khambas are those who, by general admission, excel in this art as they do in many other things. In recent times Kham has given to Tibet, besides artists, a great number of men of heroic virtue, both physical and contemplative, and it is to the spiritual centers in Kham that persons of high aspiration from other regions have tended to go for instruction. Khamba skill and ardor has even expressed itself at times in the field of brigandage: such familiar Shakespearian characters as "first and second murderer" (who also figure in classical Tibetan drama) are often presented on the stage wearing Khamba costume, a joke which everybody in the audience is able to appreciate! It is therefore not surprising that it was in Kham that resistance to the Chinese first broke out in open warfare and that many leaders of the patriotic movement belonged to that region.

An account of Tibetan metalwork would not be complete without some reference to the vast amount of jewelry, varying in design with the district, which was in use all over the country —charm boxes, necklaces, ear-rings, rings and many other such pieces of jewelry were in common circulation, mostly made of silver though often gilt as well. Decoration took the form of fine filigree, coupled with a skilful use of turquoise, coral and small pearls; jade or onyx beads were also common. Another metal object, which though not exactly jewelry, was commonly carried on the person when traveling was a small silver shrine in which to house one's patron deity; a man would sling his portable shrine from the shoulder much as we would carry a camera.

This brings us to the craft with which the present inevitably rather schematic account of Tibetan art must be concluded: the craft of *Weaving,* which includes the making of rugs in woolen pile. First, however, one should speak about weaving in the ordinary sense, of materials for clothes and also of blankets, of which the Tibetans employ a large variety.

Of all the crafts found in Tibet weaving was the most universally practiced one. Practically every house had its loom and a very large proportion of the population, both male and female,

could claim competence in this respect, with the result that the Tibetans have been among the most adequately clothed peoples in the world. Great houses kept a large number of weavers employed in supplying the household with woolens of all kinds ranging from rolls of ordinary cloth and bedding to the incomparable material known as *shema,* made from selected portions of the fleece and which, once dyed an "off-black" color, went into the gowns of the gentry and wealthier merchants: so close is the weave as to render this material almost rain-proof; it will even turn a mastiff's teeth on. occasion, as this author can testify —they did not mark the cloth itself, though they drew blood underneath. This best of all cloths was expensive even in Tibet — one gown made from it cost the equivalent of about £20— but against that must be set the fact that such a garment is expected to last for several generations: thus regarded, it is not all that costly. But even apart from such high-class materials, the ordinary homespuns worn by the population at large were excellent, as well as pleasing to the eye; one can but repeat it, Tibetans of all ranks were well supplied in regard to the three basic necessities of food, clothing and housing; since the Occupation they have known shortage for the first time in their history.

The monastic population whose habit, in Tibet, is of a dark maroon, not yellow as in most Buddhist countries, naturally absorbed a considerable weaving output, being supplied in this respect by their own families or else by well-wishers who, in this way, stood to gain merit by contributing to the welfare of the *Sangha*.

Something should here be said about dyes: apart from indigo, which was only obtainable from India, the Tibetans used the following dyestuffs: for red, madder and also lac, an insect product obtained from Bhutan; for yellow, rhubarb, a plant abundant on the Tibetan hills — when combined with indigo this gave all possible shades of green; for browns, walnut is the dye used, it comes from the alpine valleys. Latterly, Tibetans had begun to bring in chemical indigo and other aniline products stocked by the bazaars on the Indian border, to the great detriment of the weaver's craft in all its forms.

As regards his basic material, wool, the Tibetan weaver had access to the best possible sources of supply, since sheep living under the hard conditions of his native land tend to grow a wonderful quality of fleece; even when it feels soft to the touch it retains a resilience that enables it to stand up to the hardest wear; moreover Tibetans do not make the mistake of depriving it of too much of its natural oil, that is why their materials are ideal for wearing in a very cold climate. Tibetans do not work in silk or cotton, being entirely dependent for these on China and India respectively; as both are in considerable demand for several types of clothing, their importation ranks among the more important items of Tibetan trading.

So far, only plain materials of various kinds have been mentioned: it now remains for us to consider the one branch of the weaver's art where the Tibetans have gone in for elaborate patterning and variegated colors, namely the art of making carpets in pile; it should be said, in passing, that neither tapestry nor embroidery was ever developed in Tibet and where silk-embroidered *thankas* in Tibetan style are met with, these will almost certainly be the work of Mongolian monks, who originally will have got the idea from the Chinese.

Tibetan rugs are used exclusively for sitting on; never as floor coverings. Mostly they are of small size, oblong or square, being placed upon a low mattress of corresponding shape or else on a divan. The only carpets of considerable size are the long runners used by the rows of monks when engaged in chanting their choral offices; these are thick and rather shaggy and the colors, though pleasant, are kept on the sober side. The ordinary Tibetan rugs are often brightly colored but never garish; at least they never were so while the traditional designs and methods of dyeing prevailed. In recent times there has been a change, about which more later.

The introduction of this craft into Tibet can certainly be ascribed to contacts with China; the designs indicate this clearly, being for the most part based on a field carrying one, or more often three circles each of which has a square inscribed in it, this being also a common Chinese

practice. The various borders running round the carpets also show evidence of a Chinese origin, including, as they do, the "key-pattern" and other familiar features found on Chinese rugs of similar form. In fact, even after the Tibetans began to make their own rugs in a style very much their own, they continued to import a large number of fine Chinese rugs of a type made at Ning-hsia, in Kansu province, and it is probably there that the original parentage of the Tibetan craft of carpet-making is to be sought. In particular, fine Chinese examples were to be seen in Tibet in the form of shaped saddlecloths as well as small oblong carpets laid over the hard saddle itself; these rugs were much prized and they certainly added a lot to the bright appearance of any pony whose master could afford them.

A peculiar feature of Tibetan rugs is the actual manner of creating the tufts that form the pile. Of the two classical carpet "knots," the Turkish and the Persian, it is the latter that was used in China and therefore one would have expected to find it also in Tibet; but such is not the case, for the Tibetans, for reasons unexplained, developed their own type of pile, made by winding the various strands of colored wool round a stick, the loops being sheared to form tufts only after a whole row has been completed; following which the row is secured by a weft thread. Another special feature, common both to Tibetan and Chinese rugs, is connected with the aim of producing definition in the design. In all carpets belonging to Islamic peoples definition is obtained by outlining; that is to say, a pale line of knots is run round a dark shape in the design and vice versa. In Chinese and Tibetan rugs, on the other hand, there is no such outlining and definition is obtained in quite a different way, namely by "undercutting" with scissors so as to deepen the shadows at required points, thus causing the design to stand out. This undercutting is a highly skilled operation; as a method it is very effective when kept within the limits imposed by its purpose; when exaggerated into a mannerism it merely becomes vulgar, as can be seen in modern Chinese commercial carpets.

Two of the principal centers of rug-making in Tibet were Gyantse, on the trade-route between India and Lhasa and, in a smaller way, Kampa Dzong which many will remember as one of the stages on the way to Mount Everest, situated on the edge of the plateau facing the main Himalayan chain. Kampa Dzong rugs are of relatively coarse texture, as befits their simple but very attractive designs; the classical Gyantse type of rug, on the other hand, shows a much finer knot-count.

This erstwhile flourishing craft has unfortunately been in continual decline since about 1930, when the first commercialization of Gyantse rugs began to affect their quality. The situation deteriorated far more rapidly, however, about the time of the Second World War, when there was an influx into Tibet of neo-Chinese products of the most vulgar and inartistic kind. High society at Lhasa, whose members for better or worse were in a position to lead public taste, fell for all sorts of foreign novelties: in fact for the first time, the idea of "old fashioned" versus "up to date" gained a hold on the minds of many of the richer Tibetans, with catastrophic results on their powers of discrimination; this is a psychological phenomenon, typical of modern times, that has affected many lands and always has the same causes behind it and leads to the same results. Owners of genuine Tibetan carpets suddenly lost the taste for them and contemptuously handed their best examples over to their servants to be used up in the kitchen. In place of these pieces, which we ourselves might well have wished to place in a museum, they filled their houses with hideous products of a tightly packed board-like texture, displaying on a borderless field various sprawling motifs of a pictorial kind, such as dragons, tigers or fantastic birds, dyed in hit-you-in-the-eye aniline colors. Any one of these changes was enough to ruin the art, the worst being the loss of texture, for in all weaving this is the most essential factor of all; in a rug the "lie" of the tufts determines both its feel and the way the colors will catch the light and even a good design will be ineffective if the texture be not right. For anyone who thinks of producing any kind of rug, this is the first point to which he must give his attention: this is said for the benefit of

anyone who thinks that the revival of this, or any other Tibetan craft using refugee labour will be an easy task. The practical problems are bound to be very great and their solution, to be even possible, requires a clear facing of the issue, without the least attempt at evasion either at the level of knowledge or of execution. The Lamas teach that Wisdom and Method, for any spiritual enterprise to be successful, must go hand in hand, they cannot be parted. The same applies in the arts: the idea must be right and so must the technique, otherwise one will produce a travesty, if not worse.

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In giving this account of Tibetan arts and crafts under many different aspects the aim has been, all along, to avoid a too abstract presentation, as if the objects described were only meant to be viewed across the protective glass of a collection or classified according to periods under cover of some sumptuously printed book. One has tried to show both what lies behind the very idea of Art, in Tibet, as also what place the creations of art have filled in the lives of the Tibetan people, serving their practical needs and enriching them inwardly at the same time.

One would gladly have had an opportunity of saying something about the three mobile arts of music, dancing and the drama, since these too have entered intimately into the artistic experience of Tibetans great and small and at all levels, from that of popular merrymaking to mystery plays of high spiritual import; but it would take a separate article to do anything like justice to them.

Ultimately the Spiritual Life itself is the sphere where the highest artistry of all is called for: for a Tibetan, religion is as much a matter of "skill" as of "will," this is a characteristic trait of his outlook. The supreme work of art, in Buddhist eyes, is Enlightenment itself; the human art of living, with all its component arts, is as a bow bent to speed an arrow to that target.

The Wild Boar and the Bear[8]

by
René Guénon

AMONGST the Celts, the wild boar and the bear symbolise respectively spiritual authority and temporal power, that is to say, the two castes of the Druids and Knights, the equivalents, at least originally and in their essential attributes, of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. This symbolism in origin clearly Hyperborean, is one of the marks of the direct connection between the Celtic tradition and the primordial tradition of the present *Mahayuga* (cycle of four "yugas" or ages) whatever other elements from previous but already secondary and derivative traditions may have come to be added to this main current and be, as it were, reabsorbed into it. The point to be made here is that the Celtic tradition could well be regarded as constituting one of the "links" between the Atlantean and Hyperborean traditions, after the end of the secondary period when this Atlantean tradition represented the predominant form and became the "substitute" for the original centre which was already inaccessible to the bulk of humanity.[9] As regards this point also, the very symbolism we have just mentioned can provide some not uninteresting evidence.

Note, in the first place, the importance given to the symbol of the boar by Hindu tradition, which was itself the direct issue of the primordial tradition, and which affirms expressly in the *Vêda* its own Hyperborean origin. The boar (*varāha*), as is well known, not only represents the third of the ten *avatāras* of *Vishnu* in the present *Mahayuga*, but our entire *Kalpa*, that is, the whole cycle of manifestation of our world, is designated as *Shwêtavarāha-Kalpa*, the "cycle of the white boar." This being so, and if the analogy which necessarily exists between the great cycle and subordinate cycles is taken into consideration, it is natural that the emblem of the *Kalpa*, if it may be expressed thus, is to be found once more at the starting point of the *Mahayuga*. This is why the polar "sacred land," seat of the primordial spiritual centre of this *Mahayuga*, is also called *Vārāhi*, or the "land of the boar."[10] Moreover, since it is here that the first spiritual authority dwelt, of which all other legitimate authority of the same order is but an emanation, it is no less natural that representatives of such an authority should have received from it the symbol of the boar also, as their distinctive emblem, and should have kept it throughout. This is why the Druids designated themselves "boars," although since symbolism has always many aspects, we may well have here also an allusion to the isolation in which they kept themselves with regard to the outside world, the wild boar always being regarded as the "solitary" one. Moreover, it must be added that this isolation itself, which took the form, with the Celts as with the Hindus, of a forest retreat, is not unconnected with the characteristics of "primordiality," of which at least some reflection should be maintained in all spiritual authority worthy of the function it fulfils.

But to return to the name *Vārāhi*, which leads to some particularly important observations: it is regarded as an aspect of the *Shakti* of *Vishnu,* and more especially with relation to his third descent, the boar *avatāra* whose "solar" nature immediately identifies him with the "solar land"

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[8] *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée,* ch. (Gallimard, Paris, 1962).
[9] Cf. *Le Roi du Monde*. Ch. X, notably passages concerning the relations between the Hyperborean *Tula* and the Atlantean *Tula* (*Tula* or *Thule* being one of the earliest designations of spiritual centres); see also *Symboles fondamentaux,* etc.,
[10] Contrary to what Saint-Yves d'Alveydre seemed to have thought, this name *Vārāhi* is certainly not applicable to Europe, which is the "Land of the Bull," though no doubt it came to be so called in a period far removed from the origins.

or primeval "Syria," to which reference has been made elsewhere,[11] and which is, moreover, one of the designations of the Hyperborean *Tula*, that is, of the primordial spiritual centre. Then again, the root *var,* for the name of the boar, is to be found in the Nordic languages in the form of *bor,* the exact equivalent of *Vārāhi* is thus "Boreas," and, in fact, the customary name "Hyperboreas" was used by the Greeks only at a period when they had already lost the meaning of this ancient designation. It would be better, in spite of the usage which has been prevalent since then, to term the primordial tradition not "Hyperborean," but simply "Borean," thus affirming unequivocally its connection with "Boreas" or "land of the boar."

There is yet another angle: the root *var* or *vri* in Sanscrit contains the meanings of "cover," of "protect" and of "hide," and, as the name *Varuna* and its Greek equivalent *Ouranos* show, it serves to indicate the sky, both inasmuch as the sky both covers the earth and represents the higher worlds that are hidden from the senses.[12] Now all this is perfectly applicable to the spiritual centres, either because they are hidden from the eyes of the profane, or because they protect the world by their invisible influence, or, finally, because they are, on earth, as the images of the celestial world itself. It may be added that the same root has yet another meaning, that of "choice" or "election" (*vara*), which is obviously no less appropriate to the region which is invariably referred to as the "land of the chosen," the "land of saints," or the "land of the blessed."[13]

In what has just been said, it is possible to discern the union of the "polar" and "solar" symbolisms, but, strictly speaking, in that which concerns the boar, it is the "polar" aspect which is especially significant; and, moreover, this arises from the fact that in ancient times the boar represented the constellation which later became the Great Bear.[14] In this substitution of names lies one of the marks of what the Celts symbolised by the strife between the boar and the bear, that is, the revolt of the representatives of temporal power against the supremacy of spiritual authority, with the diverse vicissitudes which followed one another in the course of successive historical epochs. The earliest manifestations of this revolt actually go back far beyond so called "historical" times and even further than the beginning of the *Kali-Yuga*, in which it was to become more wide-spread than ever before. This explains how the name *bor* came to be transferred from the boar to the bear, and how "Boreas" itself, the "land of the boar," became the "land of the bear," during a period of Kshatriya predominance, to which, according to Hindu tradition, *Parashu-Rama* put an end.[15]

In this same Hindu tradition the most usual name for the Great Bear *is sapta-riksha,* and the Sanskrit word riksha is the name for the bear, etymologically identical with those by which it is known in various other languages: the Celtic *arth,* the Greek *arktos,* and also the Latin *ursus*. It may be wondered however whether this is really the primary meaning of the term *sapta-riksha,* or if there has not been rather, in the manner of the substitution we have just mentioned, a sort of super-imposition of words which are etymologically distinct, though they may be considered closely connected and even identical by the application of a certain phonetic symbolism. Indeed, *riksha* is also, in a general sense, a star, that is to say in fact a "light" (*archis*, from the root *arch* or *ruch*, to "shine" or "illuminate"); and, on the other hand, the *sapta-riksha* is the symbolic dwelling

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[11] See *Symboles fondamentaux* etc., ch. VI, and XII. The *Vayu Purana* describes the Varāhar (the Boar Avatāra) as follows: "His bulk was vast as a mountain; his tusks were white and sharp and fearful; fire flashed from his eyes like lightning, and he was radiant as the sun."

[12] The Latin word *coelum* itself has the same significance originally. See in this connection *Le Roi du Monde*, Ch. VII.

[13] The Germanic root *ur,* which has the sense of primordiality, would also seem to be related to the Sanscrit *var.*

[14] It should be recalled that this constellation has also had many other names, amongst them that of the scales, but it would be beyond the range of this article to concern ourselves with it at present.

[15] It has already been pointed out in this connection that Fabre d'Olivet and those who followed him, like Saint-Yves d'Alveydre, seem to have made a somewhat strange confusion between *Parashu-Rama* and *Rama-Chandra*, that is to say between the sixth and seventh *avatāras* of *Vishnu*.

of the seven Rishis, who, apart from the fact that their name is related to "vision," thus light, are also themselves the seven "Luminaries" by whom the Wisdom of earlier cycles was transmitted to the present cycle.[16] Nor is this connection between the bear and light the only case of its kind in animal symbolism, for the wolf was held to be connected with light by both Celts and Greeks,[17] whence its attribution to the solar God, Apollo or Belen.

At one period the name *sapta-riksha* was applied, not only to the Great Bear, but to the Pleiads, which also contains seven stars. This transfer from a polar constellation to a zodiacal constellation corresponds to passage from solsticial to equinoxial symbolism, implying a change in the starting point of the annual cycle, as well as in the order of predominance of the cardinal points related to the different phases of this cycle.[18] This is the change from North to West, which refers to the Atlantean period; and this is clearly confirmed by the fact that, for the Greeks, the Pleiads were daughters of Atlas and, as such, they were called also Atlantids. Transferences of this type are, moreover, often the cause of manifold confusions, the same names having different applications in different periods, and this applies equally well to terrestrial regions as to celestial constellations, so that it is not always easy to determine exactly the connection in each case. In fact this can only be done by linking up their diverse local variations with the characteristics pertaining to the corresponding traditional forms, as we have just done with those of the *sapta riksha*.

In Greece the revolt of the Kshatriyas was represented by the hunting of the Boar of Calydon, a transparently Kshatriya version of the struggle according to which they claim for themselves a decisive victory, since the boar is killed by them. Athenaeus, following earlier authors, declares that the Boar of Calydon was white,[19] which clearly identifies it with *Shwêta-varāha* of Hindu tradition.[20] Equally significant, in the present context, is the fact that the first blow was struck by Atalanta, who, it is said, had been suckled by a she-bear, and the use of the name Atalanta might indicate that the revolt began either in Atlantis itself, or at least amongst the inheritors of its tradition.[21] Then again, the name Calydon is reproduced exactly in the name Caledonia, the old name for Scotland. Apart from any question of "localisation," it is, properly speaking, the country of the "Kalds" or Celts;[22] and the forest of Calydon is no different, in fact, from that of Bracelonde, the name of which, although in a somewhat modified form, is the same, and is preceded by the word *bra* or *bor*, that is, by the name of the boar itself.

The fact that the bear is often taken symbolically in its feminine aspect, as we have just seen with regard to Atalanta, and as is seen in the naming of the constellations of Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, is not without significance in so far as it is attributed to the warrior caste, wielder of temporal power, and there are several reasons for this. Firstly, this caste normally plays a passive or feminine role with respect to the sacerdotal caste, from which it in fact receives not only the teaching of the traditional doctrine, but also the legitimation of its own power, whence its "divine right." Further, when this same warrior caste, overthrowing the normal relationship of subordination, claims supremacy, its predominance is generally accompanied by the

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[16] The persistence of these "seven Luminaries" will be observed in Masonic symbolism: the presence of a similar number of persons representing them is necessary for the constitution of a "just and perfect" lodge, as well as for the validity of the initiatory transmission.—Let us point out also that the seven stars which are mentioned at the beginning of the Apocalypse (I. 16 and 20) would be, according to some interpretations, those of the Great Bear.

[17] In Greek the wolf is *lukos* and light is *luke;* hence the double meaning of the epithet of *Apollo Lycius*.

[18] The transfer of Libra into the Zodiac naturally has a similar significance.

[19] *Deipnosophistarum, IX, 13*.

[20] It need scarcely be recalled that white is also the colour attributed symbolically to spiritual authority; and it is known that the Druids wore white robes.

[21] There are also other curious connections in this respect, in particular between the golden apples referred to in the legend of Atalanta and those in the garden of the Hesperides or "daughters of the West," who were also like the Pleiads daughters of Atlas.

[22] It is likewise probable that the name Celts, like Caldeans, which is identical with it, was not originally applied to a particular people, but to a sacerdotal caste exercising spiritual authority among different peoples.

predominance of feminine elements in the symbolism of the traditional form as modified by it, and sometimes even, as a consequence of this modification, by the institution of a feminine form of the priesthood, as for example that of the Celtic Druidesses. This last point is merely touched upon here since to dwell on it would take us too far from our subject, especially if we were to go in search of corresponding examples in other traditions, but at least this indication serves to show why it is the female bear, rather than the male, which is symbolically placed in opposition to the boar.

It should be added that the two symbols of the boar and bear do not always appear as being inevitably in opposition or combat, but that, in certain cases, they can also represent spiritual authority and temporal power, or the two castes of Druids and Knights in their normal and harmonious relationship, as may be seen especially in the legend of Merlin and Arthur. In fact, Merlin, the Druid, is also the boar of the forest of Bracelonde (where he ends, moreover, not by being killed, like the Boar of Calydon, but only by being put to sleep by a feminine power); and King Arthur's name was derived from that of the bear, *arth;* more exactly, the name is identical with the star *Arcturus*, taking into account the slight difference due to their respectively Celtic and Greek derivations. This star is to be found in the constellation of the Great Wain, and, in these names can be seen the union of the emblems of two different periods: the "Guardian of the Bear" has become the Waggoner, whilst the She-Bear herself, or the *sapta-riksha*, has become the *septem triones*, that is to say the "seven kine" (whence the appelation "Septentrion" to indicate the North). However, we are not concerned here with these transformations which are comparatively recent compared with those which we are considering.[23]. All that has been said so far seems to point to the following conclusion as regards the respective role of the two currents which contributed to the formation of the Celtic tradition: originally, spiritual authority and temporal power were not separated into two different functions, but were united in their common principle and a vestige of this union is still to be found in the very name of the Druids *(dru-vid*, "strength-wisdom," these two terms being symbolised by the oak and the mistletoe).[24] On these grounds, and also as more particularly representing the spiritual authority to which is reserved the higher part of the doctrine, they were the true heirs to the primordial tradition, and the essentially "borean" symbol, that of the wild boar, truly pertained to them. As for the Knights, having the bear as their symbol (or the She-Bear of Atalanta) it may be considered that the part of the tradition more especially destined for them contained, principally, elements originating from the Atlantean tradition; and this distinction may even help to explain certain more or less enigmatic parts of the subsequent history of the traditions of the West.

[23] Arthur is the son Uther Pandragon the "chief of the five, "that is to say the supreme king who lives in the fifth kingdom, that of the *Mide* or "middle," situated at the centre of the four subordinate kingdoms which correspond to the four cardinal points (see *Le Roi du Monde*, Ch. IX); and this situation is comparable with that of the celestial Dragon when, containing the Pole Star, he was "in the midst of the sky like a king on his throne," according to the expression of *Sepher Ietsirah*.

[24] For the ancient Egyptians the symbol of the Sphinx, in one of its meanings, combined these two attributes according to their normal relationship. The human head may be considered as representing wisdom and the leonine body as representing strength; the head is the spiritual authority which directs, and the body is the strength which acts.

(Original editorial inclusion that followed the essay:)

Examine the mutations of things and thou wilt find everywhere 'has been' and 'will be.' Think on God and thou wilt find 'is' where 'has been' and 'will be' cannot be…Being is a term for immutability… There is primal and absolute life, in which it is not one thing to exist and another to be, but the same thing to be and to exist; and primal and absolute intelligence, in which it is not one thing to be living, another to understand, but to understand is to live, and is to be, and all things are one.

St. Augustine

Book Review

BORN IN TIBET. **by: Chogyam Trungpa**
(Allen and Unwin, 35s.)

Review by Martin Lings

This unique autobiography falls into two parts, the story of the upbringing and education of a young Tibetan Lama from his earliest years until the age of nineteen, and the story of his escape to India when his country was invaded by the communists.

The death of the tenth supreme abbot of Surmang had left the monks of that group of monasteries without a spiritual head; and after several months, through visions and other signs, as happens also in the case of the Dalai Lama and many other lesser dignitaries, the author of this book, then less than a year old, was identified beyond doubt as the tenth abbot's incarnation, and he was subsequently enthroned as the eleventh of the line. It may be mentioned in passing that the traditional conception of reincarnation is quite different from what it is generally understood to be by Westerners. This becomes clear when one learns that the author's *guru* is one of five reincarnations of the same person who are all living at the same time and who all accept each other, and are universally accepted, as reincarnations of that person. A valuable appendix explains that there are several different kinds of reincarnation but there is never any question of a dead man's ego, the kernel of his individuality, being reincarnated.

The author was brought up in the monastery, and at the age of eight he was ordained as a novice. Shortly afterwards he went into spiritual retreat for three months, and on the basis of that his training in general was intensified.

There are many brief and vivid sketches of some of the remarkable men who passed through his early life: his tutor who had previously spent three years in spiritual retreat behind bricked in doors, receiving food through a panel, and who, when he felt that his tutoring was finished, retired to end his days at the same hermitage; the saintly and gifted regent abbot, lover of birds and animals, in his mountain retreat which he called the Garden of the Mists; a married Lama who was a gifted poet and who handed on to him much of the teaching that he himself had received from the tenth abbot. Many other disciples of the tenth abbot also came into the life of his successor, as was to be expected. No doubt the most outstanding of all was Jamgön Kongtrül of Sechen who was invited to perform a rite at the monastery when the author was only nine. Even at that age he was impressed to the point of being conscious that this Lama was destined to be his *guru;* and at the age of twelve he insisted on going to Sechen. One has the impression that the two years spent there with his *guru* were the most satisfying of his early life. Both master and disciple felt that a considerably longer period was necessary, but the young abbot's monks were impatient at the absence of their spiritual head and contrived a pretext to make him return. Later he insisted on going back to his *guru*, but for the moment he had to leave him. He writes: "The following day when I went to say good-bye to my *guru* he told me that, though I must now leave, he had had a dream the night before and had seen a half moon rising in the sky; everyone was saying 'This is a full moon': 'this means,' he said, 'that you are the moon but not yet really full, for your studies are not complete.' He gave me further advice on meditation … and broken-hearted I left that wonderful place."

by now the author was fourteen, and from that time on he was in ever increasing demand, sometimes from quite distant parts, to officiate at funerals and to perform other rites. Many vividly described incidents stay in one's memory—for example, his visit to a highland monastery and the solemn meeting, with all due ceremony, of two processions, that of the guests headed by himself, and the procession of welcome headed by the young abbot who was to be his host, a

boy of his own age who soon became a close friend and who later became the disciple of his *guru*, and who took part in the final escape to India.

It was at this young abbot's highland monastery that the author was invited to bestow a vast collective initiation into a body of teaching which he himself had received at Sechen, an exceedingly complex rite which took six arduous months to perform. This was just one of the many dilemmas with which the book is punctuated. On the one hand it was more or less taken for granted that he would accept the invitation, and a steady stream of aspirants were arriving at the monastery; on the other hand his tutor, who still travelled with him everywhere, warned him on no account to accept unless he was confident that he could do it perfectly "as failure would be serious." It was only after spending several days in devotional meditation that he decided to undertake the task, and all went well.

Memorable also is the description of the four nunneries that were established, as an offshoot of the monastery, at the four corners of a near-by mountain. There was also, not far from the monastery, a hermitage "which was exclusively used for seven week periods of meditation on *bardo,* the state experienced at the moment of death and just afterwards."

On the return journey he visited another centre, one of the most important in Tibet.

"The whole area around the monastery is famous for its art… All the villagers earn their living by painting… All the houses belonging to the villagers contained wonderful paintings and carvings, and their shrine rooms were in the same style as those of the monasteries… On the opposite side of the river the people specialized in goldsmith's and silversmith's work, particularly in smelting and casting these precious metals."

The Dalai Lama's visit to East Tibet and the remarkable preparations for it are described in rich detail. Of the actual visit he remarks:

"He (the Dalai Lama) gave me personally a wider vision, since I now understood what it meant to be the incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, for this was apparent in the Dalai Lama's serenity and radiance, which one could feel was part of him."

The author's education continued. The purely mental part of it, as regards the study of texts, was formidable enough to have overstrained the mind if it had not been balanced by continual meditation and invocation. There were many other aspects to his training. After his ordination at the age of eight he had to learn "how to perform various rites, how to intone and how to use drums, bells and various other instruments." There were also lessons in painting and in poetry and, at a much later stage, intensive lessons in sacred dancing.

The second part of the book, the story of the escape, is told in a matter of fact way, but when read between the lines it is the story of terrible hardship and astounding endurance, made possible by drawing on the forces of the Spirit. No one can fail to be impressed by the prevailing serenity. At one point the author feels obliged to make a short spiritual retreat to renew his strength. At another point he is able to write a poem, which is given at the end of the book. The following is part of an address made by him, still only in his twentieth year, to the assembled fugitives:

"Our journey to India must be thought of as a pilgrimage, something that in the past few Tibetans have been able to make. Whether or not India has changed, the spiritual blessings imparted to that country by the presence of the Buddha remain: the places where he lived, freed himself from the bondage of *Samsāra,* taught, and died have an eternal value. It is fortunate for us that our way is hard and that we are struggling against greater difficulties than the pilgrims of the past, for by this means we shall learn and profit the more from our journey. We should not be thinking only about the enemies threatening us from without. Each moment we should be aware of ourselves and of the forces of destruction that threaten each man from within. If we fail in this, we are indeed putting the spiritual object of our journey in jeopardy; each step along the way should be holy and precious to us."

But when the book has been read and when the overwhelmed reader has had time to see it in perspective, it is neither the narrative of upbringing and education nor the narrative of escape that seems to stand out most of all. To say this is not to deny the intense interest of either, for each in its own way serves once again to confirm the fact that fiction is no match for truth as regards the strange and the marvellous. But the author, faithful to his ancestral outlook, has succeeded in painting a vast canvas in which the human individuals and their paths and the bridges that they cross are dwarfed and overshadowed by the setting itself. That setting is the civilization of Buddhist Tibet. Our dominating memory is of a theocracy in full flower, surrounded on all sides, penetrated, and in many places deeply indented, by virgin nature, which the author so often and so lovingly describes throughout the book and which enters so profoundly into the lives of both priest and layman; and within the framework of this theocracy, we are especially struck by the sheer quantity of spiritual riches. In a book of this kind we would expect to hear of spiritual dignitaries. But what takes us by surprise is the remarkable correspondence between outward function and inward spirituality which seems to be the rule rather than the exception. The chief characters in this book are nearly all Saints in the making, one feels, while some of them no doubt are Saints already made; and to match what one might call this quantity of quality, we have a corresponding impression of the piety of the people as a whole, a general orientation towards the merciful Beyond such as the Western world has not seen for six hundred years or more.

Yet the author's civilization was still flourishing, quite undecayed, only ten years ago. Through *Born in Tibet* it is now revealed to the West, to a world which mistakes machine-power for vigour and which claims to be "Civilization" with a capital "C"; and if that world were prepared to listen, it might learn from this book something of what vigour and civilization truly are.

Book Review

MY DEAR TIME'S WASTE. **by Fr. Brocard Sewell, O. Carm.**
(Saint Albert's Press, 45s.)

Review by William Stoddart

Fr. Sewell is perhaps best known as editor of *The Aylesford Review*. The present book, his autobiography, consists mainly of a sequence of recollections and anecdotes about the people he has known throughout the various stages of his life. Many of these people are highly interesting—Chesterton, Belloc, Eric Gill and Bernard Kelly, for example—and one jogs along happily with Fr. Sewell's reminiscences. His association with these distinguished individuals, however, loyal and unquestioning though it undoubtedly was, obviously did not involve his being very deeply engaged in their notable intellectual activities. This makes the book a trifle on the light side—something it would not have been if, over and above the personal recollections, Fr. Sewell had sought to convey to a greater extent the specific nature of these men's original thought.

What strikes one most on reading this book, however, is the extent to which the arrival of the post-war period has been a watershed in the life of Fr. Sewell. Gone completely is the influence of Eric Gill with his implacable rejection of the shoddy and the false, no matter the manner in which these might turn up. No trace of Gill's masterly re-affirmation of the traditional truths is to be found in the latter part of the book. A host of "contemporary" personalities of every kind and degree of folly, mischief and ugliness cram Fr. Sewell's pages. Atheists, miscreants, *nouvelle vague* writers, all receive studiedly indulgent mention and are blandly treated as normal and positive members of society. Just as, however, one tended to "blame" Fr. Sewell for not being a deeper and more intimate spiritual companion of Eric Gill and the rest, so here one must "excuse" him, for it is evident that he is blissfully unaware of the implications of his protégés' activities, and of what it is, for example, that they are "sincere" about.

The text "Judge not that ye be not judged" is not quoted by Fr. Sewell, but one guesses, sadly, that it is to these words that he would probably turn in order to justify his permissive attitude towards all and sundry in the modern age. by the same token, he would probably be unsympathetic to those of us who, mindful of sacred truth—and its lack of respect for persons—might feel inclined to "judge" some of our contemporaries. Nevertheless it is necessary to point out that Fr. Sewell indulges in "judging" too. For example, he finds great fault with the police (it may be correctly) for the part they played in the trial of Stephen Ward; he has elsewhere waxed indignant about the C.N.D. marchers who were jailed under the official secrets act. More important, his positive findings (often in the case of the most dubious of characters) are also "judgements" (even though favourable), and as such would also fall under the ban of the words of Christ quoted above. In passing, it is surely worth making the point that the handing out of praise to unworthy persons (except within precisely defined limits) is a cruel implicit criticism of those who are worthy—be these the saints who have gone before us, or simply humble people of good will.

The main Scriptural illustration of the "judge not that ye be not judged" injunction is that of the sun shining and the rain falling on just and unjust alike. The point here is that, notwithstanding, the two categories remain distinct. In the religious life two attitudes (pertaining to two distinct "levels") are possible: either (1) on the basis of the words of Christ quoted above, one "turns the other cheek" and remains impassive in the face of all contingencies, one cuts oneself free from the futile chain reaction of rights and wrongs, and one forswears judgment,

both favourable and unfavourable; or (2) recognizing that there is both divine and human justice and that God is not mocked, one "judges" under Christ and in His light—remembering that He is the ultimate judge of all things. Christ enjoined us to love one another, but He did not forbear to speak of a "generation of vipers." There is no degree of spirituality, however high, which requires us to nurse vipers at our bosom, and there is nothing in Christianity which would restrain us from calling a spade a spade. Christ forgave the woman taken in adultery (who by this time acknowledged her fall and was repentant); He did not pretend that she had not sinned.

Fr. Sewell's confusion of levels and a certain weakness in logic are somewhat irritating, but it would be unjust and pointless to blame him for not being a Bernard Kelly—a Thomist metaphysician and associate of Eric Gill to whom Fr. Sewell refers.

It is a commonplace that the religious life involves the renunciation of the world. If this were so when the world was relatively "normal," how much more is it true today! Fr. Sewell is at pains not to "reject" contemporary trends. Indeed, he makes it his business to "accept" irresponsible, ignorant (but far from unpretentious) innovators in literature, ideology and morals. Though not actually stated, it is implied that this is all part of "charitableness." But here we must see what the Scriptures have to tell us: the Golden Rule involves (1) loving God and (2) loving one's neighbour as oneself. It cannot be stressed too much that the first clause has absolute priority, and that the second is dependent upon it. This means that while love of God is absolute and unconditional, love of one's neighbour is relative and conditional. The injunction itself makes this clear by its use of the words "loving one's neighbour *as oneself."* This means that one's neighbour, just like oneself, must expect to be treated harshly, if the need arise (if one is an evildoer, for instance). The contemporary error is to obscure the conditional character of love of one's neighbour, and also to invert the order of the two clauses (if not, indeed, to dispense with the first clause altogether).

It is important that the first clause of the Golden Rule should be quoted in full: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind *(et in tota mente tua)."* (Matthew, XXII, 37). It is characteristic of a mindless age that while the first two modes are now taken in as vague a sense as possible, the third mode is disregarded entirely. This is not said at the expense of Fr. Sewell, but at the expense of the contemporary wreckers (small fry though most of them are) whom, albeit somewhat self-consciously, he befriends. 1f we have turned our backs on St. Thomas Aquinas (and enthusiasm for the quasi-Marxist views of Teilhard de Chardin would suggest that we have), it is probably too much to hope (now that some interest is shown in the non-Christian religions) that a study of Buddhism (orthodox Oriental Buddhism, that is, not Western or modern counterfeits) will teach us to abhor the deadly sin of mindlessness—an open door to hell and a "sin against the Holy Spirit" for which there is no forgiveness. The most characteristic manifestation of contemporary mindlessness is the well-nigh total ignorance of the concept and reality of *orthodoxy*. From the youthful Chesterton to the "new writers" of the present day, *quelle dégringolade*!

Correspondence

REINCARNATION

Sir,

SPEAKING as one who acknowledges his own indebtedness to Guénon in the past, I can also admit to some sympathy for those who complain, as did the two letter-writers in the Summer number of *Tomorrow,* of the habitually hectoring tone Guénon adopted in regard to people whose views he disapproved of, for whatever reason. In mitigation, it can be said that his frontal attack on all the most cherished illusions of our modern Western civilization called for special qualities, in the man, such as rarely go with delicately adjusted expression; the vocation of an *Athanasius contra mundum* is often accompanied, humanely speaking, by a tendency to over-simplification in the field of applications, even when principles are clearly envisaged. It is of course matter for regret that Guénon's strictures soon took on the form of recurrent *clichés* lending themselves to easy parody—the penalty of a lack of sense of beauty, which in Guénon marked his weakest side.

To pass to the question of "reincarnation" itself: this is an unhappy word, too often used, because it almost inevitably will evoke the picture of a human birth in our own familiar world. What neither Guénon nor his critics have brought out with sufficient clearness is that *samsāra,* transmigration, the existential round of birth and death as presented by Hinduism and Buddhism (where it constitutes a basic doctrine) is before all else *indefinite;* whatever forms popular imagination may graft on this idea, it is contrary to its real meaning for us to try and define the particular form which "rebirth" will take for such and such a being—the traditional classification of beings in heavens, hells, human or animal realms etc., is evidently schematic and symbolical and does not violate the above condition in any misleading way. Only one other thing need be laid down about *samsāra* (and here Guénon was right), namely that the illimitable character of All-Possibility excludes repetition; no being or thing can retrace the existence of another in the sense of a real identity, be it even for a moment; the uniqueness of creation applies down to the smallest characteristics or components of the beings concerned.

In his letter Mr. Calmeyer struck a most relevant note when he said that the vital question here is "who is he or she?", or in other words, "what is self ?" The Vedantic doctrine of *atmā,* universal selfhood, and the seemingly opposed Buddhist doctrine of *anatma,* universal non-selfhood, provide an answer to this question from two complementary angles. If the Semitic theologies, for their part, do not include the notion of *samsāra* (except perhaps in a very indirect sense, through the Christian teachings about Purgatory), there is nevertheless a meeting point between the Semitic idea of a "soul" and its salvation and the Indian idea of "human birth hard to obtain" (within the process of transmigration) discernible in the fact that Deliverance or Buddhahood can only be attained as from a given birth: even though a Buddha "remembers all his past lives," his Enlightenment is not definable in terms of samsaric experience at any remove; it is a unique and eternal event, to us paradoxical and inexpressible. If we speak of it as if this were the final link in a chain of succession, this is because our own present situation leaves us no choice—so long as "a Way" (across *samsāra)* still exists for us, with wayfarers to tread it, our thinking and language must needs reflect our own condition; hence the value of symbolical modes of expression which, at least to some extent, escape the limitations of individual thought.

It is noteworthy that Guénon, when writing about the Hindu doctrines, alluded very little to *samsāra* as such; he wished rather to emphasize the principial simultaneity of that which, from the standpoint of ordinary experience, appears as successive: the "guénonian" presentation of the *Multiple States of the Being* is a static version of the same truth which *samsāra* traditionally expresses in dynamic mode. Guénon's scheme of the *degrees* of reality is illuminating provided it be not turned into a system to the detriment of the essential indefinitude of *samsāra* and its

contents. It would seem, however, that Guénon, despite warnings offered to others, somewhat systematised his own views on the subject; whence his statement that, among Hindus, their frequent references to rebirth in human form are consciously intended to be read in a symbolical sense only, and that it is Western misunderstanding, notably on the part of Theosophists, that is exclusively responsible for current reincarnationist phraseology. Having had much to do with both Brahmins and Lamas in their own countries I can only say that as a statement of fact the above mentioned view does not hold water.

While I feel sure that all are agreed in rejecting the possibility of *repetition* in the arising and existence of beings, as spelling metaphysical nonsense, the possibility of another (but different) human birth is not formally ruled out by the Orientals; for them, this possibility goes in with the rest of *samsāra* and they neither try to limit it in positive or negative terms. One can perhaps best express the traditional view by saying that human birth is a rare and correspondingly precious opportunity, determined like everything else in an indefinite Round of Existence by antecedent *karma*. Popular simplifications apart, this is the doctrine one meets in Asia.

Lastly, to take two lesser points of detail in Mr. Calmeyer's letter: he mentions some recent books, with names of Indian writers quoted there, as evidence that Guénon was wrong in ascribing the "reincarnational" idea to Western authorship only: though this point has already been touched on, I should like to add that persons, Oriental by race, who have come strongly under modernist European influences cannot fairly be cited as spokesmen for the Eastern traditions; intellectually they are hybrids. Of the ones mentioned by Mr. Calmeyer some evidently come under that heading, of whom Swami Vivekananda was a typical example—a remarkable personality in his way, but a prey to all sorts of sentimental confusions plainly traceable to a Westernised education and its consequences; Sri Chaitanya, on the other hand, was a saint of unimpeachably traditional authority, whose teachings have not to be criticised, but "situated" which is a very different thing.

The other point in the letter calling for comment concerns "the unequivocal references" to reincarnation allegedly to be found in the Bible: having looked up all the passages listed by the author of the letter I can only say that none of them read to me as referring to the idea under discussion, even remotely.

MARCO PALLIS.
London, 23.12.66.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Philippians, iv, 8

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Nature and Function of the Spiritual Master[1]

by
Frithjof Schuon

THERE is a Vedantic notion which, being fundamental, can serve as a key in the most diverse realms, and this is the ternary *Sat, Chit, Ananda*: Being, Consciousness and Bliss. Here it will be applied to the spiritual master, not for any lack of other ways of approaching this subject, but because the Vedantic ternary provides in this connection a particularly appropriate means of access.

The master, in fact, represents and transmits, firstly a reality of being (*Sat*), secondly a reality of intelligence or truth (*Chit*), and thirdly a reality of love, union, or happiness (*Ananda*).

The element "being" which the master represents and transmits, and without which he would be as if deprived of reality and existence, is the religion to which he belongs and by which he is mandated, or the spiritual organization within the framework of this religion. The religion, or the esoteric cell which sums it up and offers us its essence, confers on man the "being" without which there is no concrete and efficacious way. The function of the founders of religion is *a priori* to give back to fallen man his primordial "being"; the first condition, then, of spirituality is to be virtually "reborn" and thus to realize the as it were ontological basis of the two constituent elements of the way, namely, discernment or doctrine on the one hand, and concentration or method on the other.

Representing *a priori* a "substance" or a "being," *Sat*, the spiritual master is *a posteriori,* and on this very basis, the vehicle of an "intellection" or of a "consciousness," *Chit:* by this is to be understood a providential doctrine which determines the flavour or style of every subsequent formulation. It is necessary to understand that this doctrine depends on a Revelation in the direct and plenary sense and that consequently its regular ramifications have a quality of absoluteness and infinitude which makes unnecessary any recourse to extraneous sources, although it is perfectly possible that formulations originating in such a source, to the extent that they are mentally compatible with the dogmatic or mythological system in question, may be extrinsically adopted by a given master and integrated into the perspective which he incarnates. Such was the case, notably, of the Neoplatonic concepts adopted by certain Sufis, or of Christianized Aristotelianism. It would be wrong to see syncretism in this, for the extraneous concepts are accepted only because they are assimilable, and they are only assimilable by reason of their inward concordance with the tradition in question, and because Truth is one. Another aspect of this question of intellectuality is infallibility: the master is in principle infallible with regard to the revealed doctrine which he represents, and which he even personifies by virtue of his "being" or "substance," of his *Sat*, so to say; but this infallibility, which is not unconnected with Grace, is conditioned by the equilibrium between knowledge and virtue, or between intellectuality and spirituality—one might even say, between intelligence and humility.

Thus, the spiritual master must realize the ternary "being," "discernment," "concentration." by "being" must be understood the "new substance"[2] or "consecration," or "initiation"; by "discernment" is meant truth which distinguishes between the Real and the illusory, or between *Atmā* and *Māyā;*[3] and by "concentration" must be understood the method which allows the "initiated" and "consecrated" contemplative to fix himself, at first mentally and later with the

[1] This article is appearing concurrently in a volume to be presented to His Holiness the Jagadguru Sri Sankarācārya Svamigal of Kānci Kāmakoti Pitha in celebration of the 50th anniversary of his investiture.

[2] "And put on the new man," as St. Paul says

[3] Or between *Nirvāna* and *samsāra,* in Buddhist terms.

centre of his being, on the Real whose evidence we carry in ourselves. It is this fixation which, being a reality of union, and thus of "love" and of "bliss," corresponds analogically and operatively to the element *Ananda* in the Vedantic ternary.

The importance in spirituality of what we have called the existential element results from the principle that it is impossible to approach the Absolute, or the Self, without the blessing and the aid of Heaven: "No man cometh to the Father but by Me" (Christianity), and "no one will meet *Allāh* who has not met his Envoy" (Islam); "whosoever gathereth not with Me, disperseth," and "without Me you can do nothing" (Christianity); "and you cannot wish unless *Allāh* wishes" (Islam). This *conditio sine qua non*, the pivots of which are first and foremost the elements of "consecration" and "orthodoxy"—related respectively to *Sat* and Chit—explains why a spirituality deprived of its bases can only end up as a psychological exploit without any relation to the development of our higher states.

The profane man being "inexistent" from the point of view at issue here, the master gives him "spiritual existence" by affiliation or consecration; next he gives him the doctrine—or "intelligence"—, and finally he gives him "life," that is to say, the spiritual means referring to the element "concentration." Now this means, which is an engagement "to the death"—for in order to "live" inwardly, one must "die" outwardly—is essentially a gift from the master and from Heaven, for otherwise it would be lacking in the indispensable Grace. Doubtless there have been very exceptional cases in which other modalities have come into play, but this was always on behalf of persons whose sanctity guaranteed their purity of intention, and protected the spiritual means from any profanation.[4]

In a word: we can only make use of a spiritual means on condition of a concrete and solemn engagement, recognizing thereby that Heaven disposes of us according to its good pleasure; and this engagement is irreversible—the way is one of no return.

* * *

Inasmuch as he is the guide of the personal way of the disciple—always within the general way laid down by divine authority through tradition—the spiritual master is as it were the continuation of the *ego* of the disciple. Every spiritual alchemy involves an anticipated death and consequently also certain losses of equilibrium, or periods of obscuration, in which the disciple is not fully master of himself; he is no longer completely of this world, nor yet completely of the other, and his experience seems to call in question all the existential categories of which, so to say, we are woven. In these "trials," and in the "temptations" which accompany them—for lower *māyā*, or the downward quality (*tamas*), takes advantage of the slightest fissure—the spiritual master plays the role of "motionless centre": to the temptation of giving rational form to irrational troubles he opposes objective, immutable and incorruptible truth. The same is true in the case of temptations of inverse character, when the disciple, submerged by some contemplative state which surpasses his usual capacity—and such a state may only be accidental and does not prove any realization—may think that to some degree he has become superhuman. In this case, lower *māyā*—or the devil, which here amounts to the same thing—will not fail to suggest to the disciple that he should declare himself master, or give way to some other pretention of this kind. The case is rather like that of a drunken man who no longer perceives the true proportions of things. The master, for his part, has realized "sober drunkenness", his human substance is adapted to his spiritual state, for mastership is precisely "keeping a cool

[4] The seeds of sanctity are fear of God and a sense of the sacred, to say the least. It must be recognized that these qualities are totally absent from the general mentality of this sacrosanct "modern age."

head"—without any pretention, however—in the beatific experience. All that has been said shows clearly that faith is indispensable on the part of the disciple. Without faith there is no spiritual continuity, and thus no bridging of "hells," nor any possible victory over the *ego*.

In a certain sense, gnosis transcends and abolishes faith, but only when faith is understood as a quasi-moral acceptance of revealed truths, and not as a concrete presentiment of the Inexpressible. Certainly gnosis. is a "vision" and not a "thought," but it is so only in a certain regard, for it never abolishes in all respects the veil separating the earthly creature from Pure Being.[5] Understood thus, faith—the *shraddhā* of the Hindu *chelā*—is a necessary element of all spiritual unfolding; of this order too is faith in the master, in so far as he incarnates the knowledge to be attained.[6] Moreover the master, being a living man and not a logical demonstration, relates precisely to that element of non-fixation and illimitation which is everywhere present in the cosmos and which is indispensable for the subjective realization of the theoretical data.

What has gone before clearly shows that spiritual mastership is a very special function and that it is consequently false to describe every teaching authority as a "spiritual master." The functions of "doctor" and "master" often coincide—but they may also not do so—in the same personage. The master does not necessarily write treatises, but he always possesses a sufficient doctrinal authority.[7]

* * *

It is not the function of the spiritual master to reveal all his knowledge or all the graces which he has received. Here we are up against the whole problem of secrecy and asymmetry,[8] or of inward illimitation and the laws of life. On the one hand, a plant has need of an invisible element—its root—and, on the other, it manifests the virtualities of the latter in a way which combines rigour with relaxation, or the determined with the indeterminate; a spiritual teaching does not set out to unveil totally, or to use up totally, the truth which inspires it, nor to give it the implacable and exhaustive form of a mathematical equation. One must not seek to introduce a quasi-absolute element of achievement—and thus of petrifaction and sterility—into the very expression of the truth. It is true that, strictly speaking, this is impossible, but it is nevertheless possible to confer on doctrinal teaching concerning the most intimate aspects of the spiritual life—but not in the case of generalities—a prolixity which is remote from the effective power of assimilation of the recipient. This is what, traditionally, is blamed as a disequilibrium between doctrine and method. In other words, theoretical teaching must not exhaust in advance the acts of awareness which it aims at awakening in the disciple. The latter needs light, but he also needs an element of obscurity which will act as a leaven on behalf of the light received, and which will help him to release the element of light which he carries in his own substance. Instead of "obscurity" one might say "generative disequilibrium," of which the *koans* of Zen Buddhism doubtless provide the best example.

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[5] To think otherwise is to misinterpret certain ellipses in sacred teaching. Doubtless the circle is a perfect adequation with regard to the point—it "is" the centre—but it nevertheless remains different from the latter; likewise for the radius.

[6] Shrî Shankara: "My refuge is neither my mother nor my father, nor my children nor my brothers, nor any others. May my supreme refuge be the foot which my *guru* has placed on my head." *(Svatmarirûpana* 146, 148).

[7] The case of the saint having the quality of *Pratyeka-Buddha* (Buddhism) or of *Fard* (Islam) should be recalled here. He has no spiritual posterity properly so called, but nevertheless acts by his presence.

[8] According to an old adage—Chinese, if I am not mistaken—"he who knows ten must only teach nine." But this law of the secret also concerns the disciple. As a contemporary Hindu master has observed: "the *sadhaka* must not reveal his spiritual experiences except to his *guru* or to a saint.

Verbal demonstrations are certainly indispensable, but the symbol with its power of direct, total and unlimited suggestiveness, and its double function of unveiling (re-vealing) and of veiling, keeps all its rights in the subsequent order of contemplative realization. Mention must also be made of teaching by sign or gesture. Where the spoken word is insufficient, the master makes a "gash" in the soul of the disciple, he marks it with the red-hot iron of the pure symbol. This sign—which may well coincide with a humiliation—is meant to release in the disciple the necessary awareness and, at the same time, to actualize the corresponding virtue. The essential is not to fall into either extreme: we must neither despise words, which are venerable when they are what they ought to be—otherwise man would not possess the gift of language—nor imagine that we can do everything with them; here, as always, wisdom consists in putting everything in its proper place.

God instructs the collectivity *a priori* by the revealed Word, but he instructs the individual *a posteriori* by destiny. This principle is reflected in a particular way in every spiritual method.

* * *

Another point which must be made here is the following: granted that the human world is made of abuses, one must not lose sight of the fact that exoterism has a natural right to certain excesses, if one may so express it, which means that it is impossible for exoterism to do justice to every nuance without compromising its very existence. The disordered subjectivism of a personal mysticism is usually more false and more harmful than the contrary excess, because pharisaism at least safeguards the keys, and for that very reason never goes quite so far as to kill the spirit.

Nevertheless, as there is no rule without exception—in view of a certain aspect of All-Possibility—one must mention the cases, extremely rare in comparison with their opposites, of Kabīr, Guru Nanak, and Jakob Boehme. These cases of intrinsic orthodoxy without a traditional framework are explained only by very special circumstances, and possible only—as far as Boehme is concerned—as a result of a certain shrinkage in Catholicism from the time of the Renaissance, and—as far as the Indians are concerned—as a result of the juxtaposition, both painful and mystical, of Hinduism and Islam. In fact, exceptions of this kind are due either to contact between two powerful, ponderous, even tyrannical religions—whether rightly or wrongly so is not the question here[9]—or, as in the case of Boehme, to a sort of stifling of sapiential esoterism within the framework of a traditional civilization which had accidentally and very recently given rise to a vacuum such as Protestantism. In the present day however there are no longer anywhere in the world powerful and fervent religions dangerously bordering on one another and so giving rise to what may be called "explosions" of bhaktic esoterism, and nowhere does there still exist a powerful religious civilization which is artificially stifling its sapiential esoterism or gnosis, and though there are yet other factors—more personal and more subtle—which occur in the cases cited, they need not be taken into account here. At all events, the present-day world does not and cannot present the circumstances making possible legitimate spiritual exceptions such as those mentioned.[10] In a world where the formal framework of the sacred everywhere becomes more and more whittled away, spirituality is

[9] We must not forget that exoteric ostracism has its rights, the human world being what it is.

[10] At most there are still a few exceptions of this kind among the Hindus, but they derive from conditions peculiar to Hinduism; these conditions cannot be transferred to non-Hindus lacking the same heredity, to mention only this factor. The same attitude can have a completely different subconscious meaning—and efficacy—on the part of a Hindu and on the part of a European. It should be added that it is almost normal for these facts to escape, all too often, the Hindus themselves, who cannot be expected to understand spontaneously all the implications of something that is situated completely outside their traditional universe.

more than ever linked to this framework, which is like a last witness to the truth. Spirituality has need, in fact, of a formal or psychological atmosphere of which the modern world is the very negation.

A question not unconnected with the foregoing—since we are talking here of exceptions—is the following: can the function of the spiritual master extend beyond the frontiers of a given religion? This cannot be ruled out categorically, but it is nevertheless a very precarious possibility in view of the high degree of spirituality which it demands on the part of the master, and also in view of the possible difficulty, for him, of assessing facts situated in a traditional world other than his own. Furthermore, in a case such as this, he would act as the vehicle of an "extraneous" *barakah*, and it is precisely this which presupposes a spirituality having effectively transcended the world of forms. It is necessary to stress "effectively," because universalist verbiage is one thing, and realization of the Essence is another. Moreover, in a case of this kind, there must be a sufficient reason of *force majeure*. Such reasons do exist accidentally, as is shown, for example, by the relations between the young Ibrahim ibn Adham and the monk Symeon, a master of gnosis, and also by a passage in "The Russian Pilgrim" which allows that in the absence of a *starets* the seeker may receive instruction "even from a Saracen," with the help of Heaven. Such an encounter is only conceivable if the two parties are in full conformity with their respective tradition, for the Christian must be really Christian and the Moslem really Moslem, however paradoxical this may seem in view of the spiritual communion that has to be established between them;[11] but if their understanding must be more than a philosophical abstraction, it must nevertheless include the points of departure, which extrinsically and provisionally are separative. This is not because they are separative and exclusive, but because, by their intrinsic veracity, they guarantee a true intuition of unity.

This seeming paradox is comparable to that of our relation with the Infinite. This relation cannot be unitive without first having been separative, or rather, without being separative in its basis and in our individual consciousness, for there is both an order of succession and a parallelism. The most accomplished gnostic, or the perfect *Jnani,* "prostrates himself at the feet of Govinda," which implies a separation. From a more contingent point of view, the station of unity means that the sage has transcended the level of forms, and thus also that of doctrinal formulations—which nevertheless are sacred and always remain valid in their proper dimension—but this station is independent of the question of knowing whether or not the master is informed about a given religion other than his own. The state of union implies, in this particular connection, not a *de facto* attitude, but a capacity in principle.[12] That is to say that the spiritual master must manifest, taking into account the nature of the difference of levels, both the particularism of form and the unity of spirit. He must conform to holy separation at the base, so as to be able to realize holy union at the summit.[13] One only attains to the latter by perceiving in advance the element of unity in the revealed form itself, and by loving this form for the quality which it receives from the Supraformal. For every sacred form is *Shûnyamûrti,* "Manifestation of the Void."

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[11] The situation may appear in a somewhat different form in the case of Hindus and *Indian* Moslems, for reasons which have been alluded to above. In the present day, however, modernistic influences seriously compromise the advantages of the spiritual climate of India.

[12] The inward and essential knowledge of a theologically exclusive Moslem may be infinitely closer to the Christ-given mysteries, for example, than the mental and sentimental universalism of a profane despiser of "separatist dogmas."

[13] "When one has attained (perfect) Love, one must not despise social rules (institutions and rites), but rather conform to them (without attachment to their fruits)." *(Nārada* Stara, *62).*

As the very term "spiritual master" often gives rise to disproportionate and offensive-sounding assimilations, it would be useful to say a few words on the question of hierarchical differences. The misunderstandings concerned, be they serious or slight, are at bottom of the same order as the common error which, analogically speaking, would assimilate the circle to the sphere, on the pretext that both figures are round—a typical error, to be found in the most diverse domains, but above all in history and psychology. In the first place, either we apply the term "spiritual master" to the founders of religion —in which case the term can no longer be applied to the sages who succeed them and who are not prophets in the proper sense of the word —or else it is the sages whom we call "masters"—in which case it would be improper to use the term "spiritual master" in the case of beings such as the founders of religion, or the *Avatāras* of Vishnu,[14] because this would be a tautology casting a slur on their supereminent dignity and equating them with their representatives. It might indeed be asked whether the term "master is appropriate for the greatest of the latter—Christ's Apostles, for example—for the very same reason, *mutatis mutandis*, since their greatness is proved by the fact that they alone were the direct disciples of the "Word made flesh" and that they participate instrumentally in the Revelation.[15] This distinction is entirely legitimate in this connection, but there are also reasons which allow one to disregard it, as we shall see later.

In comparing a Benedictine master—of the fifteenth century, for example—with St. Benedict, and then comparing the latter with St. John, we obtain a sufficiently clear picture of the principal degrees, not of spiritual mastership in itself, but of its manifestation in breadth, for it is important not to confuse an almost cosmic function with inward knowledge. Certainly the most eminent saint or sage, by his traditional position, is always in possession of the "greater" or the "whole," but the less eminent does not necessarily represent a "lesser" as far as his inward reality is concerned, although, even on this level, there may be relations of "dimension" or "breadth" to be taken into account in favour of the most glorious figures on the traditional "iconostasis." This factor is of especial importance when the figure concerned incarnates a non-supreme mode of spirituality—for example, the cases of Rāmānuja and Confucius, the latter, incidentally, being greater than the former—so that one might be tempted to place these eminent figures below *a jnānî* of lesser dimensions. This would be an optical illusion, especially in the case of the Chinese Revealer, whose inward reality necessarily immensely—transcended the role which was assigned to him by Providence.

Be that as it may, it should not be too difficult to understand or to feel that, from the point of view of cosmic breadth, theurgic power, and the capacity to save, even a Shankara is not the equal of Krishna, and that from an analogous point of view, no later master can be the equal of Shankara; no *roshi* can replace Bodhidharma, any more than the latter can be equated with the Buddha. Nevertheless, in comparison with the worldly and the profane, and with regard to them, every true master is altogether close, not only to the great instructors of "apostolic" rank, but even to the founding *Avatāra,* and this is a compensatory truth which lets us better

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[14] The *Avatāras* of Vishnu did not found religions, except the Buddha. It should not be lost sight of that Hinduism is like a symbiosis of diverse religions, though this does not mean that it does not of necessity comprise within itself certain fundamental ideas (the *Veda,* the castes, the *Trimûrti,* the cult of the cow) which might be called "dogmatic"—this word having for the present author a most venerable meaning—although dogma takes on a different aspect for Hindus as compared with Semites owing to the "pluridimensionalism" of Hinduism, which readily reduces anti-nomial aspects to their unique essence and can consequently tolerate the juxtaposition of the most seemingly contradictory formulas. The exclusion of Jainism and Buddhism proves that Hinduism is not an amorphous mass which will absorb anything.

[15] On the one hand, St. John is not Christ, and, on the other, no Christian mystic could equate himself with the author of the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse. The relation between the Prophet, his son-in-law All, and the sufis is an analogous one.

appreciate the cult of the master in India and elsewhere.[16] The cosmic breadth of the *Avatāra* and of his direct prolongations obviously presupposes spiritual perfection, but inversely, this perfection does not imply the cosmic rank of the very greatest, whence the inegalities already referred to.

Doubtless it is not always possible, or, for that matter, necessary, to avoid every ambiguity, for example to settle the question as to whether there is a real difference between the "apostolic" degree—for example, that of a Nāgārjuna—and certain later, but particularly eminent manifestations, such as Padma Sambhava in Tibet and Kōbo Daishi in Japan, who are so to say, central reverberations of the Spiritual Sun in a new world.[17] On the other hand, it is always possible and even necessary in the other cases to take account of the evidence of the facts and of traditional opinion, out of respect for the irreplaceable majesty of the divine manifestations.[18]

But these considerations must not cause us to lose sight of the compensatory truth just mentioned, namely, that every spiritual master is mysteriously assimilated, by his knowledge and his function and by the graces attaching to them, to his prototypes and—both through them and independently of them—to the primordial Prototype, the founding *Avatāra*. On the level of this synthesis, it could even be added that there is but one sole Master, and that the various human supports are like emanations from him, comparable to the rays of the sun which communicate one self-same light and are nothing apart from it.

[16] This cult, however, loses all its meaning, when it is accompanied by the errors just mentioned. One may well believe that a given master possesses an inward knowledge which equates him mysteriously with Rāma or with the *Rishis,* for example, but one gains nothing, and compromises everything, in imagining that he is better than they.

[17] St. Francis of Assisi and St. Bernard are similar cases, the first having been adopted directly by Christ, and the second by the Virgin.

[18] One of the worst of abuses is the pretention of making a "psychological" analysis of an *Avatāra,* basing oneself on deeds and gestures, when in fact one is in the presence of an order of greatness which totally eludes profane investigation, Let us note here that Rāmakrishna often used the term *Avatāra* in a wide sense. including all avatāric modes—"total," "partial," "major" and "minor"—and in this he is hardly to be blamed, firstly because in his teaching he clearly defines the transcendent nature of the "Man-God," and also because he himself was effectively situated in the "Divine Ray."

Orthodoxy and the Master

Texts presented by Whitall N. Perry

THE citations given below form an element of a mosaic from a comprehensive anthology in preparation that deals with Traditional Wisdom. They constitute a section called *The Spiritual Master* in the chapter entitled ORTHODOXY — RITUAL — METHOD.

In briefest outline, traditional regularity or orthodoxy implies attachment to an authentic living tradition with a legitimate line of representatives ("apostolic succession"). Adherence to the laws of the tradition—loosely "exoterism"—is incumbent on every mortal seeking salvation. Within a tradition (and actually constituting its essence) is normally found an "esoteric" way reserved for a relative few who have the necessary intellectual or spiritual qualifications, and which envisages sanctification more especially as its goal. The word "normally" is used advisedly, because the twentieth century has seen such an upheaval in traditional patterns that anomalies and exceptions have inevitably resulted. For the rest, it is indispensable to study carefully the works of the contemporary authorities on these questions in order to evaluate things in a proper perspective. The principle to remember in all this is that the Universal Order is not subject to change. Whatever the modifications and upheavals in sublunar existence, the dichotomy between this world and the next remains constant and quasi-absolute, and so accordingly will the basic laws of the spiritual life for bridging this gulf remain necessary and valid. We live in the *formal* realm, where performance necessarily precedes *transformation*.

* * *

If thou see a man of understanding, go to him early in the morning, and let thy foot wear the steps of his doors.

Ecclesiasticus, VI. 36

The teacher is he who knows the Eternal Wisdom, the Veda, who is devoted to the All-Pervader Vishnu, who knows not arrogance, who knows the method of yoga, ever stands upon yoga and has become yoga itself; who is pure, who is devoted to his teachers and who has witnessed the Supreme Person, Purusha. He who possesses all these virtues is called a "dispeller of darkness," a guru.

The syllable "gu" means darkness, the syllable "ru" means dispeller; he is therefore called a "guru" because he dispels darkness.

The guru is the Supreme Cause, the guru is the ultimate destiny, the guru is transcendent sapience, the guru is the supreme resort, the guru is the final limit, the guru is the supreme wealth. Because he teaches "That" (the Supreme Essence) the guru is most great.

Advaya tāraka Upanishad, 14-18

Beloved Vedas and Tantras handed down to us by tradition, as also Mantras and usages, become fruitful if communicated to us by the Guru, and not otherwise.

Kulārnava Tantra, XI

It is said even God cannot grant Moksha (Deliverance), but only the Guru.

Swami Ramdas

If you do not meet a transcendental teacher, you will have swallowed the Mahāyana medicine in vain!

Chih Kung

He who works at the prayer (of Jesus) from hearsay or reading and has no instructor, works in vain.

St. Gregory of Sinai

Can the water of the (polluted) stream clear out the dung? Can man's knowledge sweep away the ignorance of his sensual self?
How shall the sword fashion its own hilt? Go, entrust this wound to a surgeon.
Flies gather on every wound, so that no one sees the foulness of his wound.
Those flies are your thoughts and your possessions: your wound is the darkness of your states;
And if the Pīr (spiritual master) lays a plaster on your wound, at once the pain and lamentation are stilled,
So that you fancy it is healed, (whereas in reality) the ray of the plaster has shone upon the spot.
Beware! Do not turn your head away from the plaster, O you who are wounded in the back, but recognize that that (healing of the wound (proceeds from the ray: do not regard it as (proceeding) from your own constitution.

Rūmi

Only that knowledge which issues from the lips of the guru is alive; other forms are barren, powerless, and the cause of suffering.

Shiva Samhitā, III.1 1

Our Art is good and precious, nor can any one become a partaker of it, unless it be revealed to him by God, or unless he be taught by a skilled Master. It is a treasure such as the whole world cannot buy.

THE GLORY OF THE WORLD

A man who reads about the doctrines of the Jōdō without receiving oral instruction will miss the thing really necessary to the attainment of Ojō.[19]

Hōnen

The mistaken impression of the reality of the world is never to be effaced without the knowledge of its unreality derived from the *Shastras*[20] and the living lips of a Teacher.

Yoga-Vasishtha

Since there is no connection between the (mere) sound and the true meaning, …a wise man must resort to a good master, for without him the truth cannot be found even in millions of ages…So good men who desire their own perfection always pay with their whole being full honour to their master, who is the bestower of infinite rewards. They abandon envy and malignancy, and pride and self-conceit, their determination set on enlightenment and the concept of weariness renounced, and thus they always honour their guru, master of the world,

[19] Enlightenment.
[20] The Hindu scriptures.

who bestows success in all things… Thereby they gain by the grace of their guru and without any obstruction that truth supreme which is taught by all the Buddhas. It is eternal, resplendent and pure, the abode of the conquerors, the divine substance in all things and the source of all things. Just as a sun-stone shines brightly from the proximity of the sun-light which dispels the enclosing darkness, even so does the jewel of a pupil's mind, freed from the murkiness of impurity, light up from the proximity of a world-teacher who is bright with the fire of the practice of truth.

Anangavajra

Stand in their multitude of ancients that are wise, and join thyself from thy heart to their wisdom, that thou mayst hear every discourse of God, and the sayings of praise may not escape thee.

Ecclesiasticus, VI.35

And with how many a prophet have there been a number of devoted men who fought (beside him). They quailed not for aught that befell them in the way of Allah, nor did they weaken, nor were they brought low. Allah loveth the steadfast.

Qur'ān, III.146[21]

You should keep to one place, one master, one method, and one system of yoga. This is the way which leads to positive success.

Swāmi Sivananda

God and the *Guru* are not really different: they are identical. He that has earned the Grace of the *Guru* shall undoubtedly be saved and never forsaken, just as the prey that has fallen into the tiger's jaws will never be allowed to escape. But the disciple, for his part, should unswervingly follow the path shown by the Master.

Srī Ramana Maharshi

If thou desire (spiritual) poverty, that depends on companionship (with a Shaykh): neither thy tongue nor thy hand avails.
Soul receives from soul the knowledge thereof, not by way of book nor from tongue. (Even) if those mysteries (of spiritual poverty) are in the traveller's heart, knowledge of the mystery is not possessed by the traveller.

Rūmi

Even if your intelligence is above that of Yen-tzû and Min-tzû (two of the most clever pupils of Confucius), yet, merely with constrained conjecture, you will not be able to succeed unless you have a true teacher. For the work of *chin tan* (gold medicine) in case oral instructions are lacking, where and how can you fertilize the fecund womb?

Chang Po-tuan

[21] This passage in the anthology itself contains three marginal cross references to the chapters on *Holy War, Pilgrimage,* and *Faith,* which help elucidate for the interested reader the inner and spiritual significance of "prophet." Among other things in *Qur'ānic* symbolism, a "prophet" is none other than the Master himself—of whom Muhammad is the prototype—who leads his devotees on the Spiritual Journey and helps them combat the Inward Dragon of the fallen soul barring access to their True Self; steadfastness is the mark of fidelity to the Pact they have undertaken with the Master.

If you wish not your head to be lost, be (lowly as) a foot: be under the protection of the Qutb (spiritual Pole) who is possessed of discernment.

Though you be a king, deem not yourself above him: though you be honey, gather naught but his sugar-cane …

As you have no strength, keep making a lamentation; since you are blind, take care, do not turn your head away from him that sees the road.

Rūmi

To attain tranquillity of spirit and avoid inconstancy, one must have initiation and the aid of a guide. The spiritual path is the most dreadful there is; it is strewn with innumerable pitfalls. Unless he is guided by an experienced hand, a man no matter how intelligent is sure to make some false moves…

In this world, even to learn the art of stealing one needs *a guru*. How much greater is the necessity of a *guru* if one is to acquire the supreme knowledge of Brahman!

Swami Brahmananda

It is very important for a person who wishes to "lament" to receive aid and advice from a *wichasha wakan* (holy man), so that everything is done correctly, for if things are not done in the right way, something very bad can happen, and even a serpent could come and wrap itself around the "lamenter."[22]

Black Elk

(The) Guru simply helps you in the eradication of ignorance. Does he hand over Realisation to you?… The ego is a very powerful elephant and cannot be brought under control by anyone less than a lion, who is no other than the Guru in this instance; whose very look makes the elephant tremble and die.

Srī Ramana Maharshi

It is necessary to seek a teacher who is not himself in error, to follow his instructions, and so learn to distinguish, in the matter of attention, defects and excesses of right and of left, encountered through diabolical suggestion… If there is no such teacher in view, one must search for one, sparing no efforts.

Nicephorus the Solitary

It is impossible for us to study all the Sāstras and learn all that is laid down in them… Further, as the defects inherent in us are numberless, it is impossible for us to find out all of them or to seek to get rid of them by ourselves. A Guru is therefore necessary to know about our spiritual equipments, to find out the stage in which we are at present, to decide what course of action will take us to the next higher stage and to teach and guide us aright… When the Sāstras prescribe what courses of action have to be pursued by aspirants in the several stages, a Guru is necessary to know what the Sāstras prescribe and to teach us the particular course of action suited to our qualifications.

Srī Chandrasekhara Bhāratî Swāmigal

[22]"Lamenting" or "crying for a vision": spiritual retreat in an isolated spot, such as a mountain top.

There is no other way for overhauling the vicious worldly Samskaras (tendencies left from former actions) and the passionate nature of raw, worldly-minded persons than the personal contact with and service of the Guru.

Swāmi Sivananda

The fleshly soul is a dragon with hundredfold strength and cunning: the face of the Shaykh is the emerald that plucks out its eye.

Rūmi

Would you know the perfect Master? It is he who understands the regulation of the fire, and its degrees. Nothing will prove to you so formidable an impediment as ignorance of the regimen of heat and fire; for our whole Art may be looked upon as being concentrated in this one thing, seeing it is all important for the proper development of our substance that the degree of heat which is brought to bear on it should be neither too great nor too small. In regard to this point many learned men have gone grievously astray.[23]

Thomas Norton

I bow down to my most adorable Teacher who is all-knowing and has, by imparting Knowledge to me, saved me from the great ocean of births and deaths filled with Ignorance.

Srī Sankarāchārya

Never should (a student) think ill of him (the teacher). For the teacher gives him a (new) birth in knowledge. And that is the highest birth. Mother and father engender his body only.

Apastamba Dharma Sutra, I.i.15-18

The Guru is Brahma, the Guru is Vishnu, the Guru is Siva; the Guru is the supreme Godhead itself in the visible form; Obeisance to that Guru.

Invocation preceding Hindu prayer recitals

The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd.

Ecclesiastes, XII.11

The learner ought to share in his teacher's thought; he should be quicker in his listening than the teacher is in his speaking.

Hermes

> The supreme mystery in the Veda's End (Vedanta), Which has been declared
> in former time,
> Should not be given to one not tranquil,
> Nor again to one who is not a son or a pupil.

[23]In the anthology under preparation there are numerous marginal cross references to other passages in the same book to help make meanings more clear. As that cannot be done within the scope of this article, it can only be said here that the Alchemical perspective is an objectification of the spiritual work in terms of the "chemistry" of the soul's constitution and processes, and the modifications, sublimations, and transformations it undergoes when submitted to "Mercurial" or spiritual influences. The "fixation" in Gold represents the terminal goal of the Art, when the soul is stabilized in the image of its uncreate Archetype.

> To one who has the highest devotion (*bhakti*) for God, And for his spiritual teacher (*guru*) even as for God, To him these matters which have been declared Become manifest (if he be) a great soul (*mahātman*)—Yea, become manifest (if he be) a great soul!
>
> *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, VI, 22.3

To live and act in such a manner that the Guru is highly pleased with the disciple is a sure condition for the working of grace… A true aspirant seeks always to please his Guru by moulding his life in accordance with his teachings.

Swāmi Ramdas

> Who can finde such a *Master* out,
> As was my *Master*, him needeth not to doubt:
> Which right nobil was and fully worthy laude,
> He loved Justice, and he abhorred fraude;
> He was full secrete when other men were lowde,
> Loath to be knowne that hereof ought he Could;
> When men disputed of Colours of the Rose,
> He would not speake but keepe himselfe full close;
> To whome I laboured long and many a day,
> But he was solleyn to prove with straight assaye,
> To search and know of my Disposition,
> With manifold proofes to know my Condition:
> And when he found unfeigned fidelity,
> In my greate hope which yet nothing did see,
> At last I conquered by grace divine
> His love, which did to me incline.[24]
>
> Thomas Norton

He who fills duly both ears with the Veda is to be considered (like one's) father and mother; him one should never injure.

Mānava-dharma-sāstra, II.144

Now the Brahman who obeys his Guru till the end of his body goes straight to the eternal abode of Brahma.

Mānava-dharma-sāstra, II.244

O Lord (Krishna), thou art self-effulgent, the embodiment of Truth. Thou art the Atman, the innermost Self in all beings. Thou art the teacher of teachers.

Srimad Bhagavatam, XI.ii

He (the *brahmacārin)* should look upon his Guru as God. Verily is the Guru the embodiment of divinity. Accordingly the student must serve him and please him in every way.

Srimad Bhagavatam, XI.x

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[24] Shinran always spoke of himself as Hônen's disciple, and he had such an absolute confidence in Hônen as his Master, that he once said, that if being deceived by Hônen meant his own dropping into hell, he would never regret it" (Coates and Ishizuka : *Honen the Buddhist Saint,* Historical Introduction, p. 49).

Despite the identity of the master with the Self, the scriptures categorically declare that however learned or endowed with superhuman powers, one cannot realise the Self without the master's grace. What is the secret of this?

Though in reality the master is the very Self of all, the soul having by ignorance become differentiated and individualised, cannot find out its original Pure state of Being, without the master's grace. Hence the scriptural statement.

Srī Ramana Maharshi

For there is One alone Who hath no need of doctrine (or learning) that is to say, God, Who is over everything, for He existeth of Himself, and there is no other being who existed before Him. Now all rational beings are learners, because they are beings who have been made and created. The ranks of the celestial hosts who existed first of all, and the orders of beings who are the most exalted of all possess teachers in the Trinity, Who is exalted above everything. The orders of beings of the second group learn from the beings of the first group, and those which belong to the third group learn from those of the second group, which is above them, and in this manner each of the later groups learneth from that which is above it, even down to the lowest group of all; for those among them who are superior in respect of knowledge and excellence teach knowledge unto those who are inferior to them. Therefore those who imagine that they have no need of teachers,[25] and who will not be convinced by those who teach them things of good, are sick with the want of the knowledge which is the mother and the producer of pride. Now those who are princes and the foremost ones among these in respect of destruction are those who intentionally (or wilfully) fell from sojourning in heaven, and from the service thereof, and these are the devils who fly in the air because they forsook the heavenly Teacher and rebelled.

Palladius

The guide of those who have no spiritual guide is Satan.

Bāyazīd al-Bistāmī

Wherever thou seest one (that is) naked and destitute, know that he hath fled from the (spiritual) master.

Rūmi

Do not delay lest you become worthless. Find a teacher as soon as possible, in order that you may acquire the principle of *hsüan* (mystery). If you do not learn the truth in your present life, how will you know in what womb you are going to be born in the next life? When you have decided to take up the subject, you must stick to it through to the end. The greatest of human events are life and death.

Chang Po-tuan

If a person has a sincere fervour for the Lord and is eager to follow a spiritual path, he is sure to meet a true *guru* through the grace of the Lord. Consequently, the spiritual aspirant should not be troubled about the coming of a *guru*.

Swāmi Brahmānanda

[25] There are people ready to invent anything as an excuse for a teacher, even including an imagined contact with some dead person supposed to be in paradise, or the idea of an infallible voice that guides from within. But the doctrine is unequivocal: there is no spiritual master outside of the orthodox channels, and no amount of self-interested rationalizing can bring one into being.

If you go on working with the light available, you will meet your Master, as he himself will be seeking you.

Srī Ramana Maharshi

Is it right to receive investiture from the hands of more than one? Yes, it is right, provided that the second investiture is not accompanied with the intention of annulling the first.

Muhammad ibn al-Munawwar

Disciple—Mahārāj, the Scriptures speak of service to the *guru* as a necessary means for spiritual realization. Up to what point is this true?

The Swāmi—It is necessary in the preliminary stages. But after that it is your own spirit which plays the role of *guru*.

Swāmi Brahmānanda

The grace of a Saint who is accepted as a Guru is essential to the progress of a spiritual aspirant.

Swāmi Ramdas

Love for the dervishes is the key which opens the door into Paradise and those who hate them are worthy of anathema.

'Attar

The disease of worldliness has become chronic in man. It is mitigated, to a great extent, in holy company.

Sri Ramakrishna

The knowledge which has been learned from a teacher best helps one to attain his end.

Chāndogya Upanishad, IV.ix.2

An Index of Sources including biographical references is appended to the anthology in preparation, but their inclusion seemed disproportionate to the brevity of this one section of a chapter as given here. Editor.

Meditation and Action

by
The Venerable Chögyam Trungpa

Talk given on 27th November 1966 at the Brighton Conference of THE CENTRE FOR SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES; grateful thanks are due to the above society for kind permission to reproduce this talk here. Its author is a Lama from Eastern Tibet who escaped to India in 1959 and is now resident in this country: the story of his early training and subsequent adventures when escaping from the Chinese Communists forms the subject of a book entitled BORN IN TIBET and recently published by Allen and Unwin. After consulting the Venerable Trungpa it was agreed that his talk on Meditation should be printed just as it stood (having been recorded on tape in the first place) because it seemed to the editor that what little might be gained by recasting it in literary form would be more than offset by a loss in characteristic vividness and suggestive power. Therefore the author has confined himself to a very few indispensable adjustments in the text, leaving the rest as it stands.

MEDITATION and its practice is of course a very vast and deep subject to discuss in a short period, but I will try my best to comment on certain principal methods and aims of meditation, leading up to its fruition. I am sure that most religions in the world have some form of meditation or contemplation, and that this is the only way to achieve a higher state of realization. I think one must make clear that meditation is not the invention of any religious school in the world, but that meditation is something which already existed even before any religion known to us by name existed, and that only certain *methods* were introduced by various great religious masters and teachers. Particularly in Buddhism, meditation is one of its essential practices, *the practice;* but there are of course great varieties of technique, numerous ways of practising. Before we go into this, however, let me give you the general pattern of Buddhism.

Buddha was born in a Hindu family and India was a Hindu country; but he was not satisfied with the existing religious establishment and social structure. Not only that, but he saw that life in the royal family, or any worldly pleasures and pursuits, are not the final way to meet the challenge of existence; in fact he saw them merely as a drug to make one forget death and suffering. Buddha was very concerned at that time with finding out more about life itself, and so he made several journeys outside the palace, meeting peasants and simple country people. He saw them dying, saw old age, sickness, all sorts of suffering and hardship that people were going through. Then he thought and felt that his own life in the royal house was too artificial, therefore in order to find the true meaning of life he decided to leave his kingdom and meditate in the jungle under a Hindu master. He studied for a long period, but still found that certain questions remained unanswered, so he then went and meditated alone, without any teacher and finally found the answer he sought and achieved what is known as *Enlightenment*, the state of Bodhi, which means the awakened state.

In the course of Buddhist history one might say, perhaps, that at different periods there have been different developments of particular aspects of the teaching of Buddha. For instance, there was a time when there were many Buddhist disciples "leaving home" and leading contemplative lives in the jungle as monks and nuns, and they followed what is known as the First Turning of the Wheel of *Dharma* (= Doctrine or Law). Buddha's teachings were divided into three different groups, the First, Second and Third Turning of the Wheel of Doctrine. The First concerned the existence of suffering, the origin of suffering and the cessation of suffering. The Second Turning of the Wheel of Doctrine, which was revealed some ten years after Buddha attained Enlightenment, concerned further teachings about the cessation of suffering; and not

only the cessation of suffering, but about freedom and about the presence of freedom in all things; this is known as the doctrine of *Sunyata*, the doctrine that the emptiness which is the essence of all existence is in itself a state of freedom. The Third Turning of the Wheel of Doctrine consists in not only seeing things as emptiness, negatively, but seeing the void from a positive point of view as *Prabhasva*, the Sanskrit word meaning 'illumination.' Everything is not only emptiness, impermanence, but there is light, there is brilliancy, there is a kind of great force of wisdom, great force of a *living* element in spirituality. This is the last turning of the wheel of the doctrine.

These Three Turnings of the Wheel of Doctrine are the subject of the Buddhist 'bible,' so to speak, of which there are one hundred and eight volumes. A lot of these volumes not only contain the Buddha's own words, but tell us what people discussed in front of him; the Buddha encouraged people to ask questions many of which have been put on record, so that the *sutras* amount not only to what he said, but also describe how he lived his life—and all his life offers an example of active spirituality, whatever he did, from the age of twenty-nine up to his death.

So one might say that during the early part of the Buddhist period people followed the First Turning of the Wheel of Doctrine. This was largely because India was divided into a caste system, and Buddha saw that this was essentially non-existent for one who was able to see beyond the set limits—these limits are merely conventional and therefore illusory—and he wanted to introduce the concept that in spiritual life there is no caste and no race, since everyone has to suffer alike. Therefore he induced people to realize the original nature of suffering, but also the way to be freed from it. After some time, however, Buddhism was developed in India not only as a teaching of the contemplative life, but also as an explicit metaphysical theory, especially by Nagārjuna. He did not incorporate some non-Buddhist philosophy or other into Buddhism, but simply put the great Truth into logical language, founding the philosophical school called the Middle Way *(Madhyamika* in Sanskrit). People had tended to think of Buddhism as too extreme and felt doubts about it, especially at that time when scholars expected questions and answers always to take a logical form. So Nagārjuna introduced this logical way of interpreting the teaching of Buddha through the philosophy of the Middle Way. At this time he was much concerned not only to codify Buddhist logic, but also to establish a kind of meeting-point of the First Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine and the Second Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine, and this in fact is the Middle Way.

The Third Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine came later on, some three hundred years after Nagārjuna's time, and this is sometimes known as the Tantric teaching; but it is not only a theoretical teaching, for it is always accompanied by an appropriate method whereby the teaching can be effectively realized. There are, of course, great *sutras*, like the Sutra of Mahaparinirvana and other Buddhist texts, which together represent the Third Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine. But there is also the mystical aspect of Buddhism, that is to say the teaching of Yoga, of a specifically Buddhist Yoga. "Tantra" is the text, and "Yoga" is the practice, the following of that Path. Tantra is the shortest way to achieve Enlightenment through various methods, suddenly or else in stages. The Third Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine shows that the Middle Path meant finding certain ways, certain methods, rather than just studying a theory. Tantra introduced numerous methods and techniques of meditation, which later on in the history of Buddhism became known to the spiritual masters of Japan, China and Tibet.

So there has been, as one might say, a flow, starting from the founding of Buddhism on the principle of first learning about life, suffering, and so on, and gradually moving from there towards the highest peak of realization. This was not invented, of course, by the Buddha's followers; rather this is, one might say, a human development: a particular teaching was (or is)

needed at a particular time and certain aspects of that teaching were introduced later on when the time was ripe. This is how Buddhism developed and continued to fulfill people's need.

Now we come to the question of meditation itself. Perhaps we might start with the four Principles of Being which are Impermanence, Suffering, Emptiness and Selflessness. These four subjects cover all aspects of Buddha's teaching.

Starting with Impermanence—taken in the ordinary sense, it means that all existence is subject to decay. If a thing is created, then it is also subject to death, to decay. But there is another thing too—each moment, each minute is also birth and death, and so comes the study of Time. The present becomes the past, the future becomes the present and then the past, and so things are always moving and changing, everything is subject to change. People sometimes find this rather a grim idea—it makes everything seem unreal, so they say, but in saying this, they miss the essential point. In order to see the beauty of things, in order to see their reality, you have also to know their impermanent aspect. For example, a flower. We know it cannot live for a long period, for a year, say; we know it will only be beautiful for a few weeks or a few days. So one is able to enjoy it all the more just *because* it obeys the law of impermanence. I am sure most of you would agree that to have a plastic flower in your room gives you quite a different feeling, because it always remains the same, is always the same colour; but if you have a real flower, you see something in it which is subject to decay, and therefore there is beauty in it as well. There is beauty in the teaching of the Impermanent. Further to this, we also have to find out about Suffering. Perhaps Suffering isn't the right term to use: the word *dukha* actually means pain, but it does not only mean ordinary suffering, ordinary physical pain, but also wrongness or maladjustment in some aspect of life. One might say that in the present day people suffer, they find that life is not worthwhile, there is something wrong, and they complain about the world, about their life, about society, and so on. This is not only a problem of our own particular age, the twentieth century. Things have always been so, throughout all time. If you read books written in medieval times, people then were also extolling the glories of the previous generations and were not satisfied with their own lives. Perhaps especially in this age, when material progress and communication have become so rapid, the law of Suffering becomes even clearer. The other day we were talking about the suicide rate, saying that every day a thousand people commit suicide. It is not that one particular time is necessarily worse than another, for materialism is always there in greater or lesser degree; with changing times a different aspect of materialism will express itself. Whatever happens one will find that something is not right with life, and unless one is able to discover the seed of it, one will remain subject to Suffering.

Next comes Emptiness. This is rather a difficult subject to explain. One might say that the "Divine Nature," the "Godhead" is everywhere—the Void is everywhere. Take as an example the word 'silence': when you first think about it, silence means simply 'absence of noise.' But if you are able to go deeper, silence is not only absence of noise but there is in it, as it were, a positive aspect, there is 'quietness.' And if you take it even further, there is not only quietness, but there is a kind of 'music of silence' in it. In a sense silence is also another aspect, another dimension of sound—another dimension of music. In the same way, *Sunyata,* Emptiness, is in everything. Not necessarily just in "religious" objects, but even in quite mundane things—in everything there is an element of Sunyata. This is the essence, this is the Divine Nature, if you like to call it that, this is in Christian terms the Creation of God, therefore everything has an aspect of God in it. This is a very, very crude and rough way of expressing Sunyata, but perhaps we may come to it again later on in the study of meditation.

The fourth Principle of Being is *Anitya,* Selflessness. This links up with meditation.

But before we come to the actual doctrine of Selflessness, I think we should first say something about the *kāya* concept, the concept of three principal aspects of Buddhahood,

namely the Dharmakāya Buddha, the Sambhogakāya Buddha and the Nirmanakāya Buddha. You can read of this in the Diamond Sutra and the other great Sutras associated with the Third Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine. Take first the Dharmakāya: one might say that the space *outside* existence, if you define it, is the Dharmakāya—Dharma is the Sanskrit word for "law" or "norm," and *kāya* means "form" or "body." So the outline is the thing which defines space, for example in a cup—in order to see the space one might first have to take the cup and say, "inside of this is emptiness," and then break it so that, by breaking it, inner space is merged with outer space. So the Dharmakāya exists before time and after time, and even before the definition of the Dharmakāya itself existed. It is sometimes referred to as the Buddha with one eye, the Third Eyed Buddha, the Buddha who sees into everything. It is referred to in certain mystical texts as "Buddha, the Four-Faced One," that is to say one who sees in all directions at once because he is not involved in the idea of back and front, since all parts of him are in an equal state of illumination. You will find this explained in certain Hatha Yoga Tantra texts.

Then we have the Sambhogakāya Buddha, occupying the middle position: this word means "Body of Bliss." "*Sam"* means 'complete,' "*bhoga*" is 'enjoyment,' and I have shown it in the centre of my diagram[26] because it is not separate from the Dharmakāya, but is its expressive force. And so the Dharmakāya is like the space outside, while the Sambhogakāya is the living light in it, expressed as compassion and wisdom and other divine virtues. And thirdly we have Nirmanakāya, the Body of Manifestation, and that is the 'Seeingness' of everything; without this, one cannot see.

Something needs to be said about the common background of existence: the Sanskrit term for this is *Vijnana Alaya,* which literally means "repository of discrimination"; it denotes the background of all that exists. And then we have what might be called the primary ignorance, the first moment of "ignoring" the all-seeing Eye. Here "ignorance" is not to be taken in the ordinary sense, but in the sense that the Seeingness of the Eye "ignores" the existence of the Eye itself. Thus ignorance develops. And as you go on, at first the ignorance is in the form just of confusion, of mere ignoring, of becoming fascinated by the vision instead of realizing that the seer and the thing seen are not separate, but are simply possibilities included in the One. As we become fascinated by the vision, we begin to shift away from the centre, and the more we become involved, the further we travel astray, with this deviating tendency becoming ever more accelerated by our desire to lay hold of the world of appearances. Then the element of time creeps in. You see something in a sudden glimpse, a wonderful flash, and then after this you want to "make another flash," with effort, with desire. And of course you cannot.

Hence arises the existence of ignorance and from Ignorance the subconscious creates the various fetters, such as pride, envy, craving, hatred and others. The first one is pride, and this is a less extreme form, less evolved emotionally, and as it builds up in intensity, the last degree is hatred, which makes a very extreme division between 'I' and 'you'—thinking that "I" am definitely in the right, and "you" in the wrong.

by this stage we might have had the purpose and practice of meditation explained to us in such a way that we misunderstood it; in which case, instead of turning our meditation inward, we might try to search for freedom outside, while also trying to press on as fast as possible. And of course in the very moment of trying to chase this or that, you go further and further away from that freedom all the time, further and further out. Therefore there is no existence of 'self' as such, *atman* as such. There is, in a sense, this inner circle of "ignorance," which is the self-conscious idea of "I am," and "I want to go forward." If you ask, "But is not this self, this centre, something?" I think the answer is 'No' Because if you say this *is* the centre, there is a chance of

[26] While speaking, the Lama drew a diagram on a blackboard in order to illustrate various points. *(Editorial note).*

the ignorant aspect of self influencing all the rest. There may also be a danger of an inward view in reverse, because the state of enlightenment or freedom is not one of oneself becoming greater, a greater 'me' in a bigger version. Realization of freedom is not just that—it is something of quite another dimension.

And this brings us on to the question of the practice of meditation. We are in fact confused as to where we are going, in which direction, so we have first to find a regular pattern of the movement of thought, before we are able actually to deal with the centre. Therefore there are various practices in meditation. In the beginning you have the practice of 'mindfulness.' Of course, there are different traditions, different methods, and the teacher must know the disciple, and the disciple must have personal instruction and follow the method which is suitable for him particularly. But the general pattern of meditation is first to develop a habitual mindfulness; and often in the Buddhist tradition we use the movement of breathing with a view to cultivating this quality. You sit quietly and just watch your breathing going in and out, in and out, mentally saying 'out', 'in.' In some traditions they count the breaths, 'one,' 'two,' 'three' and so on. Obviously this is still a form of thought, you are still thinking 'out' and 'in' and this is a thought-process. But this is necessary. Before we get to the true mystical experience, we must first have an *imitation* of it. And even this can be difficult. And another problem, of course, when we talk about this aspect of meditation is that it does not involve thinking in terms of a particular mystical symbolism and trying to focus upon it. In fact it is the opposite—one is trying to *undo* things and trying to solve the problem of the over-learning which has been done by the "ignorant" within. You have to un-learn, as it were. Therefore the first thing we have to do is to develop a regular pattern of mind—thoughts will keep coming into the mind and you will want to express them, and so on. And here again, an important aspect of meditation is that it is not a battle! It is not at all a case of standing, as it were, in the sight of God and trying to fight evil. In fact it is the opposite. You are trying to ignore both the feeling of wanting to fight and of wanting to develop something in particular; you are trying simply to get on with the very moment's actions, the very moment's thoughts. One must be able, as it were, to 'disconnect' one's active thoughts—neither to welcome them, nor go into them in detail, nor to hate them nor to love them, but simply to let them pass through. For example, if someone knocks at your door and you answer, 'Hello, come in!' and call him by his name, then you are already involved with that person. But if, on the other hand, you answer "What do you want? You are a stranger!" you will put him off, you will not get involved with him. Similarly, thoughts need a certain kind of response from us—the thought comes from outside and a sort of inner 'agent' in ourselves welcomes it, but if we are able to overcome this inner agent there is then no place into which the thought can come, in which it can dwell. Then one begins to develop a regular pattern, one is able simply to concentrate on 'out' and 'in,' the movement of one's breathing, and for quite a long period of time one is able to be quite still. This is of course not an actual contemplative state, but simply an imitation of one.

The next stage will be, probably, that you have a longing to remain in that state. You begin to 'enjoy' it—for although there is no thought, there is a kind of still feeling and one may have the experience of extreme pleasure, of happiness, and one may feel wonderfully calm and at peace, and so on. So then one wants to remain in this state, and this in itself is another temptation which must be overcome. For no single method or technique is valid *all* the time, from the beginning to the end—they are all simply *temporary* methods. I am sure you have heard the Buddha's saying: one does not carry the boat on one's back after one has crossed the stream! You find another means of transport and you leave the boat on the river bank. So similarly, you must not hang on to a particular method because you find it is nice and comfortable. And then again, this method of meditation is not seeking to go "into a trance," so to speak, nor is it a case

of going into the depths of yourself and enjoying the inner bliss. You are, in fact, trying to overcome the desire to enjoy inner bliss—so that ultimately you may enjoy a universal and selfless bliss which is outside, inside, everywhere.

So first you have to develop a pattern of thought which is regular. And then the next step is that you should forget even the fact that you are meditating. Up to here, you have had to make a great effort to meditate, but there comes a stage when one is able to forget that one is actually sitting and meditating. One has to overcome these desires and simply `hold' one's personality and concentrate on the one thing, and then one is able to go into what is known as "formless" meditation. In breathing, there is the 'out' and the 'in,' the 'out' and the 'in,' and between these there are gaps—'out,' silence, 'in,' silence, and so on. These silences are in a sense the actual meditation. (One often finds after one has finished a formal meditation time that the best experience of meditation comes at the end because one is detached from the actual desire to do it properly). So now one tries to learn this 'meditation beyond action,' and with this there will be a kind of 'radiation' in the meditation—up to then one has been meditating within the 'you' and concerned about breathing and so on, and now one is able to break through and radiate out, and so you radiate your whole being outwards. Sometimes one finds this very difficult, because ego-gravity holds one back, telling one it might be dangerous, and then you find a false Middle Way. So one has to try to overcome this gravity and endeavour to release entirely out, though one might feel fearful, feel that one doesn't want to go too far, that one wants to come back to the inner bliss and enjoyment of the previous stage of meditation.

Finally then, in your formal meditation time you will be able to meditate and overcome these obstacles. But still things are not progressing. When you go into meditation and start meditating, everything goes very well, but still something is missing. For now one has to bring meditation into practical everyday life—this is known as *meditation in action*. While one talks, walks, does anything, one should be able to radiate. When any problem arises, far from its being a hindrance to one's meditation, it becomes a kind of opportunity. These experiences may be negative ones—they may be temptations, they may cause distress. Whatever kind of difficulties one has to go through, these difficulties are the *Guru* from whom one will ultimately learn. Suppose you are going for a pilgrimage in the mountains and a tree falls and rocks roll down on your path. Instead of treating them as obstacles, you make the trees into ladders and the rocks into steps and use everything possible to help you on your pilgrimage. Similarly, one is able to use everything as part of one's meditation experience. Of course, at the beginning we are concerned with elementary things, we practice walking etc., with mindfulness, we try to be mindful of each step, and so on. But then comes a stage when one is able to overcome this rigidity. There is a kind of inner wisdom which speaks to you and acts as a kind of "eye" for you, so that you are able to listen to someone's conversation and walk and do things, but without becoming too involved, without emotional entanglement, and one is able to radiate fully. One is able to talk and do everything within the light of radiation, just as, when the sun rises, one is not consciously aware of the sun though everything one does is done in the light of the sun.

Of course you meet difficulties not only when you are in the meditation cell or in church; you will meet them when you go outside, and this is the only way you can put your practice into effect; but gradually one comes more and more back to the centre. And at this stage, even religious practices sometimes can become a hindrance. Though they may be necessary in order to develop serenity, a feeling of peace, and so on, they are but a method, another method. As Buddha said, one is expected to overcome attachment even to the Buddha; the Buddha is not a final refuge, only Dharma, Truth, is *the* final refuge. In the history of India, King Krita once had a dream which he took to be a bad omen for his kingdom. He told the Buddha of his dream, which was that an elephant was in the house and trying to get out and the whole body got through, but

the tail stuck. The Buddha said, "This dream is not about your kingdom, this is telling you the future of a follower of Buddha; though he may be able to renounce big things, the very last thing of all remains."

Finally, everything goes beyond the stage of words. The teacher is only someone who will introduce you to a method of meditation and practice, and eventually one has to find the inner teacher. At first the obstacles and problems that arise are the inner teacher. And then one goes beyond that, to a stage where 'awareness' is the inner teacher.

At first you feel, 'I am going to practice a method of meditation,' and then you go into it. Then at the second stage, you just feel conscious that you have to go into it and then you go into it, and finally even the desire to meditate is non-existent; meditation occurs spontaneously, it just happens. An analogy is that one's thoughts are like a thief going into a deserted house. He wants to steal but he finds nothing and goes away. Similarly thoughts come, but if there is nothing to react to them, they just pass through.

You don't have specially to stress the morality of the pilgrim. If a person is able to practice meditation and he is carrying it out effectively, then he doesn't have particularly to worry about "am I being a good religious person?" at all. Because the very desire for this does not exist any more, and when he has a certain desire, the desire itself acts as a reminder, so he doesn't have to lead a consciously defined religious life, but it just happens.

And then finally comes the last stage. Up till now he has been able to make himself stable, balanced, but he has not had any higher mystical experience. But now finally everything he hears and sees becomes heaven, as you might call it. Not in the sense that the landscape becomes full of flowers, or buildings made out of precious stones, but that they are *equivalent* to precious stones. He may live in a very simple brick house, but for him there is beauty in it, it is equivalent to a house made out of precious stones. He doesn't have to have visions of heaven, heaven just happens wherever he is. For if one is still unbalanced and full of a desire to go to heaven, then even in heaven one would probably feel tired of seeing beautiful things, because one has this instinct to search further and further on while thinking that "I want this." As long as one wishes to search further and as long as one is unable to free oneself, one is not able to find the centre.

So finally, the last experience will be that one reaches heaven and sees everything as wonderful, as a reminder of spiritual things, and through this realization one is also able to influence other people. Not because one becomes excessively clever and able to read other people's thoughts like pictures, but because one is in a state of truth, because one is 'clear'; therefore whatever one does is also done for other people. This happens automatically, it is not consciously acted. Whatever one says is the word of truth, because there is no conscious effort and one is never involved in the idea of duality. Finally there is no self, no 'I' left. Therefore whatever one does becomes an act of compassion. In the Buddhist tradition we sometimes worship the footprint of Buddha, because this represents the fact that Buddha walked from one end of India to the other without riding on a horse or an elephant, nor in a chariot. He simply walked on his bare feet and delivered his message.

Hermes[27]

by

René Guénon

THE Hermetic tradition is, strictly speaking, concerned with knowledge which is not metaphysical but only cosmological, in the double sense of "macrocosmic" and "microcosmic." This statement must not be taken in any sense as a depreciation of the traditional sciences which come under the heading of Hermetism, or of those which correspond to them in other doctrinal forms of East and West; but if everything is to be put in its rightful place, then it must be admitted that these sciences, like all specialized knowledge, are merely secondary and derivative with regard to the principles. In fact they are no more than a particular application of the principles at a lower level of reality. To maintain the contrary would mean giving precedence to "Royal Art"[28] over "Sacerdotal Art."

It cannot be contested that it is from Hermes that Hermetism takes its name. The Greek Hermes has in fact characteristics which correspond exactly to the sciences in question and which are strikingly expressed, for example, by his chief attribute, the Caduceus. No doubt there will be another opportunity for us to examine its symbolism more fully; suffice it to say for the moment that this symbolism is essentially and directly related to what might be called "human alchemy"[29] and is concerned with the possibilities of the subtle state, even if these are to be taken merely as the preparatory means to a higher realization, as are, in Hinduism, the equivalent *Hatha-Yoga* practices. This can moreover be transferred to the cosmic order, since everything in man has its correspondence in the outer world, and *vice-versa*[30]; here again, and by reason of this very correspondence, the domain in question is the "intermediary world" where are brought into play forces whose dual nature is very clearly figured by the two serpents of the Caduceus. It may be remembered also, in this connection, that Hermes is represented as the messenger of the Gods and as their interpreter (*hermeneutes*), that is, precisely, an intermediary between the celestial and terrestrial worlds, and that he has in addition the function of "guide of the souls of the dead" which, in a lower order, is clearly related also to the domain of the subtle possibilities.[31]

It might be objected that in so far as concerns Hermetism, Hermes takes the place of the Egyptian Thoth with whom he has been identified, and that Thoth represents Wisdom, which is related to the priesthood as guardian and transmitter of the tradition; that is true, but since this identification cannot have been made without some reason, it must be admitted that it concerns more especially a certain aspect of Thoth which corresponds to a certain part of the tradition,

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[27] *Le Voile d'Isis,* 1932.

[28] With regard to the expression "Royal Art," which Freemasonry still uses, we may note here the curious resemblance between the names Hermes and Hiram; this does not mean, needless to say, that these two names have the same linguistic origin, but their constitution is none the less identical, and the combination HRM from which both are essentially formed suggests other comparisons also.

[29] See *Man and his Becoming according to the Vedanta*, ch. XXI

[30] As is said in *Rasâ'il Ikhwân as-Safâ* "the world is a great man and man is a little world" *(al-awn insân kabir wa 'l-insân âlam saghir)*.—It is moreover in virtue of this correspondence that a certain realization in the "microcosmic" order can cause, accidentally as regards the being who has achieved it, an outward realization relating to the "macrocosmic" order without any special effort having been exerted in that direction, as has been known to happen, for example, in certain cases of metallic transmutations.

[31] The functions of Divine messenger and "guide of souls" could, astrologically, be related respectively to a diurnal and a nocturnal aspect; they may also be said to correspond to the descending and ascending currents symbolized by the two serpents of the Caduceus.

the part that comprises those branches of knowledge which are related to the "intermediary world"; and the remains that the ancient Egyptian civilization has left behind do in fact show that the sciences of this order were much more developed there and had taken on an importance far more considerable than anywhere else. There is moreover another comparison, we might even say another equivalence, which shows clearly that this objection would have no real bearing: in India the planet Mercury (or Hermes) is called *Budha*, a name of which the root letters mean Wisdom; here again, it is enough to specify the domain in which this Wisdom (in its essence the inspiring principle of all knowledge) is to find its more particular application when it is related to this specialized function.[32]

Strange though it may seem, the name *Budha* is in fact identical with that of the Scandinavian Odin, *Woden* or *Wotan;*[33] there was thus nothing arbitrary in the Roman assimilation of Odin to Mercury, and in some Germanic languages the day of Mercury (in French *mercredi*) is still called the day of Odin, which is precisely what the word Wednesday means.

Still more remarkable, perhaps, is the fact that this same name is to be found exactly in the *Votan* of the ancient traditions of central America who has moreover the attributes of Hermes, for he is Quetzal cohuatl, the "bird-serpent," and the union of these two symbolic animals (corresponding respectively to the two elements air and fire) is also figured by the wings and the serpents of the Caduceus.[34] One must indeed be blind not to see, in such facts, a sign of the fundamental unity of all traditional doctrines.

Another equally interesting point is that in the Islamic tradition the Prophet Idris is identified both with Hermes and with Enoch; this double assimilation seems to indicate a continuity of tradition going back beyond the Egyptian priesthood which, as far as Enoch is concerned, could only have been heir to the heritage of what he represents, for he himself clearly belongs to an earlier age.[35] At the same time, the sciences attributed to Idris and placed under his special influence are not the purely spiritual sciences, which belong to Christ, but alchemy and astrology and other "intermediary" sciences; these are, in fact, the sciences which can, strictly speaking, be called "Hermetic," But this brings us to another consideration, which might seem, at any rate at first glance, to be a rather strange reversal of the usual correspondences: as we shall see in a forthcoming article,[36] for each of the planetary spheres there is a major Prophet who presides

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[32] *Budha is* not to be confused with *Buddha,* the title of Shâkya-Muni, although both appellations have clearly the same radical meaning, and although certain attributes of the planetary *Budha* were eventually transferred to the historic *Buddha* who is represented as having been "illuminated" by the irradiation of this planet, whose essence he was said to have absorbed into himself. It may be noted in this connection that the mother of the *Buddha* is called *Mâyâ-Devi* and that, for the Greeks and Romans, *Maia* was also the mother of Hermes or Mercury.

[33] The change of b to v or w is an extremely frequent linguistic phenomenon.

[34] See in this connection *La Langue des Oiseaux (Symboles fondamentaux de la Science sacrée, ch. VII)*. The serpent is opposed or allied to the bird according to whether it is being considered in its malefic or benefict aspect. Moreover a figure such as that of an eagle holding a serpent in its claws (which is to be found, precisely, in Mexico), does not evoke exclusively the idea of that antagonism which is represented, in the Hindu tradition, by Garuda's fight against Nâga ; on occasion, especially in heraldic symbolism, the serpent is replaced by the sword, and this substitution is all the more striking when the weapon in question, has the form of a flaming sword, which is moreover closely akin to the lightning in the grasp of Jupiter's eagle ; and the sword, in its highest sense, is a figure of Wisdom and the power of the Word (see for example Revelations, I, 16). It may be noted that one of the chief symbols of the Egyptian Thoth was the ibis, destroyer of reptiles and hence a symbol of Christ ; but in the Caduceus of Hermes we have the serpent in its two contrary aspects as in the Mediaeval figure of the "amphisbaena" (see *Le Roi du Monde*, pp. *34-35)*.

[35] Should it not be concluded from this same assimilation that the *Book of Enoch***,** or at any rate what is known by this name, must be considered as an integral part of the whole corpus of the "Hermetic books" ?—On the other hand, some say also that the Prophet Idris is the same as the Buddha. What has already been said shows well enough how we are to take this assertion which refers in fact to *Budha,* the Hindu equivalent of Hermes. It could not refer to the historic Buddha, whose death is known to have taken place, whereas Idris is expressly said to have been borne up to Heaven alive, just as is Enoch in the Bible.

[36]The author is clearly referring here to his article on *The Science of Handreading in Sufism* which is to appear in the next number of *Studies in Comparative Religion.*

over it and is its "Pole" (*Qutb*); now it is not Idris who presides over the Heaven of Mercury, but Christ, whereas Idris presides over the Heaven of the Sun; and, naturally, this involves the same transposition in the astrological correspondences of the sciences which are attributed respectively to these two "Poles." This raises a very complex question, the full treatment of which would be quite beyond the scope of the present article; we may have occasion to come back to it, but for the moment the following few remarks will perhaps afford a glimpse of the solution and will in any case show that far from being a mere confusion, the reversal which might seem erratic in the eyes of a superficial and "outward" observer has in fact a deep-rooted cause.

Firstly, it is not a single isolated case in traditional doctrine for it has something like a counterpart in Hebrew angelology: generally speaking Michael, is the angel of the Sun and Raphael is the angel of Mercury, but sometimes the relationship is reversed. On the other hand, if Michael, as the representative of the solar Metatron, is assimilated esoterically to Christ,[37] Raphael, according to the meaning of his name, is the "divine healer," and Christ appears also as "spiritual healer" and as "repairer"; one could find also other connections between Christ and the principle represented by Mercury among the planetary spheres.[38] It is true that, for the Greeks, medicine was attributed to Apollo, that is, to the Solar principle, and to his son Asklêpios (in Latin Aesculapius); but in the "Hermetic boobs" Asklêpios becomes the son of Hermes, and it is also to be noted that the staff which is his attribute is closely related, symbolically, to the Caduceus.[39] The example of medicine shows us how one and the same science can have aspects which relate to different orders, and which therefore have different correspondences, even if the outward effects obtained seem to be alike, for there is purely spiritual or "theurgic" medicine, and there is also Hermetic or "spagyric" medicine; this is directly related to the question we are considering; and perhaps it will lead to a subsequent article explaining why medicine, from the traditional point of view, was considered essentially as a sacerdotal science.

On the other hand, there is nearly always a close connection made between Enoch (Idris) and Elijah (Ilyâs), both of whom were taken up to Heaven without passing through bodily death,[40] and the Islamic tradition places both in the sphere of the Sun. Similarly, according to the Rosicrucian tradition, *Elias Artista*, who presides over the Hermetic "Great Work"[41] has his dwelling place in the "Solar Citadel" which is moreover the abode of the "Immortals" (in the

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[37] See *Le Roi du Monde*, pp. 32-34.

[38] If Hindu doctrine considers the Buddha as being the ninth *avatâra* of Vishnu, that is the *Mleccha* (foreign) *avatâra,* this does not necessarily exclude other divine interventions which have taken place on behalf of "foreign" (non-Hindu) peoples during this same period. In particular, Christ might even be said to share with the Buddha the ninth avataric function, since his first coming was, for the West, what the advent of the Buddha was for the Far East (and what the Qoranic "descent" was for the "middle" region). Now as we have seen in connection with the Buddha, the ninth *avatâra* is a "Mercurial" manifestation. It would seem then that the two comings of Christ may be related to his "Mercurial" and "Solar" aspects, the Solar Christ being Christ Glorious, that is, the tenth or Kalki *avatâra*, who is to come at the end of the cycle, the `white horse' of this final descent being a Solar symbol *par excellence. As* to the first coming of Christ, it may be mentioned that the month of May takes its name from Mercury's mother, *Maia*, who is said to be one of the Pleiads and to whom that month was consecrated in ancient times; and in Christianity it has become "the month of Mary," by an assimilation which is doubtless not merely phonetic, between *Maria* and *Maia*.
(This note has been somewhat modified by the translator in the light of conversations which he had with the author, many years after the article had been written.)

[39] Around the staff of Aesculapius is coiled a single serpent, which represents the benefic force, the malefic force being bound to disappear inasmuch as the attribute in question belongs to the genius of medicine.—The relationship may also be noted between this same staff of Aesculapius, as an emblem of healing, and the biblical symbol of the "brazen serpent" (see *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée,* ch. XX).

[40] It is said that they are to appear on earth again at the end of the cycle: they are the two "witnesses" mentioned in Revelations, ch. XI.

[41] He incarnates as it were the nature of the "philosopher's fire," and according to the Bible narrative, the Prophet Elijah was taken up to Heaven on a "chariot of fire" ; this is related to the "fiery vehicle" (*taijasa* in the Hindu doctrine) which in the human being corresponds to the subtle state (see *Man and his Becoming according to the Vedanta,* ch. XIII).

sense of the Chirajivîs of Hinduism, that is, beings "endowed with longevity," whose life lasts throughout the whole cycle[42]) and which represents one of the aspects of the "Centre of the World." All this is certainly worth reflecting on, and if one adds also the traditions, from almost all parts of the world, which liken symbolically the Sun itself to the fruit of "the Tree of Life",[43] one will perhaps understand the special relationship between the Solar influence and Hermetism, inasmuch as the essential aim and end of Hermetism, as of the "Lesser Mysteries" of antiquity, is the restoration of the human "primordial state": is it not the "Solar Citadel" which, according to the Rosicrucian doctrine, is to "descend from Heaven to earth at the end of the cycle, in the form of the Heavenly Jerusalem," realizing the "squaring of the circle" according to the perfect measure of the "golden reed"?

[42] *ibid., p.* 17. Let us recall also, from the alchemical point of view, the correspondence between the Sun and gold, which Hinduism denotes as "mineral light"; the *Aurum potabile* (drinkable gold) of the Hermetists is moreover the same as the "draught of immortality," which is also called "liquor of gold" in Taoism.
[43] See *The Symbolism of the Cross*, ch. IX.

Reincarnation: New Flesh on Old Bones

by

Whitall N. Perry

"A science of the accidental is not even possible…for all science is of that which is always or for the most part, but the accidental is in neither of these classes."

Aristotle (Met. XI.8.30)

A LOT has been written against reincarnation, but it is little wonder if the doctrine dies hard, since it is in its nature to be born again.[44] A fresh study on the subject, however, has just appeared, which falls into a somewhat different category, being a scholarly treatise in the domain of pathological psychology; it is entitled *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation,*[45] by Ian Stevenson, M.D., Department of Neurology and Psychiatry, School of Medicine; University of Virginia,—and were it but entitled *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Metempsychosis* (meaning the transference of psychic elements from one being to another), then we could not be more in agreement with all the documentary evidence brought forth.

The nuance "suggestive of" is retained advisedly, because as Dr. Stevenson remarks, one has to take into account other possible factors, such as fraud, cryptomnesia, paramnesia, genetic "memory," extra-sensory perception-plus-personation, retrocognition, and possession.

The question of fraud need hardly detain our attention; Dr. Stevenson has gone to exhaustive lengths to check and recheck his material, which has been chosen from among some six hundred cases actually under study. His documentation is presented with the clinical thoroughness of a professional scientist who has travelled the world over to investigate his cases and make personal contacts wherever possible with both the subjects and all related parties, using interpreters of unquestioned integrity when languages other than English, French, German, Spanish, or Portuguese have had to be used. Indeed, he is rather pushing scientific "objectivity" to a fault, scrupling over a gnat as it were to avoid swallowing a non-existent camel, since in point of fact the woods are full of spooks which are anything but frauds.

Cryptomnesia means mistaking for one's own creations ideas borrowed from another source (believing one is Napoleon, for instance), whereas paramnesia is just the reverse, mistaking for one's memories events experienced for the first time (something like thinking you once were Napoleon when you really are), and *in extremis* leads to a disintegration of sequential understanding, so that words, for example, lose their meaning. Genetic "memory" has to do with the hereditary transmission of ancestral biological and psychological factors which become inextricably woven into the memory texture of the subject himself. Extrasensory perception-plus-personation occurs when a "percipient" "identifies" through clairvoyance with another human personality. Retrocognition carries the act one stage further, involving an agent who serves actively or passively as a telepathic link or "carrier" between two otherwise unrelated parties. In a long General Discussion which concludes the book, Dr. Stevenson carefully examines these alternative hypotheses to his twenty case-histories of "reincarnation," one by one, in an attempt to demonstrate in what degree each hypothesis can be eliminated as an unlikely

[44] We have already presented a doctrinal formulation on the subject in *Tomorrow,* Autumn 1965 ; see also the series of articles by René Guénon starting in the Spring 1966

[45] New York, American Society for Psychical Research, 1966, 362 pages.

explanation of the case in hand. In this slippery realm of probabilities and improbabilities, we gladly submit to the author's arguments and judgments, these matters in any case being outside of our technical competence.

As concerns possession, the author admits that this hypothesis is far less easily eliminated than the others, but his general rule of thumb is to call it reincarnation if a link between two "personalities" appears to be forming at the embryonic stage of the physical organism, and possession if the association only manifests later, and especially if it is of a temporary rather than a continuous character.

But all this is really beside the point, since the book's avowed aim is to demonstrate scientifically the possibility for "survival of the human personality" in terms of reincarnation. Now the incidence of "survival" based on the reported cases in the author's possession, depending on the ethnic group, varies anywhere from one per 500 persons to one per 5,000. And it is here that Aristotle's dictum cited above applies: for an incidence as low as this, if it proves anything, "proves" that "survival" is a fluke and not a norm; and indeed, if we are to discard everything theology and all the religions of the world teach concerning the immortality of the human soul, and place our faith solely on the evidence that science can produce, then we must perforce acknowledge that "survival" is the prerogative of neurotics.

But let us examine a few cases.

* * *

In India there is Jasbir, son of Sri Girdhari Lal Jat of Rasulpur, District Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, who in the spring of 1954 at the age of three and a half appears to have died of smallpox. Arrangements are made to bury the child the next morning (for although Hindus practice cremation, the bodies of small children are usually buried), when the "corpse" stirs and returns to life. Some days later speech is regained, along with a remarkable transformation, for Jasbir now claims to be the son of Shankar of Vehedi village, and refuses food in the Jat home, insisting he belongs to the Brahmin caste. A Brahmin lady neighbour finally offers to cook for him to forestall starvation. Jasbir later relates how in his "former life" he had joined a wedding procession where he was given poisoned sweets by a man who owed him money. This poison provoked a fall from the chariot on which he was riding, and subsequent death from head injuries.

Three years after recounting this, Jasbir met a Brahmin lady from nearby Vehedi whom he recognized as his "aunt." She retold Jasbir's story to her husband's family, and it turned out that a young Brahmin of twenty-two from Vehedi named Sobha Ram Tyagi had effectively died in a chariot accident in May 1954, in the manner described, though his family had known nothing about a debt of money or poisoning. Jasbir was finally permitted to go to Vehedi, where he recognized members of the Tyagi family, and with whom he afterwards felt far deeper ties and much more at home and at ease than with his own family.

Dr. Stevenson made repeated visits to members of both families to verify his material. This case is unusual, in that two lives overlap, whereas habitually there is a five to ten year span of "discarnate survival" between corporeal lives. This is also one of several cases, among the many studied in India, where the caste changes. With the passage of years, memories of "former lives" generally fade, and the author's investigations show seven years to be the average length of "personation." Jasbir, however, seemed more disconsolate and morose than ever when Dr. Stevenson last saw him in 1964: in other words, "Sobha Ram" qua Jasbir manifested no shred of gratitude for his new life, even though Jasbir claimed that after death qua "Sobha Ram" he had been advised by a Sadhu to "take cover" in Jasbir's body.

In Ceylon is the case of H. A. Wijeratne, born on 17 January 1947, in the village of Uggalkaltota. He has a deformity on his right breast and arm, and his father, H. A. Tileratne Hami, notices such resemblances to his deceased brother, Ratran Hami, that he says to his wife: "This is my brother come back." She for her part observes her son when around two and a half years old toddling about the house muttering aloud something to the effect that his deformity is the result of his having murdered his wife in his previous life. She asks her husband what this could mean, and he confesses that his younger brother, Ratran Hami, had in fact been executed in 1928 for the murder of his wife. In vain Wijeratne's father tries to silence the boy; the facts just spill out with all the more abundance and vividness of detail.

The record shows that Ratran Hami, the younger brother by fifteen years of Tileratne Hami and like his brother a farmer in the village of Uggalkaltota, murdered his young wife, Podi Menike, on October 14, 1927, for refusal to quit her parental home at Nawaneliya, by plunging a kris through her breast in the same region marked by Wijeratne's deformity. Though he pleaded an accident at his trial, he was found guilty. Yet he seemed resigned to his fate. Shortly before going to the gallows in July 1928, he told his older brother that he was not afraid to die, and that he "would return." When Dr. Stevenson interviewed Wijeratne in 1961, he still claimed that "he" (as Ratran Hami) had murdered Podi Menike, and far from manifesting contrition, said that in similar circumstances he would probably do the same thing over again. He also continued to regard his father as his older brother.

With Wijeratne we witness the transmission of a physical mark, a deformity he believes both inherited and merited through "karmic" justice. This contrasts with the physical transmission of another case described in India, that of Ravi Shankar Gupta, where the victim himself is "reborn" with the congenital scar on his neck from his "previous" murder, the brutal beheading by a barber and a washerman of six-year-old Ashokumar Prasad,—all this amply testified to by Ravi Shankar and later corroborated and verified by numerous witnesses, including Dr. Stevenson.

Turning from Asia, where the *popular belief* in reincarnation runs strong because of the teaching in both Hinduism and Buddhism of the Round of Existence and the transmigration of souls, the author next finds Brazil a ripe terrain for his studies, given the blending there of African Voodoo and Kardecian spiritism into the potent cult of "espiritismo" in a country that is nonetheless nominally Roman Catholic. We have already observed the possibility of lives overlapping, change in caste, and transference of physical marks; in the case of Paulo Lorenz described below, we observe a change in sex,—a phenomenon that occurs in less than ten per cent of Dr. Stevenson's cases.

Emilia Lorenz was born on February 4, 1902, the second child and eldest daughter of F. V. and Ida Lorenz, the father being a school-teacher in the small village of Dom Feliciano in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. From all accounts Emilia was an extremely disconsolate sort. She felt constrained as a girl, except for a passion for sewing, wherein lay her genius. She said if there was reincarnation she would return as a man, she rejected all suitors, and she made several suicide attempts, once by taking arsenic. She finally ended her miseries with cyanide, quickly dying on October 12, 1921. Some time later Ida Lorenz was attending spiritist séances, when "Emilia" came through and expressed regrets at her suicide. She said she wished to return to the same family, but as a boy: "Mamma, take me as your son. I will come as your son." On February 3, 1923, Ida Lorenz gave birth to her thirteenth child, Emilio, whom the family referred to familiarly as Paulo.

If Paulo was "Emilia," finally gratified in the wish to return to the same family as a boy, the gratitude was stillborn:

> For the first four or five years of his life, Paulo resolutely refused to wear boys' clothes. He wore girls' clothes or none at all. He played with girls and with dolls.

> He made several remarks asserting his identity with Emilia. He exhibited an unusual skill for sewing and also had in common with Emilia a number of other traits or interests.

His parents finally got Paulo into pants by having a pair of trousers sewn for him out of a skirt formerly worn by Emilia. All the while he exhibited a remarkable aptitude and skill for sewing without having had any previous training, unlike all the other members of the family, who even with training were bad or indifferent sewers, including Mrs. Lorenz. This interest, along with other feminine traits, wore off with age, although when Dr. Stevenson met Paulo in 1962 at the age of thirty-nine, he "retained a more feminine orientation than most men of his age," evidenced by "the fact that he has never married and has never shown any inclination to do so. Indeed, he has little to do with women except his sisters."

* * *

We will not fatigue the reader with further cases, and all the more so, as they have a monotonously similar ring, which in itself suggests an identical phenomenon running through them all. This phenomenon has every mark of metempsychosis in one form or another, and to understand it, one must have at least a rudimentary understanding of what constitutes the human soul. We can follow the author's example, and turn to India for our documentation.

According to the Vedanta, then, the soul is an emanation from Principle, an individual living projection *(jīva)* of the Universal Self *(Atmā),* an appetitive, volitive, cognitional substance, in other words a plenary microcosmic entity, whose domain is neither the corporeal nor the spiritual world, but the intermediate or subtle realm, and whose habitual state is one of flux and change, of dream and imagination on the *samsāric* "sea" of cosmic illusion *(māyā)*. But its immortal center is a spark struck from the Divine Intelligence, and it is exhorted mandatorily to return thereto, after one death from a corporeal habitation it has assumed, or after many.

And here we come upon an error in the way transmigration is often envisaged: the soul engaged in the *pitri yāna* ("Path of the ancestors") does not "coast horizontally" through an indeterminate series of lives and deaths, once having been "launched" into the *samsāra,* but rather is "referred back" at the conclusion of each life to its Source; there is a vertical dimension (symbolized in the Upanishads as a return to the "Sphere of the Moon"—equatable with *Hiranyagarbha)* which means a direct confrontation (but not yet identity) with its primeval point of Origin.[46] Each "life" can therefore be regarded as *original,* as *a fresh* entrance into existence or "descent," whether into a splendid or a terrible domain, and as a unique cyclic experience with a return culminating in *a theophany* or "Judgment," at which moment every soul does precisely—and with devastating clarity—recall its "former life." All the while the door of Liberation into the *dēva-yāna* ("Path of the Gods") remains accessible to the "Knowers of Truth," once the correct responses are given that allow passage out of the *samsāra* and union with supra-formal states of being.

These considerations can help better to understand the "exclusivism" of the soul. For just as two physical organic entities mutually repudiate any biological attempt at fusion into one body, so by transposition onto a higher plane—and despite the absence of certain physical limitations—are two souls (of which the bodies are but projections) mutually exclusive one of another. Union can only be achieved at the Center in their common Origin, in what Eckhart calls "fusion without confusion." An entirely different matter is the possibility for a soul to transmit

[46] Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad, VI.ii.15, 16; Chandogya Upanishad, V.x.1-8; Kaushîtaki Upanishad, 1.2; Bhagavad-Gîtâ, VIII.23-26.

consciously or otherwise certain impulses of memory and imagination to another soul: these imaginings and memories are creations of the soul and not its innate being; they are by-products, psychic aggregates or residues, and all the more erratic as the personality to which they belong is disordered and disintegrated, thus favouring dissociation at death, particularly where the decease is premature, sudden, or violent.[47] The phenomenon is one of haunting where these elements "fix" on a place; it is one of possession where (often through the agency of a magician) they "seize" the rational faculties of another soul; it is one of metempsychosis where they "graft" onto another personality in a sort of parasitic symbiosis.[48]

But in no case do these elements have any real *being of* their own; they are without volition and devoid of consciousness, and depend entirely on a physical object or the faculties of another person as support for their shadowy "existence."[49]

A totally different side of the phenomenon must be mentioned here, where far from being erratic, these influences are highly benefic and under strict ritual control: this is the case of holy places that are impregnated with the *barakah* or spiritual traces of saints and the prayers of the faithful; or again, where it is a case of influences used to assure the continuity of the psychic virility of a people, such as the ancient Egyptians, whose "powers" were literally anchored into the earth along with their treasures in elaborate burial ceremonies; or still again, where these elements under sacerdotal control can reliably serve to indicate spiritual succession, as with Tibetan *tulkus*.[50]

But why does the author *of Twenty Cases* barely allude in passing to the recognition tests passed by the fourteenth incarnation of the Dalai Lama (p. 214), when there is a wealth of authentic documentation in this field from qualified representatives of Tibetan Buddhism accessible to anyone interested?[51] And if really concerned with "survival of physical death by human personality," why does he not heed the Gospel words: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you;"—instead of brushing off Christianity (p. 167) with the remark that Roman Catholics are "likely to be unfriendly to the idea of reincarnation," while yet giving credence to every scrap of evidence advanced by a Tlingit Indian of mixed blood who claims to be the reincarnation of an alcoholic fisherman either drowned or murdered? The obvious answer is that the author is a scientist, not a theologian. But what is not so obvious is his anthropo-theological deference to Hinduism and Buddhism wherever these two traditions appear to corroborate his chosen subject.

Thus, he introduces the section on India with a learned discussion of Hinduism[52] and the section on Ceylon with a learned dissertation about Buddhism—Theravada, Mahayana, and all the rest, and even the section on the Tlingit Indians with an attempt to identify their Asiatic

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[47] A part of the importance of funeral rites, as Guénon observes, is to prevent the untimely disaggregation of these elements

[48] Medical science knows the precarious nature of transplants of organic matter from one body to another, where the natural tendency at rejection usually results in morbid decomposition. The same tendency on the psychic level would explain why the author found an effort frequent among Indian, Burmese, Alaskan, and Lebanese subjects to discourage their children from speaking of "former lives",—not from incredulousness, but on the contrary because of the instinctive recognition of the morbid character of "psychic symbiosis," and the fear that it may retard the child mentally and even cause early death

[49] That the dead can in special circumstances appear to the living through visions, dreams, or apparitions is well known (for example, in *I. Samuel,* XXVIII, which is not at all in the same category as that of psychic residues commonly conjured up in spiritist séances, since here God was pleased to let the prophet really appear to foretell Saul's ruin) ; but this is not what is understood by reincarnation, which means the return of the dead to life on earth in other bodies.

[50] "Re-embodiment," or the re-manifestation of a spiritual function is the repeated descent of a spiritual archetype into a succession of human souls predestined to vehicle this function over a period of time. We will not carry definitions further for fear of seeming to schematize imponderables.

[51] See for example *My Land and My People, The Autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama,* Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1962; *Born in Tibet, by* Chögyam Trungpa, London, Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1966

[52] Referring us in a bibliography to Coomaraswamy's *Hinduism and Buddhism,* without perhaps realizing that Coomaraswarny wrote elsewhere: "Reincarnation ... is not an orthodox Indian doctrine, but only a popular belief."

origins with Buddhist traces. But we refrain from imagining the reaction of a Hindu pundit or the abbot of a Japanese Buddhist order to the statement on p. 16: "Whatever may be the merits and proper interpretation of these (reincarnation) cases, their mere *existence* has provided a continuing stream of apparent empirical support for the religion of Hinduism, and for Buddhism also."

Islām serves the author little better than Christianity for "some evidence for human survival of physical death," since "Moslems … do not believe in reincarnation and even deny its occurrence" (pp. 354 and 312). But he cites in support of reincarnation two *Qur'ānic* passages: "How disbelieve ye in Allāh when ye were dead and He gave life to you! Then He will give you death, then life again, and then unto Him ye will return" (II.28); and "And Allāh hath caused you to grow as a growth from the earth, And afterwards He maketh you return thereto, and He will bring you forth again, a (new) forth-bringing" (LXXI. 17, 18). We could suggest even other passages, like the one that reads: "Pray not that day for one destruction, but pray for many destructions!" (XXV. 14). However, the hundreds upon millions of Muslims who have heard, read, and recited the *Qur'ân* since the time of the Prophet would seem to have missed the message, perhaps because of still other passages, like the one that reads:

> When death cometh unto one of them, he saith: My Lord! Send me back, That I may do right in that which I have left behind! But nay! It is but a word that he speaketh; and behind them is a barrier *(barzakh)* until the Day when they are raised.[53]

An eleventh century heretical splinter sect from Islām did nevertheless break through: "Reincarnation forms a fundamental tenet of the Druse religion" (p.243). The Druses also believe that rebirth follows immediately after death, that their number remains constant, and that when a population decline occurs (as in times of war), the remainder of the faithful are held in "discarnate" suspense somewhere in China … *quantum sufficit*.

* * *

It takes forcing logic through some fancy gymnastics to explain away all the phenomena encountered in this book in terms of reincarnation. In wishing to show, for example, that heredity accounts for resemblances and reincarnation for differences in a family (p. 190), how does the author reconcile this with his theory that the "selection of target" is based on continuing affinities? For the cases show that a "personality" may continue down a same family line or equally well be born into a family that is totally unrelated to the previous one. "The second personality of the reincarnating entity … develops as a `layer' around the previous personality … The personalities then develop like the rings of wood on a tree" (p. 307). But a tree with a hundred rings is still one tree, so where is the giant tree, the end result an evolutionist should logically expect?

We are told that the Tlingit Indians of Alaska "believe in rebirth as contrasted with reincarnation. According to the concept of rebirth, the old personality gives rise to the new as a candle burning low may light a new candle and so continue the series. In reincarnation, on the other hand, the same personality continues, although changed by the circumstances of the new

[53] *Qur'ān,* XXIII. *99,* 100.

life. Reincarnation as thus defined is a concept of Hinduism and rebirth a concept of Buddhism" (p. 197)[54] A statement like this cries aloud for scriptural confirmation.

Perhaps in the cases under study the most signal feature favouring a reincarnationist interpretation from the author's point of view is the congenital recurrence of deformities or birthmarks, particularly when combined with specific memories, skills, and idiosyncratic behaviour. Psychosomatic medicine knows, however, the difficulty in delimiting the boundary between the psychic and physical domains, where processes overlap, interpenetrate and reciprocate almost inextricably. Dr. Stevenson admits that "maternal psychokinesis" can presumably affect birthmarks in children; it needs only further understanding the modalities—apart from mother to child—by which psychic elements can pass from one being to another to realize that a transmission of physical marks via the subtle domain while exceptional is not extraordinary.

As for the untoward emergence of specific aptitudes, like a skill for sewing, there is no more cause for wonder here than in the case of musical child prodigies, who have either inherited through metempsychosis the musical gifts of another, or else are quite simply born with a colossal predisposition to assimilate an art form and master its techniques. "Selection of target" can be explained by a psychic propensity on the part of the recipient, plus horoscopic affinities; the more pathological cases can be attributed to undue passivity or failure in psychic defences, where the recipient thanks to a "psychic leak" is abnormally vulnerable.

* * *

More disturbing are the reported instances where subject A announces his intention to die and be reborn as subject B, even insisting on certain traits by which subject B will be known, and then where subject B as predicted arrives and effectively recalls details of his previous "life" as subject A. Striking examples of this appear among the Tlingit Indians. In the absence of written statements, of course, everything depends on the reliability of the witnesses acting as correspondent or third party to the transactions involved,—on their objectivity and freedom from suggestion. But when these reservations and also such pathological factors and paranormal alternatives as those listed earlier can be eliminated, then we have to recognize the presence of something very much in the category of a curse that is pronounced upon a family, particularly as these cases seem to run through family lines. Moreover, subject B commonly emerges as the victim, with a morbid discontentment of his lot, saying: "You are not my father," or "You are not my mother," or "This present life is not my real one."

But in the name of reincarnation, by what criterion are we to judge which personality *is* the real one, subject A or subject B? In the case of Jasbir described above, for example, we had every reason to believe that subjects A and B were two distinct personalities, since at one time both Sobha Ram and Jasbir were simultaneously alive. So that if we admit the traditional doctrine, that the body is but a projection of the soul, then whatever happened after death to soul A when it "became" B? It is like a game of musical chairs, where the person left standing suddenly doesn't "exist" any more! One may reply that Jasbir did really quit his body, which was then taken over by Sobha Ram in what Dr. Stevenson euphemistically calls "exchange incarnation"; but if this was the case, then the only term for it is the ghoulish one of "body-snatching."

[54] This Tlingit conception of rebirth actually describes the conservation of a totem through the condensation and transmission of a magic power within a tribe, analogous on a somewhat inferior plane to the preservation of traditional elements as mentioned earlier concerning the Egyptians.

Or again, if we become "theological" or "unscientific" and admit the doctrine of Judgment common to *all traditions,* are we then to allow that a reincarnationalist who—assuming it were possible—dies in the odour of sanctity at the end of time has the stench of sin effaced from all his previous "human incarnations" so that he is welcomed by the Pantocrator on the Last Day? And let not the reincarnationist deform theology to demonstrate that the resurrection of the dead is just a symbol for reincarnation.[55] If the resurrection of the dead means anything, it means that each body the reincarnationist ever inhabited in this world has to be present on that Day, so which body is going to step forth and claim "it is I" when Christ calls out his name? It is easier to skirt around the dilemma by saying that judgment (other than continuous karmic concomitance) does not enter into the reincarnationist perspective; but then by what special prerogative do these often rather morbid people escape what the rest of "normal" humanity has to pass through?

In point of fact, the eschatology of the reincarnationists hardly even merits the appellation "rudimentary." In what they call "discarnate survival," "something" lingers on the outer fringes of space and time; but the unlovely term connotes the idea of dissociation from the "reality" of the corporeal state, with "survival" relegated to a limbo of ectoplasmic nebulosity. They lean on the Buddha's doctrine of births and rebirths; but it is monstrous to think that the Tathagata was sent into the world with the great teaching of the cosmic cycles of births and deaths, of the relativity of all existence, and of the Way of Escape from the suffering inextricably involved in the Wheel of Life, if all this was simply to throw light on how a butcher from Talawakele might be reborn five years later as the son of a barber from Hedunawewa!

Qualitatively, metempsychosis is as dull as yesterday's newspaper. No dimension is added to *"la vie ordinaire,"* no element from a higher domain, no secrets from the Hereafter. In fact, the aroma that comes off most of these cases is redolent with the effluvium of psychic decay.[56]

What is needed is the fresh air of theology. Meanwhile we gladly leave to "science" the task of demonstrating the "human survival of physical death." And it should be no cause for astonishment if the day when science can prove the existence of reincarnation turns out to be the day when it can create life in the laboratory, and by the same token, abolish death along with it.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

As soon as you turn away—however slightly—from God, and no longer place your trust in Him, things go awry; for then the Lord withdraws, as though saying : "You have put your trust in something else—very well, rely on that instead." And whatever it may be it proves utterly worthless.

Theophan the Recluse.

[55] The mummification of the dead as practiced by the ancient Egyptians and the Incas of Peru is not in view of reincarnation as Dr. Stevenson thinks (p. 191) but rather a ritual preparation for resurrection.

[56] One may ask, What harm is there in believing in reincarnation if one wants to? The immediate answer—apart from all consideration of the false theological concepts it engenders—is that inordinate curiosity in this direction inevitably leads towards contact with subtle forces of an infra-rational order which have a psychically dissolving effect, as is evidenced in the material exposed throughout this paper.

Correspondence

REINCARNATION

Sir,

SEEING that you published an article on "Reincarnation," by René Guénon in your spring issue and a criticism of it by my namesake in summer, I request you to remove possible misunderstanding by publishing what the *Mountain Path* Arthur Osborne has to say about it in your next issue.

That is that neither side has gone to the root of the matter, which is that (as I said in my editorial to *The Mountain Path of* July *1966):* "It is possible to discuss rebirth only from the point of view of ignorance, because from the point of view of knowledge there is no one to be reborn. Therefore the Maharshi would generally brush the question aside when asked about it. He would make some such reply as: `Find out first whether you are born now before asking whether you will be reborn.

I admitted that: "That does not, however, imply that it (discussion of reincarnation) is completely invalid, inasmuch as posthumous states of being, although no more real than this life, are also no less real. It is best to wake up from the whole series of dreams, but for those who are unable to do so it is possible to describe their sequence." Nevertheless it is rather disturbing to find a spiritual writer discussing the subject without even referring to the deeper question of whether there is an ego to reincarnate.

ARTHUR OSBORNE

Tiruvannamalai, India, 15.1.67

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

One night a certain young man was crying "Allāh" till his lips were growing sweet with praise of Him.

The Devil said, "Prithee, O garrulous one, where is the response `Here am I' to all this `Allāh' ?"

Broken-hearted, the man laid down his head to sleep. In a dream he saw Khidir (legendary figure of a saint who stood also for the perfect spiritual director) amid the verdure.

Khidir said to him, "Hark, you have ceased praising God : how is it that you repent of having called upon Him ?"

He replied, "No `Here am I' (Ar. 'labbaika, the customary response of the faithful when they hear the Muezzin's call to prayer) comes to me in response, so I fear lest I be a reprobate, turned away from His door."

Said Khidir, "(God saith), That `Allāh' of thine is my `Here am I', and that supplication and grief and ardour of thine is my messenger to thee . . . Beneath every `O Lord' of thine is many a `Here am I'(from me)".

Rūmi

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The Sword of the Spirit
The Making of an Orthodox Rosary

by
D. M. Deed

WHEN a monk or nun is professed in the Orthodox Church he or she is given, as part of the investiture, a knotted cord. The Greeks call this κομβοσχοιυιου from κομβος, a knot, and σχοιυιου, a cord. The Russians call it "Tchotki" a word derived from the verb meaning "to count," but the old Slavonic name was "Vervitsa" meaning a cord, or "Lestovka," a ladder. The words of investiture used in the Slavonic rite are; "take, brother, the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, for continual prayer to Jesus; for thou must always have the Name of the Lord Jesus in mind, in heart and on thy lips." This cord is also used by priests who are not professed monks and by lay people. It is associated with the recitation of the Jesus prayer. The cord traditionally given is made of black wool and the most usual formula of the prayer is "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me." Sometimes the word "sinner" is added, but whether it is explicitly included or not it is always implied. Variants of this formula are also used; some change the "me" to "us" and others shorten or lengthen the formula. Essentially and always the Jesus prayer consists of the recitation of a formula in which the Name of Jesus is invoked and whether the word sinner is expressly included or not it is always implied.

It is not generally known or appreciated that the knots are made in a very complex and peculiar way which is described in this article. The making of the cord seems to the writer to be of great symbolical interest and for this reason the process is described in detail.

The wool required is first measured and the number of strands needed, which varies with the thickness of the wool and the size of the knots desired, are cut into the required lengths. The length necessary is eight arm lengths and another half length for the cross which completes the rosary. The number of strands will be twelve or more if the wool is of the thickness usually required for making socks. The wool is divided into two strands which I will subsequently refer to as Strands A and B. These are knotted loosely together. This first knot does not subsequently form part of the rosary. It is later untied and is only made for convenience in order to keep A and B together at their source whilst the first permanent knot is made. It should not therefore be considered as playing any part in the symbolism of the rosary though for convenience and clarity it is referred to in the text and shown in the illustrations as though it remained throughout the making of the cord and as if A and B preceded as well as followed its making. This of course is not the case, since before we began there was only the undivided stream of wool from which all the knots are made. There is one God and Creator of all "by Whom all things were made" and therefore there is one source from which the whole rosary derives. We start from unity but duality is inherent in creation. God made light and dark, heaven and earth, male and female, soul and body, and so we make our two strands A and B in imitation of the divine pattern. From now on we work with these two threads which we shall weave into a complicated pattern, always ordered, though it may seem at times to be disordered. We use now one thread, now the other, but each is always related to the other and to the knot itself.

The process of making each knot may be divided into twelve distinct "movements" each of which is described in what follows.

Fig. 1

1. See figure 1.

Place the knot behind the first finger and take strand A across the palm and between the third and fourth fingers of the left hand; take strand B behind the three fingers and back onto the palm of the hand between the third and fourth fingers. The two equal parts into which the wool has been divided may be regarded as the two opposing or complementary elements in the created world, the active and passive principles, black and white, good and evil, expansion and contraction etc. Throughout the making of each knot the palm of the hand may be considered as the field of creation, or the more limited field of work of each one of us, that area of space and time within which we are permitted to "live and move and have our being." It is circumscribed and limited, yet, on it and by means of it, the whole knot is formed. The back of the hand is equally important although we cannot see it and we do not consciously work with it. It may be thought of as symbolizing those hidden influences which are continually at work in the whole of creation and in our individual lives though we are unaware of them until their results become apparent and then we realise their immense significance. In the same way that the wool which has passed behind the fingers is integrated into the knot when it emerges onto the palm of the hand, forming an essential part of each knot, so these hidden forces are an essential part of the whole creation and so also they influence and are integrated into the life of each one of us. Without the "work" which goes on behind the backs of the fingers the knot would never be tied; and without the work which goes on in the hidden part of the soul nothing would be achieved. Let us therefore consider that strand A represents the light or the active principle whilst strand B represents the darkness or the passive principle. It is to be noted that A is in full view in front of the fingers while B is hidden behind them and only comes to light again when A and B cross between the fingers.

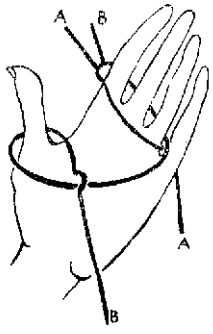


Fig. 2

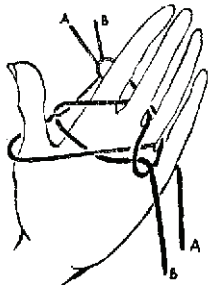


Fig. 3

2. See figure 2.

The second movement is made entirely with B which is taken round the thumb and crossed over itself at the centre of the palm, thus making a first, though rudimentary, cross. At this stage

it is made entirely of B, a hidden, dark cross at the centre of our being; perhaps a cross in embryo only, a foretaste of what is to come. A does not participate in the making of this cross.

3. See figure 3.

The third movement is a very complicated interweaving of the two strands by which they become inextricably entangled in each other. It may be described as follows; pick up strand B at a point near the thumb and place it over the second finger; pick up strand A, through the loop of B, and slip it over the thumb, then slip B off the thumb. A square has been formed in the palm and this has been firmly secured by two loops, namely A round the thumb and B round the second finger. These are at opposite corners of the square, which now surrounds the palm. We may think of it as a symbol of form and hence of matter, which is bounded, as the square is bounded by four sides, by four elements and four cardinal directions. There is, thus, a clearly defined circumscribed form in the palm of the hand made by the two opposite (or complementary) strands. The "earth" is no longer "without form and void." A form is there and out of this will come the perfect knot.

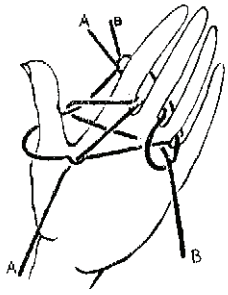


Fig. 4

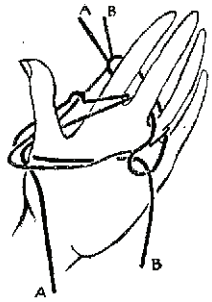


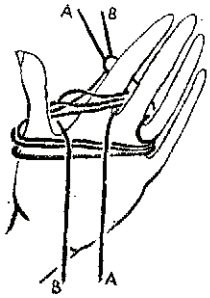
Fig. 5

4. See figure 4.

Take A behind the two middle fingers and over B, threading it under the strand of itself which comes from the thumb. by this process a very important step is taken. A cross is made by the two strands in the centre of the palm. The square of the world and of ourself has been filled by the cross. There is no need to enlarge on the meaning of this since it is clear.

5. See figure 5.

Take up the cross. This is of course a very significant action. There is no hope of reaching the perfection of the end unless the cross is taken up unhesitatingly. It is placed over the thumb leaving the palm empty and thus ready and able to receive. by this action the self has been emptied of itself, self noughted and denied. The world holds nothing for one who has taken up his cross and denied himself and therefore his hand is empty. Bordering the empty palm the two strands A and B hang down freely parallel to each other. They still appear as two opposite forces but they are now firmly interwoven with each other and emerge in orderly fashion to surround and limit the field of work.



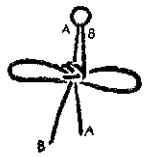


Fig. 6 & 7 Fig. 8

6. See figure 6/7.

Take B behind the two middle fingers and underneath the three strands between the thumb and the original knot and let it hang down over the palm.

7. See figure 6/7.

Take A (under B) behind the same two fingers and under the three strands between the thumb and the second finger, letting it also fall freely down over the palm. The picture is now that of a still smaller and more circumscribed square; the field of our work has narrowed down to a smaller space, it is more clearly bounded, more tightly and firmly held, and the interweaving threads are more closely bound together. A and B still hang down on each side of this space but they have changed places, B is now on the left and A on the right. Is there much difference between darkness and light? Do they not both come from the same source? We are beginning to see as we make our knot that these apparent opposites are the very warp and woof of life. Both are necessary and both are closely interwoven in the whole created world of which we ourselves are a part. It is to be noted that the palm of the hand is still empty. There is no central point visible and the two strands are joined together at their source, the original knot, which is still there at the beginning of all this complicated business of interweaving.

8.

Here is the turning point. The direction given is to search for and find the original strand A behind the thumb as it comes from the first knot, hang on to it and throw all the other strands which are behind the thumb into the palm of the hand. Now search for B in the same manner. It is the loop safely secured round the third finger. Place this on the second finger and throw all the rest into the palm of the hand. This direction tells us quite plainly to go back and look for the source, to find the threads which lead to it, and to hold on to them, securing them firmly one on each side of the palm. Duality is still there, A and B still exist, but we are quite clear now that there is unity behind this duality, that there is one God and Father of all, one Creator from Whom and also in Whom all things exist and have their being. We have firm hold of the two threads which lead us to Him. However curiously interwoven these two have become we know that they link us to God Himself and that, were it not so, there would be no knot no field in which to work, and nothing but a fruitless and disordered end to our labours. It is this link which keeps us steady and which will ultimately prove to be the end as well as the beginning. We still hold the first knot. It has been there behind the first finger all the time, even if we have forgotten it.

9. See figure 8.

We are now faced with what looks like an inextricable tangle in the palm of the hand. Everything, except the original knot and the two strands leading to it, has been thrown into the palm, which we can still consider to be our field of work. There the wool lies in what looks like a complete muddle. The direction given is "arrangez joliment au centre." In other words, there is order in this apparent chaos and we must find it and arrange it round a central point to form the knot. This is achieved by holding tight to the three secure points and pulling gently on the two threads which hang down. If this is done carefully, and with little pulls of adjustment here and there, the result is a cross which can be slipped off the hand altogether. The two horizontal arms are formed by the loops A and B which we held round the thumb and second finger respectively, the stem consists of the two strands A and B which we left hanging down and at the top is the original knot. At the centre, if all has been done correctly, is the virtual knot, not yet in its final form but nevertheless containing in itself all that is needed to make the perfect knot itself.

We have trusted and we have believed that out of the tangle order would come; we have held on to the thread which has never broken and which has always linked us to Him to Whom we owe our whole existence as well as the conditions within which we can work and which we have accepted with all their apparent limitations and difficulties; now the end is in sight.

10.

The next direction is "to run the knot up the stem towards its source" by pulling the top threads of the right and left loops. If we have made the least mistake the knot will not run up the stem. If this should happen there is nothing we can do except start again. If we pray harder and concentrate better our next attempt may succeed. But if we have made each move correctly then our embryo knot will move smoothly up the stem until it reaches the first knot, or if others have been previously made, the one immediately before it. This immediately preceding knot will be our link with the first source of all the knots. There is still more work to do but we are free now of the earlier limitations, we are in direct touch with the chain which leads us back to the beginning, nothing can stop us except some foolish last mistake and we begin to experience the joy of good work accomplished. Is this not natural? We are nearer both to the beginning and the ending, to God the Father of all, and to Him Who brings all things to fulfilment.

by this movement the very centre of the cross is drawn back towards the source from which it came. It is significant that the centre itself moves vertically up the stem. This word calls to mind the symbolism of the tree of life, of "l'axe du monde" and reminds us of the importance of the central point where this axis meets each plane of existence. We are also reminded, as the knot moves upward, of that which came after the cross, the resurrection.

At this point we can associate the two strands with the two natures of Christ, and we may also remind ourselves of the interweaving of the divine and human in all that happens in this world. There is a wealth of meaning which pours out upon us. Sometimes we may see one aspect more clearly and sometimes another.

11.

Hold the right loop B against the stem and work first with the loop A pulling it three times through the knot. Then hold the left hand loop A against the stem and work with B. Pull B through the knot once, then allow it to fall naturally through the loop A, and finally pull it once more through the knot.

These threefold moves probably have many meanings, as indeed have all the previous moves. For a Christian they are likely to be associated especially with the mystery of the Trinity, firstly as It is in the Godhead, and secondly (during the moves with strand B) in relation to the world and ourselves. The interlocking of the two loops, one falling through the other, can then be considered as symbolizing the incarnation, the descent of God into flesh and the union of the two natures, and finally the deification of man.

We can also think of these triple moves as symbolizing the "three worlds" of body, soul and spirit; or the three parts of ourselves occupied in the Jesus prayer, the discursive intelligence, which repeats the name of Jesus, the intellect which is wholely concentrated on the Name, and the spirit which creates in us compunction and love. (cf. St. Theolepte as referred to in "La Priere de Jesus" by a monk of the Eastern Church) Or, again, we may think of the three stages of purification, illumination and union; or the three "margas" of the Hindu tradition, the Way of action, the Way of love and the Way of knowledge by which the prayer itself may lead us.

There is a sense of rhythm in the triple moves by which first A and then B is pulled through the knot and made firm. It suggests the association of the Jesus prayer with the rhythm of respiration and the beating of the heart. It may be connected in our thought with the indrawing and outflowing not only of our own breath, but of the breath of God Himself. The Jesus prayer is also associated with the beating of the heart, when the lips may be stilled and there is left to us only a listening, since the prayer says itself in the depth of the heart. We may find all this, and more, symbolized in the later stages of "tying the knot." Whatever we may learn it is integrated into a whole, but we only see it as such when the knot is finished.

12.

The knot is now finished, all that remains is to pull the two ends down evenly so that the two loops are absorbed into the knot and A and B disappear in what seems a strange and quite surprising manner. There are no longer two separate strands; they have been integrated into the completed knot. But this knot is not an isolated creation; it is part of a whole chain of knots, making a complete circle which is finally finished by untying our original loose knot and making a final knot which unites the beginning of the rosary to its end, and the whole is completed by making a small cross from the woollen ends that remain.

The making of such a rosary or cord is a whole day's work and, throughout, the Jesus prayer should be repeated continuously. It is said that if each knot is not correctly made it is because the maker has not prayed continuously and with due attention, for without prayer nothing can be right since God alone can perfect the work.

No mention has been made in this article of the symbolic significance of the numbers involved. There are two of particular note. The turning point comes after seven movements and the whole knot is completed in twelve. These numbers are obviously important though the writer prefers to leave others to draw their own conclusions, merely drawing attention to the seven days of creation of the Book of Genesis, and the seven Churches of the Book of Revelations, and to the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve apostles and the twelve gates of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. It is not a mere accident that these numbers have an important place in the making of each knot.

It may well be asked who invented such a complicated knot and who was the first to make it. The answer given to writer's enquiry was "the blessed Mother of God, Herself; who else could have thought of it."

Traditional Symbolism in Kubla Khan

by
Kathleen Raine

MUCH has been written upon this most magical of all poems, each critic who has attempted to explain or explain away seeing Coleridge's poem in the light of his own ignorance or his own knowledge. My excuse for adding another to the number of such attempts is that I know of none which has considered the poem in the light of traditional symbolism understood in its traditional sense. by reason of the substitution, during the present generation, of positivist humanism based on physical science for the terms of reference which were assumed within Christian and pre-Christian European civilization, poetry whose context of reference is that older culture has become virtually meaningless in terms of the new; and "meaningless" is indeed a favourite word of positivist philosophers and literary critics. It is not surprising that the discourse of such poets as Shelley, Coleridge, Milton and indeed much of Shakespeare should become meaningless when its universe of reference is no longer known; it would be strange were it otherwise. The readings of critics of the new barbarism (for such, in relation to traditional culture, it is) are for the most part misreadings; for they mistake metaphorical discourse for naturalistic description, praising or blaming as image what is in fact symbol; for where the metaphysical is discounted, symbolic discourse cannot be understood, and becomes a dead language.

Coleridge, most learned of poets, philosopher of the imagination, was within that older tradition, was indeed an agent in its revival at the turn of the nineteenth century in that renaissance of poetry which followed upon a return to traditional values and to the traditional symbolic language.

All know the story of how the poem was written. Coleridge, staying at a lonely farm-house on the borders of Exmoor, had taken an anodyne, supposed to be opium. He fell into a charmed sleep, in which a poem rose to his mind, of not less than two or three hundred lines; "the images rose up before him as *things,* with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort." On waking be began to write the poem, but he was interrupted by "a person on business from Porlock . . . and on his return to the room found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast, but alas ! without the after restoration of the latter..."

When Coleridge wrote these words little or nothing was known of the nature of dreams; he was indeed one of the few men of his age to observe or consider the question; and his writings contain many noted observations on, for example, the way in which the dreaming mind will misinterpret some physical sensation, like the ticking of a clock, and weave it into one of those stories which in sleep we all have such a talent for inventing—so much so that we may well wonder whether our sleeping selves are not more remarkable than those masks we wear in waking life. However, to the nineteenth century the world of dreams was closed. Dreams were not considered to have any meaning at all, and to look for meaning in *Kubla Khan* occurred to no one; its magical power was attributed to sound and image, the subtle incantation of its changing metrical pattern, and the intrinsic beauty of the landscape of imagination Coleridge has painted, like a picture of a country that nowhere exists.

The whole question of *Kubla Khan* was reopened by the American scholar Livingston Lowes, in a book that delighted my generation, *The Road to Xanadu.* Freud's discovery of what

he calls "dream-work," the linking together of memories and other images charged with strong emotional association in the construction of dreams, was in the air and doubtless suggested to Lowes his method. Coleridge himself (following Hartley's theory of association) had written of the "hooks and eyes" of memory which link by association something read the day before with something remembered from childhood, or noticed on a journey, by way of some common feature; and Lowes made the attempt to follow, through clues given in his writings, Coleridge's prodigious reading. We know—for he himself has told us so—that Coleridge, before he fell asleep, had been reading in a travel-book, *Purchas's Pilgrimage,* the sentence which had stirred his imagination so deeply as to set in motion the dream-work of the poem; we shall later consider why this was so. "In Xanadu did Cublai Can build a stately Palace, encompassing sixteene miles of plaine ground with a wall, wherein are fertile Meddowes, pleasant Springs, delightful Streames, and all sorts of beasts of chase and game, and in the middest thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure." To this, many related themes from Coleridge's wide reading have become associated. The richness of Coleridge's knowledge, the vividness of his memory for the minute particulars of an image described or seen with his own eyes, Lowes abundantly demonstrated. But images do not associate themselves to one another, but to some theme which draws them towards itself, as a magnetic field attracts particles of iron; and what this imaginative field of force was, Lowes has not told us.

Robert Graves a few years later made the attempt—someone was bound to do so—to interpret the poem on Freudian lines, as a dream of suppressed sexual desires and frustrations and so forth; but that fashion gave place in due course to Jung's imaginatively richer discoveries of an innate confirmation of archetypes which tend to appear in similar forms in the myths of all religions, and also in dreams and visions. We may recognize them—whether in myths which move us or in dreams of unusual power—by a certain sense of something already known, of recollection of something we had forgotten, an assent, a coming into our own; anamnesis, Plato calls this awakening of innate knowledge we did not know ourselves to possess.

Those who have penetrated most deeply into these mysteries are the least inclined to be dogmatic; but images of power like those which rose before Coleridge's mind are known to all imaginative poets in some degree, are perhaps the very essence of poetry, and of its power to move us. Yeats wrote that revelation is not from the human personality but from "that agelong memoried 'self, that shapes the elaborate shell of the mollusc and the child in the womb, that teaches the birds to make their nest"; and that "genius is a crisis that joins the buried self for certain moments to the trivial daily mind." He used not opium but the techniques of magic to evoke this "other mind." (This expression was used by Beryl de Zoute in her writings on Balinese dancers; who, "possessed" by that mind, dance, as Yeats has written, "on deathless feet"). In his autobiography Yeats tells how persons sent into a trance perceive marvellous things which, upon waking, they, like Coleridge, quickly forget. Edwin Muir spoke of the theme of a Paradise lost by the Fall as a part of "the Fable" which he saw in a waking vision; and Yeats, too, tells, in his *Auto-biographies,* how one man, in a trance, described "a walled garden on the top of a high mountain, and in the middle of it a tree with great birds in the branches, and fruit out of which, if you held the fruit to your ear, came the sound of fighting" ; and a young girl, sent to the same "garden," heard in the tree "the continual clashing of swords." "Whence came that fine thought of music-making swords, the image of the garden, and many like images and thoughts?" Yeats ventures upon no dogmatic answer, but knew himself "face to face with the Anima Mundi described by the Platonic philosophers." In parenthesis I may say that on one occasion many years ago I myself saw a tree loaded with blood-red fruit, with a blackbird singing in its branches, and its roots watered by streams that rose from darkness; and at the foot of the tree a figure was sleeping. The vision was of a quality unforgettable. There seem to be certain typical features of

the Paradise archetype—the tree, the river, the wall, the singing birds, serpent, the clash of swords, the fruit—of which no single vision has all. As Blake says of such visions, which to him were a matter of daily experience, "to everyone it appears differently, as everything else does."

It is easy to see resemblances between Yeats's descriptions of Paradise and the images of *Kubla Khan:* a walled garden on a high mountain, marvellous trees; the sound of discord in the apple, the presence of the principle of conflict of Good and Evil, like Coleridge's "Ancestral voices prophesying war." Coleridge had visited that same garden. Purchas's description of the Khan's walled garden, with its fertile meadows and flowing streams and every kind of beast, had stirred in him the archetype of Paradise as described in *Genesis,* with "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads."

In *Paradise Lost* Milton describes Eden in symbols which in the course of Christian art have become traditional; and it is easy to see that Coleridge's dreaming mind has drawn upon Milton:

> Southward through *Eden* went a River large,
> Nor chang'd his course, but through the shaggie hill
> Pass'd underneath ingulft…
> (*Paradise Lost,* IV, 223-5)

There is a "fresh Fountain" that

> …with many a rill
> Watered the Garden; thence united fell
> Down the sleep glade, and met the neather Flood…

The subtle magical atmosphere of Milton's Paradise, those

> Groves, whose rich Trees wept odorous Gumms and Balme…

and

> ...the crisped Brooks,
> Rowling on Orient Pearl and sands of Gold,
> With mazie error under pendant shades
> Ran Nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
> Flours worthy of Paradise...

has left its trace on *Kubla Khan:*

> And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills
> Where blossom'd many an incense-bearing tree;
> And here were forests ancient as the hills,
> Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

Enough has been said to illustrate briefly an archetypal theme which could be traced both backwards and forwards throughout the whole history of European poetry and myth; for imaginative poetry, far from being "subjective" and "personal," tends to use and perpetuate traditional images in which "the age-long memoried self" has been repeatedly embodied. It is

poetry of the personality and of this world which, on the contrary, seeks for "originality" in images as ephemeral as itself.

But there is also a learning of the imagination: a learning which becomes accessible only to those who know how to use it, through their own insights into the world of intelligible forms which that learning embodies and transmits. All poets, and all readers of poetry who pass beyond the writing or reading of poetry for merely descriptive purposes, cross a frontier from the personal world into the world of those experiences which lie beyond the reach of our everyday consciousness, but to which, in our moments of greatest vision—of expanded consciousness, we have occasional glimpses. In his poem *Sailing to byzantium,* Yeats reminds us that we can learn of this order of experience only by studying those works of poetry and the other arts in which it is embodied:

> Nor is there singing school but studying
> Monuments of its own magnificence…

Traditional art is at once the embodiment, and the normal means of transmission of imaginative knowledge. To the study of those works which embody and transmit the hidden order of the soul all great poets must come in their maturity; it is the language of the initiates. Yeats tells in the introduction to his philosophical essay *A Vision,* written at the beginning of the richest phase of his poetic life, of the course of unusual studies which he had undertaken, whose influence upon his work we immediately recognize, even before we are aware of what wisdom it is which lends such depths of resonance to Yeats's later poems. Blake too offered that wisdom in terms misleadingly simple:

> I give you the end of a golden string,
> Only wind it into a ball
> It will lead you in to Heaven's gate
> Built in Jerusalem's wall.

Milton in *Il Penseroso* wrote of the proper studies of the poet who in "some high lonely Towr"

> …may oft out-watch the *Bear*
> With thrice great *Hermes,* or unsphear
> The spirit of *Plato* to unfold
> What worlds, or what vast Regions hold
> The immortal mind that hath forsook
> Her mansion in this fleshly nook :
> And of those *Daemons* that are found
> In fire, air, flood, or under ground…

—a list that forms the canon of the imaginative tradition.

In Europe the symbolic language of tradition, woven and interwoven both within and outside Christianity, is basically Platonic and neo-Platonic. Like an underground river that from time to time sends up springs and fountains, Platonism emerges in different centuries and different countries, and wherever its fertilizing waters flow, there the arts are reborn and flourish. For no renaissance has ever yet come of iconoclasm and rejection of the past, but, on

the contrary, from renewed contact with tradition: as the Gothic architecture from a renewed study of the Greek philosophy of numbers; the Florentine renaissance and all that followed from Ficino's Latin editions of the Platonists; or, in our own century, the Irish renaissance from a study of those same works that Milton's poet read in his High Lonely Tower, and which were also the "darling studies"—so he tells us and a friend in a letter—of Coleridge. For when Coleridge was still a schoolboy at Christ's Hospital, the foundations of the great poetry of the Romantic movement were being laid by the unrewarded labours of Thomas Taylor the Platonist, the first translator of Plato into the English language. Taylor also translated, between 1780 and 1800, many of the Tractates of Plotinus, as well as Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, and the other later Platonists; he wrote, besides, a number of remarkable essays on the Orphic mythology and the neo-Platonic use of those ancient myths as the natural language of metaphysical thought. Blake and his friend Flaxman the sculptor knew Taylor; Coleridge as a schoolboy devoured his works; Shelley owned his Plato, and it is likely that Keats also learned from him the use of mythological discourse. His writings crossed the Atlantic to inspire Emerson, Bronson, Alcott, and the other American transcendentalists. Emerson called Taylor "the best feeder of poets since Milton," and Yeats's friend, the poet and mystic George Russell (AE) spoke of him as "the uncrowned king"; and so, for the poets of the Irish renaissance, he was. For Taylor not only placed in the hands of, first, the English Romantics, then the American Transcendentalists, and in our own century the Irish poets, the mythology and philosophy of the Orphic, Pythagorean, Platonic and, neo-Platonic tradition; he also taught them to use that language.

We find only what we are qualified to see; the neglect of the importance, to the Romantic poets, of the perennial wisdom in its European guise of neo-Platonism is a reflection of the metaphysical ignorance of the post-Protestant West. The worst ignorance is not to know that we do not know; happily, with the rediscovery, through psychology, of at least some part of that lost wisdom, we are beginning to realize how little we have understood in works long familiar. Indeed, the entire European tradition of imaginative poetry, with all the rich variety of image in which ancient and enduring themes have been dressed, in various places and at different times, proves to be strung upon a single thread. To find this thread in one poet is to hold a clue to all; Yeats and Shelley, Blake and Milton, Dante, Virgil, Ovid, Spenser, and Coleridge all speak with the same symbolic language and discourse of the immemorial world of the imagination. Far from introducing obscurity and confusion, a knowledge of these themes draws aside a veil, so that we read familiar works with a new clarity and depth of understanding; read, as it were for the first time, the poems the poets themselves were writing, and not some fantasy of our own which often barely approximates to the original conception.

In the literature of Tradition—the learning of the imagination—Coleridge was deeply versed. When he was a schoolboy he was already reading the neo-Platonists in Thomas Taylor's translations; and shortly before he wrote *Kubla Khan* in the summer of 1797 he had written to his friend Thelwall, (Nov. 17th 1796) in London, asking him to send him a number of the neo-Platonic texts in the original Greek. It was of these themes that his mind was full at the time he wrote the poem. Details of the imagery are of course added, as Livingston Lowes discerned, from personal associations or recent reading, by "the hooks and eyes of memory" ; but the thread upon which these images are strung is the common symbolic language employed by poets and painters of the European tradition, strictly, or, as C. S. Lewis put its, "grammatically" used. For, as Lewis says, "Giants, dragons, paradises, gods and the like, are themselves the expression of certain basic elements in man's spiritual experience. In that sense they are more like words—the words of a language which speaks of the mere unspeakable."

"Alph, the sacred river" is one such theme, upon which I can only suggest a few of the associated strands which Coleridge has condensed into the phrase. The Jewish mystical tradition

of the Cabala is based upon the great symbol of "the tree of God," a symbol, like Yggdrasill and other sacred trees, of the whole of manifested being. The Tree is sometimes also conceived as a river through which the creative power flows down from the unmanifested source, the divine origin, symbolized by the letter Aleph, or Alpha; and the river of life descends perpetually from above down to the lowest plane of manifestation, matter; the "sunless sea." Burnet, whom Coleridge quotes at the beginning of *The Ancient Mariner,* and Robert Fludd, Christian Cabalists, both give accounts of this symbol. Moslem mysticism likewise regards the first letter of the alphabet in much the same way as the Pythagoreans regard the number one, and the geometrical point as the dimensionless *punctum* through which all manifestation issues from the unmanifest. A river that flows from a hidden fountain is found in many Greek myths. Psyche, in Apuleius' legend of Cupid and Psyche, is sent to draw water from the unapproachable source of the Styx and the Orphic Hymn to the Fates (Thomas Taylor had translated it) describes those weavers of destiny as dwelling in a dark cave from whose depths the sacred river flows. Porphyry's *De Antro Nympharum* (On the Cave of the Nymphs) is a symbolic description of the cave (Plato's symbol of this world) from whose darkness, "Through caverns measureless to man," issues the river of generation.

"The sunless sea" into which the river flows is a symbol no less universal; *hyle,* or matter, is invariably symbolized by water, on account of its continual flux. It is interesting to remember, in passing, that Taylor in several of his works has written of the use made by the neo-Platonists of the sea-voyage of Odysseus as a symbol of man's crossing of the stormy sea of life—a symbol retained in the Christian rite of baptism; and Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, as Mr. John Beer has mentioned in his book *Coleridge the Visionary,* derives in part from that old voyager. If we assume that Coleridge is following tradition, the sea into which his river descends is called "sunless" because it is the farthest point from the source, the divine light; like "the wat'ry shore" where Blake's Earth sits in the darkness of the world of Experience. To Coleridge the image of ceaseless flux, Heraldeitus' "all is flux" is made terrible and concrete by the image of rocks, the most solid of all things, dancing like chaff in the ever-flowing fountain :

> Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
> Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
> And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
> It flung up momently the sacred river.

In such powerful images does the dreaming mind clothe our thoughts. The earth, that Plato calls an "immortal animal" in whose life all individual lives are but momentary, breathes in "fast thick pants" as the torrent of existence flows away.

But on the waves of "the sunless sea" the "pleasure-dome" is reflected—an image used by Coleridge when he described the fleeting of the idea of the poem itself, "like the images on the surface of the stream." Again the symbol is one common to all the Platonic philosophers. Proclus uses the image of a tree reflected in a river; Plotinus and the Hermetica (Milton's Thrice-Great Hermes) abound in images of the temporal world as a reflection, in water, of the eternal forms; and Plato himself in the *Timaeus* calls this world "a moving image of eternity," and eternity a sphere, the domed vault of heaven; the same dome which was retained in the symbolic architecture of the byzantine basilica, itself a product of Platonism.

All knowledge, Plato says, is remembrance, *anamnesis—not* memory of events of time or of the individual life, but remembrance in time, and by the individual, of permanent intellectual realities: as of number and geometry, and the harmonious order which underlies all things. *Kubla Khan* both is, and is about, remembrance; its theme is the imaginative experience itself, written

in that exaltation of wonder which invariably accompanies moments of insight into the mystery upon whose surface we live. Coleridge likens the arising of remembrance to a woman singing:

> A damsel with a dulcimer
> In a vision once I saw:
> It was an Abyssinian maid
> And on her dulcimer she played
> Singing of Mount Abora.

The song and the singer come from "Abyssinia," the country of the long-undiscovered source of the Nile, which so long remained a symbol of all inaccessible sources; of Abyssinia, the high source where the gods dwell on their mountain-top—Olympus, Meru, Carmel, Zion, the Holy Mountain under whatever name; the mountain summit of Paradise where the garden is traditionally situated. (The Fall is itself, according to Platonists and Cabbalists, a "forgetting" of eternity; and the "mountain-top" the summit of man's consciousness, the state in which he continuously lived" before the fall). Abyssinia is also the Abyss, the depths perhaps of darkness as of light, Blake's "distant deeps or skies" which underlie creation. From this source of mystery the damsel herself comes; for the beauty of the beloved person evokes, as Plato taught in the *Phaedrus,* recollection. She does not speak or instruct, but sings, to a dulcimer; for music, highest of the arts, springs from a source deeper than words, and nearer to the innate order of the soul, whose harmony, as the Greeks supposed, is that of number.

The dulcimer itself is a one-stringed instrument, the monochord; and upon the monochord Pythogoras worked out the mathematical proportions of three and four, the intervals of the diatonic scale. These intervals, as the Greek philosophers were well aware, can be expressed or discovered in other media besides that of sound: in architecture, sculpture, astronomy. by the Pythagoreans and their successors, it was held that the universe is itself built upon that scale, which was not so much invented as discovered. Kepler demonstrated that the relative distances of the planets from the sun correspond to these intervals. The Lyre of Apollo, an instrument seven-stringed like the diatonic scale itself, was also, according to Thomas Taylor, regarded as a symbol of the underlying numerical harmony of the whole universe—a symbol Keats has so splendidly used in his *Hyperion* fragments. When, therefore, Coleridge made his damsel play, not a violin, clavichord, lute, or flute but, specifically, a dulcimer, it was with intent; she plays upon the chords of harmony which underlie all creation. There could be no fitter symbol of the power of beauty and love to evoke the soul's deepest knowledge.

We may compare Coleridge's Abyssinian maid to Wordsworth's Highland girl in *The Solitary Reaper:*

> Will no one tell me what she sings?—
> Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
> For old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago .. .

The image is closer to this world—or more clothed in this world—than Coleridge's, but far from mere realism; for her song too stirs recollection through "numbers," and here too ancenstral voices tell of far-off things, and, like the clashing of swords in Yeats's apple, of wars and battles foreknown in Paradise itself; that element of evil of which the Biblical serpent is another symbol.

Keats in the Hyperion fragments also describes some such initiatory anamnesis as Coleridge so dramatically underwent; though his symbolism is that of Greek mythology and not of dream. The first version opens with the god Saturn, removed from the world and sunk in sleep; a

symbolic landscape whose every image evokes the state of Platonic amnesis, forgetfulness, the unconscious. Saturn, as Keats certainly knew, was the god of the legendary Golden Age, now lost to mankind; the Classical equivalent of Paradise, that fabled land we each carry within ourselves, forgotten:

> Deep in the shady sadness of a vale,
> Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn.

There the banished gods in counsel decide to send a messenger to the world that has forgotten them—Mnemosyne—memory; or, as she is called in the later fragment, Moneta: the meaning of her name is the same. She is the same figure as Wordsworth's singer, as Blake's Jerusalem, as Coleridge's Abyssinian Maid; Jung would have called her the *anima,* whose nature it is to mediate between the world of consciousness and the unconscious. The poet addresses her as someone he has formerly known and half remembers:

> How camest thou over the unfooted sea

(the sea is in every tradition—as in the Christian service of Baptism, the voyages of Odysseus and of the Ancient Mariner, or Blake's "sea of time and space" a symbol of the material world and its flux). The figure of Recollection has crossed the forgetful waters; and the poet becomes aware that she has been there all the time, that she is deeply familiar:

> Or hath that antique mein and robed form
> Moved in these vales invisible till now?
> Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er
> The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
> In cool mid forest. Surely I have traced
> The rustle of those ample skirts about
> These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
> Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass'd
> Goddess ! I have beheld those eyes before
> And their eternal calm, and all that face,
> Or I have dream'd ...

Memory, at once strange and familiar, comes with "antique mein," from "the age-long memoried self," as if belonging to some immemorial past. The goddess replies that, like Coleridge's Abyssinian Maid, she has visited him in dreams;

> Thou hast dream'd of me; and awaking up
> Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side
> Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the vast
> Unwearied ear of the whole universe
> Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth
> Of such new tuneful wonder.

Apollo's lyre, Coleridge's dulcimer, the instrument on which the poet plays the harmony of the universe, is placed in his hands by the goddess from the high lost mountain-top of Eden, or from Saturn's golden world. He has only to contemplate her silent form—for beauty comes from

beyond the conscious mind whose communications are in words—in order himself to become eloquent:

> Mute thou remainest—Mute? yet I can read
> A wondrous lesson in thy *silent* face;
> Knowledge enormous makes a god of me

—and the poet then tells how he will banish the sorrows of the world by telling what he knows from the silent goddess. As Yeats says, "Man can embody truth, but he cannot know it."

Coleridge's Abyssinian Maid is a figure more rich in mystery, a more complete expression than Moneta of the poet's relation to the inspiring Muse; for she stands nearer to the mystery of love, and shows, like the "waning moon," a demon-aspect which is no less a face of her divinity than Moneta's tranquil beauty.

In all such female figures the truth is implicit that love (as also for Dante) is the initiator.

Yet her song is of "Mount Abora," the heights of the soul; and the poet's recollection arises from within himself:

> Could I revive within me
> Her symphony and song,
> To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
> That with music loud and long,
> I would build that dome in air...

He has but to *remember* in order to recreate in his poetry an image of the sphere and harmony of heaven. Keats and Coleridge had both looked into the source and understood that the poem is a gift brought from beyond the poet's personality; he is possessed by a knowledge not his own, a divine frenzy:

> And all shall cry, Beware! Beware!
> His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
> Weave a circle round him thrice,
> And close your eyes with holy dread…

Like the Delphic Sybil or the Bacchantes he is literally possessed by the god, so that his hair stands up; Shelley used the same image in the same sense:

> Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
> Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
> Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
> The locks of the approaching storm…

The "approaching storm" is the possession of the poet by the god, under the symbolic image of the cloud impelled by the West Wind, the breath of the spirit—a meaning which the symbol of wind and breath has now in both Hebrew and Indo-European traditions. In *Job,* "a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my head stood up." The overwhelming power of the god must be kept within bounds by the drawing of the traditional circle with which magicians draw round themselves a protecting *temenos*.

The invocation of the Inspirers was long customary among poets; and now that the poetic Muse is no longer invoked under that name, Yeats has written of his Instructors, and Edwin Muir "I have been taught by dreams and fantasies." Blake wrote of the Daughters of Inspiration as the muses of true poetry, and was angry when the reality of such inspirations was questioned by people who had never experienced anything of the kind; like Joshua Reynolds, in whose margins he wrote that Plato and Milton were "in earnest" when they spoke of inspiration. Milton (whom Blake took as the type of the inspired man) refused to use the Classical symbol of the Muse for a figure whose sacred aspect, for him, precluded the terms of Pagan mythology:

> Above the flight of Pegasean wing.
> The meaning, not the name, I call; for thou
> Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top
> Of old Olympus dwell'st, but Heav'nlie borne
> Before the hills appear'd or fountains flow'd,
> Thou with Eternal wisdom didst converse,
> Wisdom thy Sister, and with her did'st play
> In presence of th'Almightie Father…

Thus, in order to affirm more strongly her sacred nature Milton translates the Classical into a Biblical symbol, relating the Muse to the Divine Wisdom.

Kubla Khan is at once, finished, and for ever unfinished; like the Hyperion fragment, finished and unfinished likewise, and for the same reason; for with the apotheosis of the poet through the initiatory experience of anamnesis all has been said about the nature of poetic initiation; and what remains to be written—that to which the poet is at the end of the poem looking—is all the poetry which might be drawn from the inexhaustible riches of the world into which he has seen. Therefore at the end of the poem the poet himself, and his reader, has the sense of standing at the beginning, a threshold. It is not merely a threshold, but one might say the Threshold itself of the archetypal world.

That to have undergone such an initiatory vision is the mark of the true poet is recognised in the old Scottish ballad of Thomas the Rhymer, initiated by the Queen of Elfland. Fairyland is, in folk tradition (to quote from Y. Evans Wentz's book *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries)* "the world of the subjective." Thomas was told to look at what he saw. there, but to keep silence; as initiates before the Mysteries in antiquity were vowed to silence. He was shown a dark and awe-inspiring place, "Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star," where the tides of human experience ebb and flow for ever—powerful symbol of the collective mind upon which the poet draws:

> It was a mirk, mirk night and there was nae stern light,
> And they waded in red blude to the knee;
> For a' the blude that's shed on earth
> Rins thro' the springs o' that countree.

We recognise the place to which they presently come:

> Syne they came on to a garden green,
> And she pu'd an apple frae a tree:
> "Take this for thy wages, True Thomas,
> It will give the tongue that can never lee."

—for the initiates of that world does not surmise its wisdom, but knows it, and therefore speaks truth. The two stanzas which in *The Oxford Book of Ballads* follow this (xviii-xix) are evidently a later interpolation and have no bearing with the "sacred lore" of the ballad with which they are no less out of key than they would be in *Kubla Khan* or Plato's *Ion*. The Queen of Elfland has something of the ambiguous character of Coleridge's Abyssinian Maid, with whom is associated the sinister aspect of the "waning moon" and "woman wailing for her demon lover." She who gives the poet the apple of immortal knowledge from the Tree of Paradise is perhaps Lilith rather than Eve. "The book of the people recognises this ambivalent aspect of the *anima mundi* and its images; and when in his admiration the poet calls her the Queen of Heaven, she denies this, with perfect truth:

> I'm but the queen o' fair Elfland.

—a place of numinous images, bearers of a profound wisdom ; the Muse may "converse" with "the Eternal Wisdom" but even Milton does not quite venture to say that she is that Wisdom itself; and Yeats knew that in that *Hodos Chameleontos* the poet must keep his powers of discrimination for the false is mixed with the true.

Plato tells the same story of poetic initiation almost in the form of a fairy-tale:

> For the authors of those great poems which we admire, do not attain to excellence through the rules of any art, but they utter their beautiful melodies of verse in a state of inspiration, and, as it were, possessed by a spirit not their own… like the Bacchantes, who, when possessed by the God, draw honey and milk from rivers in which, when they come to their senses, they find nothing but simple water. For the souls of the poets, as poets tell us, flying like bees from flower to flower, wandering over the gardens and meadows, and honey-flowing fountains of the Muses, return to us laden with the sweetness of melody.

The last two lines of Coleridge's poem, which he brought back from those gardens in his state of divine intoxication, tells of the divine food in images which echo those of Plato, and evoke, for any reader who knows the *Ion,* Plato's dialogue on poetic inspiration, which doubtless was for Coleridge the supreme statement of the traditional role of the poet:

> For he on honey-dew hath fed,
> And drunk the milk of Paradise

The Science of Hand-Reading in Sufism[1]

by

René Guénon

THE author of a recent article on Muhy-id Dīn Ibn `Arabī expressed surprise at finding in the works of this Sufi, side by side with purely spiritual doctrine, numerous considerations on astrology, on the science of letters and numbers, on symbolic geometry, and on many other things of the same order which he appeared to regard as quite unconnected with the doctrine itself. But in fact, whenever there is any question of spiritual or metaphysical doctrine, these traditional sciences normally spring from it by way of application, just as consequences derive from a principle. Thus, far from being in the nature of adventitious or heterogeneous elements, they form an integral part of Sufism *(Tasawwuf)*.

Most of these traditional sciences are completely unknown to Westerners today; of others they know only more or less unconnected bits and pieces, often so degenerated as to have become nothing more than practical "recipes" or mere "arts of divination," clearly devoid of any doctrinal value. To show by means of an example how far from reality such a way of looking at them can be, here are some notes on what is, in Islamic esoterism, the science of hand-reading (ilm *al-kaff),* which moreover is only one of the many branches of what we might call, for want of a better term, "physiognomy," although this word does not do justice to the full extent of the Arabic term *('ilm al firāsah)* which denotes this group of sciences.

The science of hand-reading, strange though it may seem to those who have no notion of these things, is directly attached, in its Islamic form, to the science of the Divine Names: the main lines of the left hand trace out the number 81 and those of the right 18, [2] which makes a total of 99, which is the number of the qualitative Names *(al-asma' as-sifātiyyah)*. As to the Name *Allāh* itself, it is formed by the fingers in the following way: the little finger corresponds to the *alif,* the ring finger to the first *lam,* the middle finger and the index to the second *lam* which is double, and the thumb to the *ha';* and here lies the chief reason for the wide-spread use of the hand as symbol in all Islamic countries (a secondary reason being connected with the number 5, whence the name *khums* which is sometimes given to this symbolic hand). We may understand, in the light of this, the meaning of the verse in the Book of Job: "He hath placed a seal *(khatam)* in the hand of every man, that all might know His work" [3]; and it may be added that this is not unrelated to the essential part played by the hand in the rites of benediction and consecration.

As to the correspondence between the different parts of the hand and the planets *(kawākib),* this is generally known, and even Western palmistry has retained it but without being able to see in it much more than a set of conventional designations, whereas in reality this correspondence does in fact serve as a link between the sciences of hand-reading and astrology. Moreover, as we mentioned in our last article,[4] over each of the planetary spheres there presides one of the chief Prophets who is its "Pole" *(Qutb);* and the qualities and sciences which are especially related to each of these Prophets have also a relationship with the corresponding astral influences. The list of the seven celestial *Aqtāb (pl.* of *Qutb)* is as follows: Adam (the Heaven of the Moon), Jesus (the Heaven of Mercury,[5]) Joseph (the Heaven of Venus), Idris

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[1] Le Voile d'Isis, 1932.

[2] That is, in the Hindu numerals which have been used for centuries in the world of Islam except in North West Africa, where the Arabic numerals are still used. The Hindu 81 and 18 are respectively like a Roman 6 and 4 upside down. (Translator's note).

[3] *XXXVII, 7.*

[4] *Hermes* (see the last number of *Studies in Comparative Religion).*

[5] *ibid.* p. *82,* note *2.*

(the Heaven of the Sun), David (the Heaven of Mars), Moses (the Heaven of Jupiter), Abraham (the Heaven of Saturn).

To Adam agriculture is related (cf. *Genesis* II is: "God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to dress and keep it"); to Jesus corresponds knowledge of a purely spiritual order; to Joseph, beauty and the arts; to Idris (Enoch) the "intermediary sciences," that is, those of a cosmological and psychic order; to David, government; to Moses, with whom is inseparably associated his brother Harun (Aaron), religious matters under the double aspect of legislation and worship; to Abraham, faith (its correspondence with the seventh Heaven is closely connected with its situation, according to Dante, on the highest of the seven rungs of the initiatic ladder).

Distributed also throughout the seven planetary heavens, centring round these Prophets, are the other known Prophets (that is, those who are mentioned by name in the Qoran, 25 in number) and the unknown ones (that, is, all the others, the number of the Prophets being traditionally 124,000).

The 99 Names which express the Divine Qualities are also distributed according to this septenary: 15 for the Heaven of the Sun, by reason of its central position, and 14 for each of the six other Heavens (6 x 14 = 84 + 15 = 99). The examination of the signs on the part of the hand that corresponds to each planet indicate the proportion (S/14 or S/15) in which the subject possesses the qualities which are related to that planet; this proportion corresponds itself to an equal number (S) of Divine Names amongst those which belong to the planetary Heaven in question; and these Names themselves can be identified subsequently, by means of a calculation which is moreover very long and very complicated.

It may be added that in the region of the wrist, beyond the hand itself, are the parts which correspond to the two highest Heavens, the Heaven of the Fixed Stars and the Empyrean which, together with the seven planetary Heavens, make the number up to 9.

Furthermore, in relationship with the planets, the twelve signs *(burūj)* of the Zodiac are situated in the different parts of the hand, the Sun and the Moon having one each for domicile, and the other planets having two each. The sixteen figures of geomancy *(`ilm ar-raml)* also have their place, for all the traditional sciences are closely connected.

The examination of the left hand indicates the "nature" *(at-tabi`ah)* of the subject, that is, all the tendencies, dispositions or aptitudes which are as it were his innate characteristics. From the right hand may be learned the acquired characteristics *(al-iktisāb);* and since these are being continually modified, the examination must be repeated, if a thorough study is to be made, every four months. This period of four months makes up a complete cycle, in the sense that it brings us back once more to a zodiacal sign corresponding to the same element as that of the sign which we started off from, the order of the correspondence being fire *(nār),* earth *(turāb),* air *(hawa),* water *(ma')* (these elements corresponding respectively to Aries, Taurus, Gemini and Cancer, after which we come again, in Leo, to a sign of fire, and so on). It is therefore mistaken to suppose, as some have done, that the period in question should only be three months, for three months amount to no more than one season, that is, a part of the annual cycle, and they do not in themselves form a complete cycle.

These few indications, summary though they be, will serve to show how a regularly constituted traditional science is attached to principles of a doctrinal order and how it entirely depends on them. At the same time, they will serve to illustrate the truth that such a science is, as we have often mentioned before, strictly bound to a definite traditional form, so that it would be quite unusable outside the civilization for which it has been constituted according to this form. Here, for example, the considerations relating to the Divine Names and the Prophets on which, precisely, everything else is based would be in-applicable outside the world of Islam,

just as, to take another example, onomantic calculation (a method of calculation based on the numerical values of names) whether it be used independently or as an element in the setting up of a horoscope in certain astrological methods, would only be valid for names in a language such as Arabic, the letters of which have fixed numerical values. There is always, in this order of contingent applications, a question of adaptation which makes it impossible to transfer these sciences, just as they are, from one traditional form to another. Here also, no doubt, lies one of the chief reasons why they tend to be so incomprehensible to those who, like modern Westerners, have no equivalent in their own civilization.[6]

Misr, 18 Dhu' 1-Qa`dah, 1350 A.H. (Mūlid Sayyid `Ali al-Bayūmi).

[6]The data on which these notes are based were taken from some unpublished treatises by Shaikh Sayyid `Ali Nur ad-Din al-Bayūmi, the founder of the *tarīqah* that bears his name (Bayūmiyyah); these manuscripts are still in the possession of his direct descendants

"With God all things are possible"[7]

by
Lord Northbourne

THE existence of our universe, in its fullest extension in space and in time and with all that it contains both quantitative and qualitative, proves that it is among the things that are possible with God. It is perfectly gratuitous to assume that nothing else is possible with God simply because nothing else is at present accessible to us. Our universe is governed by certain conditions, the chief of which are form, number, time, space and mass or energy, and our faculties are adapted to these conditions and not to any others. If we choose to assume that no other conditions exist or are possible, we are simply assuming that there is nothing beyond what is, in fact or in principle, within the grasp of human perception and powers of deduction; and that, if you come to think of it, is a curiously presumptuous thing to do, since it makes human limitations the measure of the power of God. It is also curiously naïve to behave as if the mind of man, without the help of anything to raise it above its inherent and obvious limitations, could be supposed to be in principle capable of comprehending (in the double sense of enclosing and understanding) not only all that is, not excepting its own self, but also all that is possible. The power of God, as our text states so clearly, comprehends all possibility, and all possibility is infinitely more than all actuality and we can never perceive more than a small fraction even of actuality, let alone of possibility.

The word "infinitely" has just been used, but not carelessly or conventionally, because, once one has abandoned the idea that possibility is limited by the conditions of our terrestrial experience, there is no conceivable reason to assign any limit to it whatsoever. This is exactly what our text says in apparently very simple words; and here, as always, the simplest wording is the least restrictive and the best adapted to convey a highly comprehensive and far-reaching conception. by reason of its very simplicity it contains in potentiality more than any prolonged explanatory statement could convey.

A true statement made in theological terms, as this one is, necessarily corresponds to a truth that can be stated in metaphysical terms; in this case that truth could be called the illimitation of all-possibility. The choice of terms is a matter of opportunity alone. The metaphysical conception of all-possibility and its illimitation is fundamental; once it is grasped it does not matter so much what it is called, since all terms are limitative, and here it is a question of an absence of limits. This conception is in fact logically inescapable, for if possibility were limited it would have to be limited by something, and that something would itself be a possibility, for if it were not a possibility, it would be pure nothingness, and so could not be the cause of a limitation or of anything else. The conception cannot be grasped at all unless the mind can be freed, at least to some extent, from habits of thought arising from its confinement within the body, which tend to limit its range to the phenomena of terrestrial experience. Language in particular, the means whereby we communicate our thoughts, is derived entirely from our terrestrial experience, and for that reason no verbal statement of the metaphysical theory of all-possibility can convey its full content, or can be intrinsically complete and unequivocal. That fact by no

[7] Matt. 19: 26 and Mark 10 27. This is what we mean, or ought to mean, when we speak of the omnipotence of God, or refer to Him by His Name "the Almighty." It corresponds closely to the words *"wa Huwa 'ala kulli shay'in qadir"* which occur frequently in the Koran, meaning "and He has power over all things."

means invalidates the theory, it is only a consequence of its comprehensiveness.[8] Nevertheless, a little further explanation must be attempted.

Every identifiable or definable possibility, whether simple or complex, that is to say, every object, every event and every combination of the two, is limited by the fact that there are other possibilities distinct from it and external to it. If that were not so, it would be in no way distinguishable in itself. by definition no possibility is external to all-possibility, which is therefore not limited by any possibility. It might however be thought that impossibility, being as it were the opposite of possibility, must be distinct from all-possibility and external to it, or in other words that possibility ends where impossibility begins. But impossibility does not begin anywhere; it is another word for "nothing," a mere conception, purely negative, denying everything that has been or is or could be. Entities have beginnings and ends, total non-entity has neither. If impossibility has no beginning, possibility has no end. Definable entities, in so far as they are considered as existing in their own right, by virtue of what they seem to be rather than by virtue of what they obviously are not, can be regarded as so many limitations of all-possibility. From that point of view their existence represents a sort of departure from all-possibility, as it were a step in a "descent" towards impossibility, which however can never be reached, as the word itself implies. Such a point of view is admissible, and can be useful provided that it is recognised as partial and provisional. It is no more than that because nothing exists in its own right, but only by virtue of its participation in all-possibility. In the last analysis, all-possibility, being limited neither by possibility nor by impossibility, is limitless. As such it is neither definable nor imaginable, since there is nothing outside it to supply either the likeness or the contrast on which identification depends.

For these or similar reasons many people, especially those who pride themselves on being practical or up-to-date, would say that the conception of all-possibility is unnecessary, or at least that it is a purely mental conception embodied in a play of words having no relevance to the solution of current problems, and that therefore the question of its inescapability or otherwise is purely academic. Yet if the conception corresponds to a truth that is fundamental to an understanding of the nature of existence it cannot be negligible; on the contrary, it is vital that it should be grasped by all who are capable of doing so, at least to some extent and in one form or another, whether metaphysical or religious. One of its religious forms is that enshrined in our text. Moreover, since the conception cannot be fully grasped by the mind alone, but involves the whole man, heart as well as mind, the simplicity and directness of that text is very significant.

The physical universe that affects our senses can be regarded as a single complex possibility, that is to say, as a system that can be identified and in principle described. We spend a lot of time trying to formulate its laws, which amounts to defining its limits as precisely as we can. Independently of how far we succeed, the simple fact that the universe is subject to laws, and that its possibilities are limited by those laws, proves that it does not coincide with all-possibility, that is to say that it is not infinite and not alone, and that there is something external to it. That being so, what can be conceived as being external to it other than the indefinity of possibilities postulated by the theory of all-possibility? Any other assumption is arbitrary; this one has an impregnable logical foundation. It is true that it cannot be verified by observation; but neither can any other more limited assumption, since nothing outside our universe can be accessible to observation by us, who, for so long as we rely exclusively on our powers of observation and deduction, are looking at the universe from within and can by no means survey it from

[8] For an exposition of the theory of all-possibility, the reader must be referred to two works by René Guénon: *Le Symbolisme de la Croix* and *Les Etats multiples de l'Erre* (Paris, Les Editions Véga, 1931 and 1947 respectively). As the titles of these works suggest, their author approaches his subject, which is inexhaustible, from several different points of view, none of which is valid to the exclusion of the others.

without.

Yet man, and man alone, can recognise the fact that the universe he knows is subject to laws. He fails to make the right deductions from this fact, and so tends to identify the universe with all-possibility, and he is tempted to do so more and more as the extent of his knowledge of its observable features increases. Surely it is evident that more ancient views of the nature of the universe, such as would usually be called "religious" or "traditional," although on the physical side less extensive and often less accurate, were really much more comprehensive. At least they took into account possibilities far more extensive than those comprised in our terrestrial state; and it must not be forgotten that all our means of communication are derived from our common terrestrial experience, so that the nature of those possibilities can only be conveyed symbolically and never descriptively; the various images made use of to represent them could not therefore be expected to coincide formally. In short, though modern scientific knowledge reveals much that was previously unknown, yet in fact it hides or supplants much more. In aiming at completeness in one aspect of the picture it suppresses the picture as a whole.

Man's awareness of the limitations of his universe implies that there is something in him that can penetrate beyond its bounds, that is to say, beyond the world of phenomena, although his powers of observation can never do so, however well developed they may be. It may be mentioned in parenthesis that phenomena such as are sometimes called "paranormal" are still phenomena, and as such they are of this world, and, as with normal phenomena, their outward form is one thing and the interpretation of its significance is another. It is just this possibility of seeing the limitations of this world that marks the uniqueness of man and enables him to rise above his terrestrial limitations. When he fails to take advantage of that possibility by neglecting or rejecting the divine revelations which alone can shed light on the mystery of existence—a mystery which is beyond the reach of his natural or unaided mind and senses—he becomes no more than a thinking animal, subject to the same laws as the animals, and having no superior rights save those arising from his superior ingenuity. Hence the universal concern of religious doctrines with a certain detachment from the world as a necessary condition for the realisation of man's true destiny.

Our universe, being subject to definable laws, excludes anything that is incompatible with those laws. It can be regarded as a system of mutually compatible possibilities, or "compossibles" as they can conveniently be called. The compossibles constituting a system such as our universe are not assembled by chance nor by any arbitrary choice, they simply constitute a system because they are what they are. The number of possible systems is indefinite, not only because the number of possibilities that can be assembled into systems is indefinite, but also because any given possibility can form part of a plurality of different systems, each of which is defined by a unique set of conditions, and has its own relative internal unity, and its own relative reality; all its reality is however derived entirely from its participation in all-possibility, which alone is absolutely real and wholly itself. Whatever else may be or may not be all-possibility cannot not be; the one thing that is inconceivable is its limitation. All the rest follows. It is vain to seek to formulate the ultimate reason why things are what they are; they are what they are because it is possible that they should be so, and therefore impossible that they should not be so; and they are in a particular system—our own universe for instance—because they are compatible with the conditions that define that system. In theological terms one could say that they are what they are and where they are because God made them so and gave them their place. That sounds a bit old-fashioned, but it is much better sense than a good deal that is said today about the origin and nature of our universe.

All this is scarcely as much as a sketch of the theory of all-possibility. It may however be just enough to convey by contrast some idea of the complete inadequacy of the modern scientific

outlook and of the insignificance of its results. In equating what he can see and know distinctively with the whole of reality, and in attributing a sort of absolute validity to this outlook and its results, scientific man is not only taking a fraction of a fraction to be unity, but at the same time he is making himself insignificant, a mere trivial accident in the evolutionary process of an apparently arbitrary and purposeless mechanism. For so long as he continues to try to squeeze reality into the miserably inadequate vessel of his own brain he will continue to become himself more and more insignificant.

A living terrestrial being, a human being for example, can, like the universe itself, be regarded as a coherent system of compossibles, an assemblage of inter-related potentialities, manifested in a mode which accords with the conditions that characterize this universe. The potentialities in question constitute an individual being distinct from all others because they are what they are and for no other reason; as in the case of the universe, their assembly is in no sense fortuitous or arbitrary; and they remain for ever what they are, whether manifested or not. They can be manifested under a variety of conditions without losing their cohesion, their individuality, because its source is in their intrinsic nature and is not external thereto. Their manifestation under particularized conditions, for instance those peculiar to our universe, realizes only such potentialities as are concordant with those conditions, but not others, so that it appears both as a realization and as a limitation. The total being in all its potentiality is not realized, but only as it were one possible aspect of it. A different aspect, perhaps less limited, perhaps more so, must characterize its manifestation under other conditions, but the total being must remain what it was and is. Only in a total release from all the limitations inherent in manifestation can the being realize its full potentiality. In other and more familiar words, man has an immortal soul capable of perfection, and its sojourn on this earth is but a partial and passing phase. On this earth we have a body, but it is not ourselves, it belongs to this universe, wherein it reflects potentialities inherent in our being. At death we leave this universe and are therefore parted from our bodies, but this does not affect our real being and its potentialities, which can, and must, be then reflected in some other "universe" in a new mode, according to whatever conditions may prevail. These may include some kind of duration and extension, corresponding to, but not identifiable with, our time and space, as well as something corresponding to the "materiality" which conditions our bodies; but such possibilities are far beyond the range of our imagination. St. Paul says of our bodies, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a spiritual body and a natural body."[9] The doctrine of the resurrection of the body gives rise to many doubts and difficulties, even in the minds of believers. It need not do so, since the possibilities manifested in the body cannot be annihilated.

In our present state we are involved in time and space, wherein possibilities are manifested in succession and in extension; but they can equally well be considered as co-existing in a non-temporal and non-spatial state, although this does not come naturally to us because of our present involvement in time and space. Our present point of view is not for that reason false or distorted, but it is particularized in a special way. The fact that a more generalized conception can be reached, at least by some people, is direct evidence of our situation on the central and "vertical" axis connecting the whole hierarchy of possible states, each of which can be envisaged as a "horizontal" expansion of a point on this axis. Such a picture of our situation is evidently symbolical; as such, its content is virtually inexhaustible.[10] Meanwhile, it is perhaps helpful to think of the present as permanent and as alone wholly real. In it alone can we act or be acted upon; it summarizes the past and conditions the future; it alone is always with us; it is stationary

[9] I Cor. 15:44.
[10] *Le Symbolisme de la Croix* (see note (2)) is mainly concerned with the development of this symbolism.

while events move past it; it will still be when everything else has gone; it is the container, events are its ever-changing content. Comparably, space is spherical, and a sphere is defined by the relation of its parts to its centre; it may revolve or expand or contract, but always by reference to its centre, which contains and regulates all its potentiality. The present is eternal, the centre is ubiquitous. In the terrestrial state the symbol—the likeness—of eternity is the present, and the symbol of infinity is the dimensionless centre, the point. Eternity is not a very long time, nor is infinity a very capacious space. And in the last analysis eternity and infinity are not two, but one, and all-possibility is one of the names of that indivisible Unity.

Let us return again to theology and consider what religion teaches. Being concerned with humanity alone, for the good reason that humanity represents the central and only fully conscious element in the universe, religion is only indirectly concerned with the multiple states of being as they affect non-human entities, animate or inanimate. All living beings "have the same religion as ours" as Black Elk says of the birds,[11] that is to say, they express their dependence on God each in its own way, in their forms and their behaviour, (see also for example Psalms 19 vv. 1-3, and 104 v. 21). Having little or no consciousness of their individuality they are not tempted to the sort of presumption of independence that beguiles us; they have therefore not only no capacity for, but also no need for, anything corresponding to the external forms of religion as we know them.

The doctrines of the great religions are formulated in many different ways and expressed through a very varied imagery, but integral to them is always the idea that the human being has an essential and immortal part which passes through a plurality of states, of which this present life is one. The "monotheistic" religions teach, for instance, that man has an immortal soul, given to him by God, and destined after its earthly death, in which it is separated from the body, to pass on to Paradise, purgatory or hell, the choice depending on what it has done during its sojourn on earth. This no doubt is a great simplification of the situation in its entirety; nevertheless, it expresses the metaphysical truth adequately, and in a manner adapted to the needs and capacities of the people who are called upon to accept it, for whom it is unnecessary to know more than this. It is however vital for the state of their souls that they should not know less than this, and that they should order their lives accordingly, that is to say, as a preparation for an inevitable change of state. At death we drop all our terrestrial characteristics, all bodily and mental forms, for they are but the temporary manifestation of the possibilities inherent in and characteristic of the immortal centre which is our real being and that real being takes on another form, reflecting its proper nature in its new surroundings.

While subject to terrestrial conditions, or to any others, the individual being does not become something other than it is in principle or in potentiality, but it is passing through a phase of limitation, as it has done before and will do again. It will be a different phase every time; it has been said that "we pass this way but once," and this is necessarily true; the timeless co-existence of all things in all-possibility excludes any repetition, simply because two identical possibilities are not two but one. That is why religion treats the judgment that faces all beings after death as final, for so it is from the point of view of terrestrial existence, which is what a terrestrial religion is primarily concerned with. Religion could not, however, present the truth without taking account of non-terrestrial states: in the monotheistic religions they are referred to as paradises, purgatories and hells, and are situated symbolically "above" or "beneath" this world.

It will have become clear that within a given set of conditions, or compossibles, in other words, in a particular universe, every possibility compatible with those conditions must be

[11] *"Black Elk Speaks,"* by John G. Neihardt, page 199. William Morrow and Co. New York, 1932. Reprinted, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1961.

manifested, the universe in question being a manifestation of all-possibility in a particular mode. Therefore possibilities of distinction, of contrast, of definition, also of opposition, contradiction and negation, and even of a sort of apparent negation of itself, cannot be excluded. Manifestation consists precisely in this kind of throwing into relief of one possibility by its separation from another, or by the possibility of its apparent negation, without which everything would remain in the permanent indistinction and non-manifestation of all-possibility itself; but if things were to remain in that state, all-possibility would not be all-possibility, since the possibilities of distinction and opposition, that is to say, of manifestation, would be excluded, and that is impossible. White is manifested through its contrast with black; similarly with good and evil, beauty and ugliness, truth and untruth. In the non-manifestation of all-possibility there is no separateness and no negation (for negation implies a separation) there is only the unimaginable perfection of totality—but we have already passed far beyond what words alone can convey. This is the only complete answer to people who say, "If all things are possible with God, why does not He eliminate evil and ugliness and pain?" There are other answers of course, some good and some bad, but they are all vulnerable in one way or another. If God were to eliminate these things, there would be no manifestation, no world and no salvation; but more than that, there would be no completion, no perfection, no fulfilment.

St. Paul says that "all things work together for good to them that love God."[12] This is a comprehensive statement of the metaphysical truth in theological terms. We read too in the Book of Genesis[13] that, from the third day of the creation, when the distinctively manifested features of this universe begin to appear, God saw that each of them was good. Finally, he "saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." As in the case of our text, the simplicity and directness of these words confers on them a power and a range that would be diminished by any dialectical expansion or elaboration. And as it is with fundamental statements of truth such as these, so it is with faith. A simple and direct faith is stronger and more far-reaching than a faith justified or sustained mainly by philosophical or quasi-philosophical considerations. In so far as the latter is of the brain alone it is peripheral and mobile; the simple faith is of the heart, it subsists at the centre and illumines the whole being, brain and all. With it, philosophy can live; without it, philosophy is a dead thing.

As limited beings, we cannot know all-possibility, still less imagine or visualise it in any way, since it cannot be compared or contrasted with anything, nothing being outside it or separable from it; and yet at the same time the universe we can know is nothing but a reflection or refraction of all-possibility, and derives all its qualities and all its reality therefrom. St. Paul said, "Now we see through a glass, darkly ..."[14]: and only if we look upon the universe as a partial refraction of all-possibility, and not as if it were itself identifiable with all-possibility, can we "see God in all things"; for it is just in this sense that He is "in all things," and that all things subsist only "in God" and not in themselves; and at the same time that all things, to the extent that their appearance is taken for the reality, play the part of so many veils hiding the Presence of Him with whom all things are possible.

[12] Rom. 8: 28
[13] Genesis 1: 9 to 31. I Cor. 13:12.
[14] I Cor.13:12

Perennial Values in Islamic Art

by
Titus Burckhardt

MUCH has been written about the formation of Islamic art from pre-existing elements, of byzantine, Persian, Hindu and Mongolian origin. But very little has been said about the nature of the power which wrought all those various elements into a unique synthesis. Nobody will deny the unity of Islamic art, either in time or in space; it is far too evident: whether one contemplates the mosque of Cordoba or the great madrasah of Samarkand, whether it be the tomb of a saint in the Maghreb or one in Chinese Turkestan, it is as if one and the same light shone forth from all these works of art. What then is the nature of this unity? The religious law of Islam does not prescribe any particular forms of art; it merely restricts the field of their expression, and restrictions are not creative in themselves. On the other hand, it is misleading, to say the least, if one simply attributes this unity to "religious feeling" as one often does. However intense an emotion may be, it will never be able to shape a whole world of forms into a harmony which is at the same time rich and sober, overwhelming and precise. It is not by chance that the unity and regularity of Islamic art reminds us of the law working in crystals: there is something that evidently surpasses the mere power of emotion, which is necessarily vague and always fluctuating. We shall call it the "intellectual vision" inherent in Islamic art, taking "intellect" in its original meaning as a faculty far more comprehensive than reason or thought, a faculty involving the intuition of timeless realities. This is also the meaning of *al-'aql* in Islamic tradition: faith is not complete unless it be illuminated *by al-'aql* which alone grasps the implications of *at-tawhīd,* the doctrine of divine Unity. In a similar way, Islamic art derives its beauty from wisdom.

The history of art, being a modern science, inevitably approaches Islamic art in the purely analytical way of all modern sciences, by dissection and reduction to historical circumstances. Whatever is timeless in an art—and sacred art like that of Islam always contains a timeless element—will be left out by such a method. One may object that all art is composed of forms and, since form is limited, it is necessarily subject to time; like all historical phenomena forms rise, develop, become corrupted and die; therefore the science of art is of necessity a historical science. But this is only one half of the truth: a form, though limited and consequently subject to time, may convey something timeless and in this respect escape historical conditions, not only in its genesis—which partly belongs to a spiritual dimension—but also in its preservation, to a certain extent at least, for it is with regard to their timeless meaning that certain forms have been preserved in spite of and against all material and psychic revolutions of an epoch; tradition means just that.

On the other hand, modern history of art has derived most of its aesthetic criteria from classical Greek or from postmedieval art. Whatever its more recent evolution has been, it has always considered the individual as the real creator of art. In this view, a work is "artistic" in so far as it shows the stamp of an individuality. Now, from an Islamic point of view, beauty is essentially an expression of universal Truth.

Thus it is not astonishing that modern science, in studying Islamic art, often stops short at a negative judgement. We find such negative judgements in many if not in most of the learned works on Islamic art; they are more or less the same, though different in degree. One often reads that Islamic art was creative only at its first stage, while integrating and transforming earlier legacies, and that later on it congealed more and more into sterile formulas. These formulas, we further learn, have not quite cancelled the ethnic differences of the peoples of Islam, but they

have unfortunately suffocated the individual initiative of the artist. This happened all the more easily—so it seems—as Islamic art was deprived of a most vital and profound dimension through the religious interdiction of images. We have quoted all these judgements in their most acute form, well knowing that few European scholars would subscribe to all of them. Yet is it good to look these judgements in the face for they will help us by their very limitation to point out the view that really corresponds to the nature of Islamic art.

Let us first consider the last of the afore-mentioned reproaches, that which concerns the religious interdiction of images. This interdiction is two-fold: on the one hand there is the Koranic condemnation of idolatry which from the general Muslim point of view involves all visual representation of God in any form, the nature of God being beyond all description even in words. On the other hand there are the sayings of the Prophet according to which wanting to imitate the Creator's work by imitating the form of living beings and particularly the form of man is irreverent and even blasphemous. This last injunction has not always and everywhere been strictly observed, since it concerns more the intention than the deed: in the Persian and Indian world especially, it was argued that an image which does not claim to imitate the real being but is no more than an allusion to it, is allowed. This is one of the reasons for the non-illusive style of Persian miniatures, the absence of shadows and perspective in them. However, no mosque has ever been decorated with anthropomorphic images.

If we consider things superficially, we may be tempted to liken the Islamic point of view to that of Puritanism which ignores symbolism and therefore rejects all sacred art as a lie. Symbolism is based on the analogy between the different degrees of Being: as Being is one *(al-wujūdu wāḥid),* everything that is or exists must in some way reflect its eternal source. Islam by no means ignores this law, which the Koran proclaims in a thousand metaphors: *wa in min shay'in illa yusabbiḥu biḥamdih* (there is nothing which does not exalt His praise; Koran, 17.44). It is not by disregard for the sacred character of creation that Islam proscribes human images; on the contrary, it is because man is the viceregent *(khalīfah)* of God on earth, as the Koran teaches. The Prophet explained that God created Adam "in His form" *('ʿalā ṣūratih),* "form," in this case, meaning qualitative likeness, for man is gifted with faculties which reflect the seven "personal" qualities of God, namely Life, Knowledge, Will, Power, Hearing, Seeing and Speech.

A comparison between the Islamic and the Christian attitude towards the image of man will aid us to outline things more exactly. In response to the byzantine iconoclasm, more or less influenced by the Islamic example, the seventh oecumenic Council justified the use of icons in liturgy with the following argument: God is indescribable in Himself; but since the divine Logos assumed human nature, he reintegrated it into its original form and penetrated it with divine beauty. In representing the human form of Christ, art reminds us of the mystery of incarnation. No doubt, there is a sharp distinction between this point of view and that of Islam, but nevertheless both refer to a common basis, namely the theomorphic character of man.

Here it is worth mentioning that one of the deepest explanations of the Christian attitude towards sacred art has been given by the famous Sufi Muḥyi-d-dīn Ibn `Arabī, *ash-shaikh al-akbar,* who writes in his *al futūḥāt al-makkiyyah:* "The byzantines developed the art of painting to its perfection, because for them the unique nature *(fardāniyyah)* of Sayyidnā `Isā as expressed in his image, is the foremost support of concentration on Divine Unity." As this witness proves, the symbolic role of an image is not in itself unintelligible to contemplative Muslims, although, in obedience to the Koranic law, they will always reject the use of sacred images, thus giving precedence to *tanzih* (incomparability) over *tashbih* (analogy). In a way, the first of the two "aspects"—that of divine incomparability or transcendence—even absorbs the theomorphic character of man. In fact, the seven universal qualities which constitute the divine "form" of Adam, namely life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, seeing and speech, escape all visual

representation; an image has neither life nor knowledge nor power nor any of these qualities; it reduces man to his corporeal limits. Although limited in man, the seven qualities are potential bearers of a divine Presence, according to the *hadith qudsi :"* . . . I shall be the ear by which he hears, the eye by which he sees," and so on. There is something in man which no natural means of expression may render; the Koran says: "We offered the trust *(amānah)* unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it" (Koran, 33.72). This trust is merely potential in ordinary man: it is actual in perfect man, in Messengers *(rusul),* Prophets *(anbiyā)* and Saints *(awliyā);* in them, it even overflows from the interior to the exterior, shining forth in their whole corporeal appearance. Fearing to offend this divine trust in man, Islamic art always shrinks from depicting the Messengers, Prophets and Saints.

Instead of "Islamic iconoclasm" we prefer to say "Islamic aniconism," for the absence of icons in Islam has not merely a negative but a positive role. In excluding all anthropomorphic images, at least within religious precincts, Islamic art aids man to be entirely himself; instead of projecting his soul outside of himself, he will rest in his ontological centre where he is at once the viceregent *(khalīfah)* and the slave *('abd)* of God. Islamic art as a whole aims at creating an ambiance which helps man to realize his primordial dignity; it therefore avoids everything that could be an "idol," even in quite a relative and provisional degree; nothing shall stand between man and the invisible Presence of God.

Thus Islamic art creates a void; in fact, it eliminates all the turmoil and passionate suggestions of the world and builds in their stead an order expressing equilibrium, serenity and peace. From this, one will immediately understand how central the position of architecture is in Islam. Although the Prophet said that God favoured his community by giving it the whole surface of the earth as a place of prayer, it is architecture which, in populated regions, has to re-establish the conditions of purity and calm elsewhere granted by nature. As for the beauty of virgin nature, which is like the imprint of the Creator's hand, it is realized by architecture on another level, nearer to human intelligence and therefore more limited, in a way, but none the less free from the arbitrary rule of individual passions.

In a mosque, the believer is never a mere visitor; he is so to say at home, though not in the ordinary sense of the word: when he has purified himself by ritual ablution, being thereby freed from accidental alterations, and then recites the revealed words of the Koran, he symbolically returns to the "station" of Adam, which is in the centre of the world. According to this, all Muslim architects endeavoured to create a space entirely resting in itself and showing everywhere, in each of its "stations," the plenitude of spatial qualities. They reached this aim by means as different as the horizontal hall with pillars, like the ancient mosque of Medina, or the concentric domes of Turkey. In none of these interiors do we feel drawn in any particular direction, either forwards or upwards; nor are we oppressed by their spatial limits. It has rightly been remarked that the architecture of a mosque excludes all tension between Heaven and Earth.

A Christian basilica is essentially a way leading from the outside world to the main altar. A Christian dome ascends to heaven or descends to the altar. The whole architecture of a church reminds the believer that the divine Presence emanates from the Eucharist on the altar as a light shining in the darkness. The mosque has no liturgical centre; its *mihrāb* merely indicates the direction of Mecca, while its whole order of space is made to suggest a Presence which encompasses the believer on all sides.

It is most revealing to see how the great Turkish architect Sinan, adopting the constructive scheme of Hagia Sophia, developed it according to Islamic vision until he reached the perfect order of the Selimiye-Mosque in Adrianople; the huge cupola of Hagia Sophia is supported by

two half cupolas and extended by several small apses. The whole interior space is elongated in the sense of the liturgical axis, its different parts melting into each other, in a kind of indefinite immensity. Sinan built the main cupola at Adrianople on an octagon supported by straight walls on the cardinal sides and by vaulted apses on the four diagonal sides, creating a kind of clearly cut jewel, the contours of which are neither fluctuating nor narrow.

When Muslim architects took over and enlarged some Christian basilicas, they often changed the interior plan so that what has been its length became its width; frequently—and even besides such transformations—the arcades in a mosque run across the main space; they do not "progress" in a certain direction like the arcades framing the nave of a cathedral, they rather stem the movement of the space without interrupting it, thus inviting one to rest.

Muslim architects spent much attention and love on the form of arcades. No wonder that the Arab name for arcades—rawq or *riwāq—is* almost synonymous with beautiful, graceful and pure. European art knows mainly two forms of the arch, the Roman arch, which is plain, rational and static, and the so called Gothic arch—indirectly derived from Islamic art—with its ascending movement. Islamic art developed a great variety of arch forms, of which two are most typical: the Persian arch in the shape of a ship's keel, and the Moorish arch in the shape of a horseshoe with a more or less accentuated point. Both arches combine the two qualities mentioned above, namely static calm and lightness. The Persian arch is generous and gracious at the same time; it ascends without effort like the calm flame of an oil lamp protected from the wind. As for the Moorish arch, its extreme width is balanced by the rectangular frame: a synthesis of stability and amplitude; there is in it a breathing without movement; it is the image of a space expanding inwardly by an overabundance of beatitude; in the words of the Koran : *"a lam nashraḥ laka ṣadrak ..."* ("Did we not widen your breast ?" Koran, 94.1).

A simple arcade, built according to right measure, has the virtue of transforming space from a purely quantitative reality into one which is qualitative. Qualitative space is no longer mere extension; it is experienced as a state of being *(wajd)*. Thus traditional architecture favours contemplation.

Between the architecture of a mosque and that of a private Muslim house, there is a difference in plan but not in style, for each Muslim dwelling is a place of prayer: the same rites are celebrated here as there. In general, Islamic life is not separated into a sacred and profane domain, just as the community is not divided into consecrated clergy and laymen: each Muslim with a sound mind and morality can act as *Imam*. This unity of life manifests itself by the homogeneousness of its frame: whether it be the interior of a mosque or that of a private house, its law is equilibrium, calm and purity. Its decoration must never contradict the idea of poverty. In fact, ornament in Islamic architecture, in its rhythm and regularity, helps to create a void by dissolving the raw body of wall and pillars and thus enhancing the effect of the great white surfaces so characteristic of Muslim interiors.

The floor of a traditional Muslim dwelling, like the floor of a mosque, is never trodden on with shoes, nor are the rooms filled with furniture.

Much of the unity of Islamic life is lost when the clothes worn in every day life are no longer adapted to the prescribed rites. Costume, indeed, is part of the frame which Islamic art created for Islam, and the art of dressing is not the least of Islamic arts; as the Koran commands explicitly: "O sons of Adam, take your ornament whenever you approach a mosque" (Koran 7, 31). The traditional masculine costume shows many variations, but it always expresses the role which Islam endows man with, that is to be the viceregent and the slave of God. Therefore, it is at the same time dignified and sober, we might even say: majestic and poor; it veils the animal nature of man, enhances his features, dignifies his gestures and makes easy the different postures of ritual prayer. Modern European costume, on the contrary, while it claims to free man from his

servitude *(`ubūdiyyah),* in fact denies his primordial dignity.

We have seen that the exclusion of images from Islamic art—more severe in Sunnite than in Shiite countries—has a positive meaning, even on the level of art, as it restores to man the dignity which elsewhere is so to speak usurped by his image. The immobility with which Islamic art is reproached is in a certain sense connected with the absence of images, for it is by making images of himself that man changes. He projects his soul into the ideal he shaped, thus influencing himself until he is driven to change the image he made of himself, which in its turn will awaken his reaction, and so on, in a chain without end, as we can observe in European art since the so-called Renaissance, that is, since the purely symbolical role of the image was forgotten. Sacred art is normally protected by its traditional rules from falling into that torrent of change. However, the use of anthropomorphic images is always fragile, for man is inclined to transfer his own psychic limitations to the image he shapes, in spite of all canonical prescriptions, and then sooner or later he rebels against it, not only against the image but also against what it stands for: those epidemic outbursts of blasphemy which marked certain epochs of European history are not conceivable without the existence and actual decay of anthropomorphic religious art. Islam cuts this whole problem at its root. In this respect as well as in others it manifests itself as the last of religions, one which takes heed of the weakness of actual man, and reveals itself as a return to primordial religion. The criticized "immobility" of Islamic art is simply the absence in it of all subjective motives; it is an art which is unconcerned with psychological problems and retains only those elements which are valuable at all times.

This is the reason for the extraordinary development of geometrical ornament in Islamic art. Attempts have been made to explain this development by the fact that the prohibition of images created a void to be filled by another kind of art. But this is not conclusive; the arabesque is no compensation for images, it is rather their opposite and the very negation of figurative art. by transforming a surface into a tissue of colours or into a vibration of light and shadows, the ornament hinders the mind from fixing itself on any particular form saying "I," as an image says "I" The centre of an arabesque is everywhere and nowhere, each "affirmation" is followed by its "negation" and vice versa.

There are two typical forms of the arabesque; one of them is geometrical interlacing made up of a multitude of geometrical stars, the rays of which join into an intricate and endless pattern. It is a most striking symbol of that contemplative state of mind which conceives "unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity" *(al-wahdatu fil-kathrati wa-l-kathratu fil-wahdah).*

The arabesque commonly so called is made up of vegetable motives, stylized to the point of losing all resemblance with nature and obeying only the laws of rhythm. It is a real graphic of rhythms, each line undulating in complementary phases, and each surface having its inverse counterpart. The arabesque is at the same time logical and rhythmic, mathematical and melodious, and this is most significant for the spirit of Islam in its equilibrium of love and intellectual sobriety.

In such an art, the individuality of the artist necessarily disappears, without his creative joy being abated; it is simply less passionate and more contemplative. Suppression of all creative joy is the privilege of modern industry alone. As for traditional art, be it even at the level of mere handicraft, its beauty proves the profound pleasure involved in it.

Moreover, the universal character of geometrical ornament—the fundamental elements of which are essentially the same, whether they appear in a bedouin rug or in a refined urban decoration—corresponds perfectly to the universal nature of Islam, uniting the nomads of the desert to the scholars of the city and this late epoch of ours to the times of Abraham.

by what we have said up to this point, we have implicitly answered the critics of Islamic art mentioned at the outset. We have still to say what the notion of art means in Islamic thought.

From this point of view, art can never be dissociated either from a craft *(san'ah),* as its material foundation, or from a science *(`ilm)* regularly transmitted. Art *(fann)* in its specific meaning partakes of both craft and science. The latter moreover has to be not only a rational instruction but also the expression of a wisdom *(ḥikmah)* which links things to their universal principles.

The Prophet said: "God prescribed that every thing should be accomplished to perfection"—we might also translate: "in beauty" *(inna-Llaha kataba-l-iḥsana `ala kulli shay)*. The perfection or the beauty of a thing lies in its praising God; in other words, it is perfect or beautiful in so far as it reflects a divine quality. Now we cannot realise perfection in anything unless we know how that thing can be a mirror of God.

Taking architecture as an example, we see that its material foundation is the mason's craft while the science involved in it is geometry. In traditional architecture, geometry is not limited to its more or less quantitative aspects, as in modern engineering, for instance; it has also a qualitative aspect, which manifests itself in the laws of proportion by which a building acquires its almost inimitable unity. The laws of proportion are traditionally based on the division of the circle by inscribed regular figures. Thus all measures of a building are ultimately derived from the circle, which is an evident symbol of the Unity of Being containing in itself all possibilities of existence. How many cupolas there are with polygonal bases and how many vaults composed of alveolar squinches which remind us of this symbolism!

Considering the internal hierarchy of art, built on craft, science and contemplative wisdom, it is easy to understand that a traditional art may be destroyed either from the top or from the bottom: Christian art has been corrupted by the loss of its spiritual principles; Islamic art gradually disappears because of the destruction of the traditional crafts.

We have mainly spoken about architecture, with regard to its central role in the Islamic world. Ibn Khaldūn, indeed, relates to it most of the minor arts, such as carpentry, joinery, sculpture in wood or stucco, mosaic in earthenware, decorative painting and even carpet-making, so characteristic of the Islamic world. Even calligraphy can be related to architecture in the form of decorative inscriptions; in itself however, Arabic calligraphy is not a minor art; since it is used for the writing of the Koran, it occupies the highest rank among all Islamic arts.

It would lead us too far to display the whole fan of Islamic arts; let it suffice to consider two extreme poles of visual art: architecture and calligraphy. The first of these is the art which is the most conditioned by material circumstances, whereas the second is the freest of all arts in this respect. It is none the less dominated by severe rules with regard to the distinctive forms of the letters, proportions, continuity of rhythm and choice of style. On the other hand, possible combinations of letters are nearly unlimited and styles vary from the rectilinear *kūfi* to the most fluid *naskhi*. The synthesis of utmost regularity and utmost liberty lends Arabic calligraphy its royal character. In no other visual art does the spirit of Islam breathe more openly.

The frequency of Koranic inscriptions on the walls of mosques and other buildings reminds us of the fact that the whole of Islamic life is interwoven with quotations from the Koran and spiritually supported by its recitation as well as by prayers, litanies and invocations drawn from it. If we are allowed to call the influence emanating from the Koran a spiritual vibration—and we find no better word for it, since that influence is at the same time of a spiritual and of an auditive nature—we may well say that all Islamic art must needs bear the imprint of that vibration. Thus visual Islamic art is but the visual reflection of the Koranic word; it cannot be otherwise. However, there is a paradox, for if we look for Koranic models of art, we cannot find them, either in the contents of the Koran or in its form. On the one hand, except in certain Persian miniatures, Islamic art does not reflect the stories and parables contained in the Koran, as Christian art for instance depicts the episodes of both Testaments, nor is there any cosmology in the Koran, which could be translated into architectural schemes, as Vedic cosmology finds its

expression in Hindu architecture. On the other hand, it is in vain to search in the Koran for something like a principle of composition which might be transposed into any art. The Koran is of a startling discontinuity; it shows no logical order nor any interior architecture; even its rhythm, powerful as it is, obeys no. constant rule, whereas Islamic art is all made of order, clarity, hierarchy, cristalline form. In fact the vital link between the Koranic word and visual Islamic art must be not sought for on the level of formal expression. The Koran is no work of art but something entirely different, notwithstanding the overwhelming beauty of many of its passages, nor does Islamic art derive from its literal meaning or its form, but from its *ḥaqīqah,* its non-formal essence.

At its beginning Islam had no need for art, no religion cares for art when it first enters the world. The need for a protective frame made up of visual and auditive forms comes later, just like the need for extensive commentaries of the revealed book, although every genuine expression of a religion is already included as a latent possibility in its original manifestation.

Islamic art is fundamentally derived from *tawhīd,* that is from an assent to or contemplation of Divine Unity. The essence of *at-tawhīd* is beyond words; it reveals itself in the Koran by sudden and discontinuous flashes. Striking the plane of visual imagination, these flashes congeal into cristalline forms, and it is these forms in their turn which constitute the essence of Islamic art.

Correspondence

REINCARNATION

Sir,

THE "vindication" of René Guénon by Marco Pallis in the Winter 1967 edition of *Studies in Comparative Religion,* in reply to the criticism of Messrs. Calmeyer and Osborn, was for me a great disappointment, inasmuch as the letter of Mr Pallis (who may not wish to be characterized as a "disciple" of Guénon, although he acknowledges his "indebtedness" to him) was hardly in sympathy with the spirit of Guénon's writings. I might even go so far as to say that Mr Pallis seemed to share not a little of the vague feminist sentimentalism—a substitute for clear logic—of Guénon's critics, which Guénon had so often denounced in his adversaries.

Take for example the following quotation from Mr Pallis's letter: "In mitigation, it can be said that his frontal attack on all the most cherished illusions of our modern Western civilization called for special qualities in the man, such as rarely-go with delicately adjusted expression; the vocation of an *Athanasius contra mundum* is often accompanied, humanely speaking, by a tendency to over-simplification in the field of applications, even when principles are clearly envisaged." In the first place, Guénon would be the last to admit that his adversaries need be appeased by any sort of "mitigation," for it is precisely his refusal to compromise with clearly recognized principles which constitutes Guénon's unparalleled integrity: the very characteristic which provided the (masculine and heroic) *raison d'être* of his writings, and which places them in a class by themselves, on a level incommensurately higher than those of other authors with similar pretensions. Guénon himself stated that, when one begins to "compromise" in such matters, it is difficult, if not impossible, to know when to stop compromising. In this connection, to speak "humanely"—in Mr Pallis's words—is to identify oneself with the "humanist" movement which refuses to concede the existence of any super-human or super-mundane principles or beings whatever,—with a thoroughly "sick" and "profane" civilization like our own as the inevitable consequence.

I know of no "over-simplification" in Guénon's writings, of whose ulterior developments he was not aware, or which he did not signalize as material for enlargement elsewhere. On the other hand, an often-overlooked aspect of Guénon's many-sided personality was his qualities as a mathematician, clearly evidenced in his (unfortunately) neglected work on the Principles of the Infinitesimal Calculus—qualities which almost none of his disciples seem to share. These very qualities—which Mr Pallis seems to regard as representing Guénon's "weakest side," his "lack of sense of beauty"—on the contrary enabled him to suffuse his entire work with the type of clarity, exactness and authority which is characteristic of mathematical thought in general, and which, on its highest levels, may even coincide with what Plato called "Absolute" Beauty—however incapable the sentimentalist viewpoint may be of appreciating the intellectual heroism and asceticism which characterize the austere beauty of mathematics in its highest forms. We might for similar reasons regard the work of Aristotle as "lacking a sense of beauty," whereas Plato, while extolling the virtues of the mathematician, seemed to have his reasons for banishing the poets from his Republic.

As Guénon states in his aforementioned book on the calculus, it is perfectly true that modern mathematics, like all modern disciplines, is permeated with "samsāric" identifications (to purify the modern viewpoint of such identifications is precisely Guénon's purpose in writing that work); nevertheless the presence of a "Pythagorean" element in all esoteric traditions is

sufficient testimony of its inevitability as ingredient of and prolegomena to all true Metaphysics. Indeed, if Metaphysics is the supreme science of the Absolute, of Universal Possibility, as Guénon understands the term, then it must contain all the positive possibilities of the lesser science of mathematics, including the aforementioned qualities of clarity, precision and authority, if only because, as Guénon insistently maintains, the lesser must be contained in the greater, and not vice-versa. Guénon's more strictly metaphysical works, like *Les Etats Multiples de l'Etre* or *Le Symbolisme de la Croix,*contain themes which are developed with admirable mathematical precision, simplicity, clarity and grandeur; Mr Pallis's own "sense of beauty" must be singularly truncated if he fails to recognize these qualities in Guénon's work.

Plato's denunciation of the poets while he himself achieves the status of a supreme poet is no more inconsistent than Guénon's "systematization," i.e. mathematization of Metaphysics while at the same time decrying modern "systems." When Mr Pallis affirms "It would seem, however, that Guénon, despite warnings offered to others, somewhat systematized his own views on the subject" he forgets that the pejorative sense arises from the basing of systems on mere conventional hypotheses rather than unified metaphysical principles—hence the proliferation of mutually contradictory systems even in modern mathematics.

Again, Mr Pallis states: "What neither Guénon nor his critics have brought out with sufficient clearness is that *samsāra,* transmigration, the existential round of birth and death as presented by Hinduism and Buddhism (where it constitutes a basic doctrine) is before all else *indefinite ;"* and then proceeds to identify the word "indefinite" with a kind of "vagueness" which easily lends itself to the usual sentimentalist and moralist interpretations of transmigration. However, it is significant that Guénon's aforementioned work on the calculus emphasizes precisely the fundamental distinction between the mathematical indefinite and the metaphysical Infinite, so that even the word "indefinite" can be defined with technical clarity, for there is nothing vague—in Mr Pallis's sense—in the concept of indefinite sequences and series in mathematical analysis. When Mr Pallis states that "it is contrary to its real meaning for us to try and define the particular form which "rebirth" will take for such and such a being," thus reducing transmigration to the problem of the individual, he fails to take account of Guénon's other distinction between the *individual* and the *person,* so that his criticism, in the last analysis, is beside the point.

As for Guénon's "experimentalist" critics, they are sufficiently refuted by the observation that two viewpoints are here possible (all rhetorical *petitii principii* regarding false pride and false modesty aside): (1) Whether we accept the modern "horizontal" evolutionist viewpoint, or Guénon's principle of non-repetition, no circumscribed event or "experiment" at any particular time and place could ever be repeated in precisely the same way at any other time or place. It is true that one can attempt to force the issue by abusive decrees of conformism on the social level, but even the physiological faculties of, say the Greeks during the Periclean Age, must have differed in some significant respects from our own. (2) "Experience" does not necessarily imply "participation" in the vertical sense; that is, the qualities of an experiment are conditioned by the awareness and aptitudes of the experimenter, however much he tries to be "objective." If every scientific description of an event merely approximates that event (giving rise to the artificial machine-approximations of organic nature), it is also true to say that every event approximates its description, in which case the form precedes and contains the matter, and not vice-versa. The modern Epimethean experimentalist viewpoint, which exalts hindsight at the expense of the Promethean wisdom of foresight, has opened ("liberated") Pandora's box, from which the final evil to emerge may yet be the "experiment" of atomic annihilation. In this connection, Guénon's work is essentially a hymn to Hope. This refutation of experimentalism is of course valid only from the standpoint of Metaphysics, a standpoint which Guénon consistently maintained. He

admitted that Magic, and consequently psychic research, is an experimental science, so that, from this angle, it is seen that his critics are "beating a dead horse."

The preceding discussion of Mr Pallis's letter is of course primarily an exercise in the clarification of terminology; the authenticity of Mr Pallis's rich contacts and wide experience in the Orient, his grasp of Oriental doctrines, and his qualities as an author remain unquestioned. It is another type of "orientation" afforded by the providential touchstone of Guénon's writings which prompts the assessment of Mr Pallis's appeal to experience on the basis of a distinction between exoteric observation and esoteric participation.

New York, 2.5.67
IRWIN ROBERT TUCKER.

Sir,

WITH reference to Guénon's literary style, I would like to draw attention to a most important point which the recent correspondence has omitted. This is, namely, that where the style of Guénon's works is not understood there can be little chance of their content being understood either. If his ideas had just been of a personal nature, then such terms as "intolerant" and "hectoring" would be only too mild to describe their mode of expression, but the whole point is that his ideas were not only not personal to himself, but that they were in the main direct expressions of a vast body of universal truths which is as old as knowledge itself. Consequently, it must be acknowledged that to state such things too strongly or too intolerantly is, strictly speaking, an impossibility.

That wisdom and unclouded conviction should look like empty dogmatism, while stultification and egoism are able to parade themselves as honesty and good sense, is certainly a dire reflection, but not a reflection on Guénon.

Coventry, 20.3.67
ROBERT BOLTON.

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EDITORIAL

by

F. CLIVE-ROSS.

WITH this issue we complete the first volume of our new series and it now becomes apparent that our decision to change our title to one more truly representative of the journal's content was a wise one. Over the past four issues there has been a steady rise in our circulation in most parts of the English-speaking world and numbers of readers have written to express their appreciation of our present policy. During 1968 a number of important authors, already well-known for their writings on religious subjects have promised us articles covering a great variety both of subject-matter and treatment.

Several people have substantially contributed to the advancement and improvement of the journal. In particular we would like to thank H.H. Prince Sadruddin Khan who has taken a personal interest in this journal and supported it both morally and materially, following the example set by his father the late Aga Khan and by the present Aga Khan in furthering the things of the spirit. Great thanks are due at the same time to the Spalding Foundation for their help and encouragement. We also wish to express our gratitude to Mr. Marco Pallis and to other friends.

As from the Winter issue 1968 to be published shortly, we are enlarging the journal to 64 pages, while retaining the present format. Increased costs unfortunately also necessitate an increase in the selling price, although we feel that this will be more than offset by the additional material we are able to offer our readers. After this issue *Studies in Comparative Religion* will sell for 7s. 6d. (post 6d.) or $1.25 (post paid). The annual subscription will be 33s. or $5 (post paid). We thank all readers for their support, which we hope will be continued; if all those who find the journal of value will recommend it to other potential subscribers, this too will be of great assistance in the task of building up.

F. CLIVE-ROSS.

The Impossible Convergence

by
Frithjof Schuon

ACCORDING to the unanimous conviction of the old Christendom and of all the other traditional branches of humanity, the cause of suffering in the world is the internal disharmony of man—sin, if so preferred—and not just a lack of science or organization. No progress or any tyranny will ever make an end of suffering; only the sanctification of all men could bring this about, were it in fact possible to realize that state of things and thus to transform the world into a community of contemplatives and into a new earthly paradise. This certainly does not mean that man should not, in conformity with his nature and with simple good sense, attempt to overcome the evils he encounters in the course of his life; for this he requires no injunction whether divine or human. But to seek to establish a certain well-being in a country, with God in view, is one thing, and to seek to institute perfect happiness on earth apart from God is another; in any case the latter aim is foredoomed to failure, precisely because the lasting elimination of our miseries is dependent upon our conformity to the Divine Equilibrium, or upon our establishment in the "Kingdom of Heaven which is within you." As long as men have not realized a sanctifying "inwardness," the abolition of earthly trials is not only impossible, it is not even desirable, because the sinner—"exteriorized" man—has need of suffering in order to expiate his faults and tear himself away from sin or in order to escape from the "outwardness" from which sin derives.[1] From the spiritual point of view, which alone takes account of the true cause of our calamities, evil, by definition, is not what causes us to suffer, it is that which—even when accompanied by a maximum of comfort or of ease, or of "justice" so called—frustrates a maximum of souls as regards their final end.

The whole problem reduces itself to the following nucleus of questions: what is the good of eliminating only the effects, and not the cause, of evil? What is the good of eliminating these effects if the cause remains and continues to produce similar effects indefinitely? What is the good of eliminating the effects of evil to the detriment of the elimination of the cause itself? What is the good of eliminating the effects but at the same time exchanging the cause for another far more pernicious one, to wit, hatred of the supernatural and a passion for the worldly?

In a word: if one combats the calamities of this world without regard for the total truth and the ultimate good, one will be creating incomparably greater calamities, starting off, in fact, with the denial of this truth and the elimination of this good. Those who think they can liberate man from an age-old "frustration" are in fact the ones who impose on him the most radical and irreparable of all frustrations.

The C*ivitas Dei* and worldly progression therefore cannot converge, contrary to what is imagined by those who strive to accommodate the religious message to profane illusions and agitations. "Whoso gathereth not with me, scattereth": this saying, like many others, seems to have become a dead letter, doubtless because it does not belong to "our own time"; nevertheless,

[1] It is from this idea that is derived the obligation for man, in the majority of archaic tribes, to be a warrior, and thus to be continually risking his life on the battlefield; the same point of view crops up in the warrior castes of all the great peoples. Without the heroic virtues, so it is believed, man becomes decadent and the whole of society degenerates. The only man for whom escape from this vicissitude is possible is the saint, which amounts to saying that if all men were contemplatives the hard law of heroism would not be necessary. Only the hero and the saint reach *Valhalla,* Elysium, or the heaven of the *Kamis*.

as a recent encyclical tells us: "The Church must examine the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel"; yet meanwhile it is the exact opposite that is being done.

* * *

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all else shall be added unto you": this sentence is the very key to the problem of our earthly condition, as is also that other one telling us that "the Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Or further, to recall another teaching from the Gospel: evil will only be overcome by "fasting and prayer," that is to say, by detachment from the world, which is "outward" and by attachment to Heaven, which is "inward."

To the question: "What is sin?" it may be replied straight away that this term refers to two levels or dimensions: the first of these requires that one should "obey the commandments," and the second, in accordance with the words of Christ to the rich young man, that one should "follow Me," that is to say, that one should establish oneself in the "inward dimension" and so realize contemplative perfection; the example of Mary takes precedence over that of Martha. Now, suffering in the world is due, not only to sin in the elementary sense of the word, but also, and more especially, to the sin of "outwardness," which moreover fatally gives rise to all the others. A perfect world would be, not merely one where men abstained from sins of action and omission, as did the rich young man, but a world above all composed of men who live "towards the Inward" and are firmly established in the knowledge—and consequently in the love—of that Unseen which transcends and includes all things. Three degrees must here be observed: the first is abstention from sin-as-act, such as murder, theft, lying and the non-performance of sacred duties; the second is abstention from sin-as-vice, such as pride, passion, avarice; the third is abstention from sin-as-a-state, that is to say, from that "outwardness" which is both a dispersion and a hardening and which gives rise to all vices and all transgressions. The absence of this sin-as-a-state is nothing other than "love of God" or "inwardness," whatever be the spiritual mode thereof. Only this "inwardness" would be capable of regenerating the world, and that is why it has been said that the world would have come to an end long ago but for the presence of the saints, whether visible or hidden from view.

It is sin-as-vice and, with all the more reason, sin-as-a-state that constitute intrinsic sin; these two degrees come together in pride, a symbolic notion which includes everything that imprisons the soul in outwardness and keeps it away from the Divine Life. As regards the first degree—that of transgression—there is here no intrinsic sin except in function of the intention and therefore of a real opposition to a revealed Law. It may happen that a forbidden act becomes permissible in certain circumstances, for one is always allowed to lie to a brigand or to kill in legitimate defence; but apart from such circumstances an illegal act is always connected with intrinsic sin; it is assimilable to sin-as-vice and by that very fact to sin-as-a-state, the latter being none other than "hardness of heart" or the state of "paganism," to use scriptural language.

The impossible convergence is, in point of fact, the alliance between the principle of good and organized sin; that is to say the idea that the powers of this world, which are necessarily sinful powers, should organize sin with the aim of abolishing the effects of sin. It would appear that the new pastoral message is attempting precisely to speak the language of the "world," which has now come to be treated as an honourable entity without there being the slightest discernible reason for this unexpected promotion. Now to wish to speak the language of the "world," or the language of "our time"—another definition which studiously avoids being one—amounts to making truth speak the language of error or virtue the language of vice. The whole problem of pastoral communication in search of "a language" reduces itself in practice to the

following feat: how to speak Latin so that people may think that it is Hottentot, or in other words, so that they do not notice that it is Latin? Nothing is more dubious than the expression "to speak the language of someone or other" or else "to speak the language of one's own time." With the relativistic adulteration that this really implies one may indeed win adherents, but no one will be "converted"; there will be no conferring of illumination, no calling to the saving inwardness.[2]

To understand religion is to accept it without attempting to impose any off-hand conditions; imposing conditions clearly is to misunderstand it and to render it subjectively ineffective: an absence of haggling is part of the integrity of faith. To impose conditions—whether at the level of individual or social "well-being" or at the level of the liturgy which one would like to make as flat and trivial as possible—is to be in fundamental ignorance of what religion is, what God is and what man is. It amounts straight away to treating religion as a neutral and inoperative background such as it could never be and to taking away from it in advance all its rights and its whole reason for existing. Profane humanitarianism, with which official religion is trying more and more to identify itself, is incompatible with the total truth, and consequently also with true charity, for the simple reason that the material well-being of earthly man is not the whole of well-being and does not in fact coincide with the whole interest of the immortal human person.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God ..."

To recall this truth over and over again is the first duty of all men of religion; if there is one truth of which it could be said that it is particularly apt for "our time," it is this one beyond all others.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

Meister Eckhart says, As a man gets to be like God and God gets dear enough for him to disregard himself and not seek what is his in time or in eternity, he is released from all his sins and purgatorial pains, yea though he have committed every sin on earth. And this life is attainable while yet he eats and drinks. Further he declares, To be the heavenly Father's Son we must be strangers to the world, remote from self, pure-hearted, inward minded.

[2] "But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same and say, even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you. Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city." (Luke, X,10-12). This passage, like the one that forbids the "casting of pearls before swine," clearly shows that everything has its limits.

The Image and its Meaning in Popular Hindu Ritual

by
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THE religious systems which forbid the use of physical objects as foci of ritual and worship are probably fewer in number than those which allow or even enjoin it. Even the Semitic religions which denounce "idolatry" have not prevented their adherents from attaching sanctity to certain physical symbols, images or locations, and from treating these virtually as cult objects. However the techniques of worship and modes of thinking which at least the purist or "protestant" members of these religions condemn and attempt to eradicate from their own folds constitute an unquestionable precondition of religious existence for the adherents of most other religious systems.

This does not mean that the use of images and sacred cult objects in religions which permit them is without theory or rationale; rather the contrary is true. Frequently the ideas implicit in the use of such objects are of a piece with the worshipper's world-view. Thus in seeking an answer to the question of how a particular people justify their use of images we may also discover much about their attitude to the divine world and the ways in which they expect to communicate with it through the medium of ritual.

In this article I wish to discuss the function and meaning of the tangible object in popular Hindu worship. I shall use the term "image" freely here in a broad sense to denote whatever can constitute the focus of a person's worship, whether this be an icon, an aniconic symbol, even a location (such as a shrine or part of a shrine) or a feature of nature which is felt to embody some holy being and to which ritual is directed. All of these things can, to Hindus, reflect the personality of some deity and hence be his "image." The focus of a cult should also be distinguished very strictly from the tools used in the ritual, which naturally come to be endowed with sanctity or regarded as having symbolic properties, but which have a purely instrumental role in the ritual. For instance, the flowers, holy water, rice and other items used in much popular Hindu worship are certainly "consecrated" but they contribute to the ritual rather than form its focus.

The use of images in Hinduism is not a new theme, and the only novelty in this article will be that I shall discuss the problem from the point of view of popular village Hinduism; I shall not mention the ritual used in the great temples as I have had but scant opportunity to make detailed observations of this, nor shall I attempt to take into account the classical literary expressions of Hinduism—in which of course theories about the use of images feature—since this would be beyond my scope as a social anthropologist as well as being beyond the range of experience of the largely unlettered population I studied. However I think that the ideas and practices of the village folk which I shall describe demonstrate the consistency of these various aspects of Hinduism and not the reverse.

Where I describe village Hinduism I use material which I collected during a year's stay in a North Indian hill village situated in Himachal Pradesh. I have no means of knowing whether what I have recorded is true of all Hindu villages but the existing literature suggests that it is not untypical of other areas of Hindu India.

Where I interpret Hindu ritual as I saw it I have naturally used terms which the unlettered

peasant[3] might not feel able to articulate explicitly himself. But I hope that my interpretations do not depart widely from the ideas implicit in the ritual which he uses and that I have not fallen into the trap of imposing my own ideas on the material at hand. (I have taken into account villagers' own statements on the subject wherever these were available).

First of all it is necessary to outline the general role of ritual in the religious life of the villagers and the basic philosophy which underlies the practice of the ritual.

Popular Hinduism is linked with the propitiation of a multiplicity of divine beings which are termed *devatas,* or gods, yet these beings do not constitute the highest source of divine power of which the villager is aware. Certainly Hindu villagers perceive a reality which is higher than the devatas. This God (Bhagwan or Paramatma) is immanent in all living things. He is the source of all being and nothing lives or moves without his willing it to do so. He is transcendent yet omnipresent—there is no place where He is not. But though He is regarded as omnipresent and omnipotent, God is not—like the *Brahman* of Vedantic doctrine—regarded as entirely impersonal. He is seen as essentially good, taking a loving and forgiving interest in the actions and welfare of His devotees. Devotion to God is shown by prayer and "remembrance" of Him and villagers state that ideally prayer to God should be a daily activity. But prayer and remembrance here denote the cultivation of a mental attitude and have no reference to ritual. No specific ritual is addressed to God as such. He has no shrines or temples nor any visible cult.

The reverse is true of the various gods or devatas. It could be said that God is regarded as "personal" but as without definable personality; "the gods" however are seen as having more or less distinct attributes and characteristics. God cannot be visualized and hence cannot be represented or portrayed; most devatas can very well be visualized and in popular iconography each known deity can be identified by his or her typical appearance and symbols. Though not, like ordinary mortals, limited in their existence to one point in space by confinement to a physical body, the gods are not in practice seen as indwelling in all things as is God Himself; hence it is possible for there to be places in which a particular god is more present than in others—there can be temples and shrines dedicated to the gods as well as images in their likeness, while God has neither temple nor image. Worship of the gods, unlike worship of God, takes the form of ritual and this ritual constitutes the greater part of the observable religious activity of the village.

The function of the gods in human life is also different. Whereas God sustains and directs the workings of the world and the men who live in it in a universal way, the gods enter into human life in a very immediate fashion, causing specific events to occur through their favour or anger. Hence, while the worship of God through remembrance and prayer is an activity meritorious for its own sake, the gods are chiefly worshipped with a view to gaining specific benefits for the worshipper, either by averting their anger or by cultivating their goodwill.

The fact that only one term exists in the English language to denote both God (Bhagwan) and the gods *(devatas)* makes it the more difficult to discuss the conceptual distinctions implicit in the villager's use of two separate words. Yet in spite of these distinctions both Bhagwan and the plurality of deities are regarded as divine in the sense that this term is normally understood in English. For both God and the gods exist on a plane of purity and holiness which is far above that of mortal men. They constitute different modes of divinity with which men can commune in different ways and for different purposes—with God through inward prayer and meditation, and with the gods through largely ritual means.

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[3] The above references to the fact that most of the peasants were unlettered must not be read in any derogatory sense; this fact had to be mentioned, however, as having a certain bearing on the mentality of the people in question and on their way of viewing things which differs from the habitual conceptualism of a typical Western mind today.

The sophisticated intellectual or the philosophically inclined Hindu might regard the devatas as the more manifest forms of one divine principle. Alain Daniélou, for instance, expounding the theory of Hindu polytheism, has described the different deities as various "aspects of divinity . . . the abstract prototypes of the forms of the manifest world . . . Any of these forms can be used indifferently as a support through which ritual or meditation can reach the Principle of which they are the images, the manifest aspects."[4] The villagers would not express his notions of divinity in. this kind of language, but it would not be contrary to his essential picture of the universe. Only where an intellectual such as Daniélou sees an abstract hierarchy of concepts, ranging from the least manifest downwards to the most manifest aspects of the divine, the villager (having a more personalized view of the world) sees a hierarchy of divine beings, ranging from the all-powerful Bhagwan via the major divinities down to the lesser and local spirits and gods.

Setting aside for the moment the question of the non-ritualized worship directed to the supreme Bhagwan, I now offer a description of the rituals addressed to the different deities. I cannot hope to describe here all the different religious activities which take place in the village, but even a superficial observation will reveal that there are two main kinds of ritual activity, namely (1) individual acts of worship directed to particular devatas which do not require the services of a priest and (2) the complex rites conducted in Sanskrit by a Brahman priest on behalf of a client. The most important rites in the latter category are the "sanskaras" or rites of passage which mark the different points in an individual's progress through the socially and religiously recognised stages of life.

I will deal with the former category of rites first of all. Hindu villagers worship their deities because they feel that the gods can help them in meeting the problems and crises of day-to-day living. Worship is performed not so much because it is felt to be spiritually beneficial to the worshipper or as an end in itself, although it is undoubtedly regarded as a morally worthy activity, but because the worshipper hopes to gain the favour or avert the disfavour of a particular deity thereby.

Deities are thought to express their anger or favour by withholding or conferring material blessings—such as prosperity or good health. As a consequence of this belief the villager will interpret specific cases of illness or misfortune as evidence of the anger of some deity and will take pains to discover which god is responsible for his distress. He will attempt to appease that deity as speedily as possible in order to remove his trouble, whatever its nature, in offering worship. But worship is not only performed as a reaction to trouble. A person may worship a chosen deity in order positively to gain its favour and cause a desired event to take place; thus people frequently make vows to worship a particular deity if the latter, through its favour, grants their desire. The boon requested may be the successful betrothal of a son or daughter, the birth of an heir, a good harvest, the return of money loaned, or any of a host of other hoped-for ends. One woman I knew even vowed to worship a particular deity if her children passed their annual school examinations. The gods are thus thought of as potential sources of both help and hindrance in the practical matters of living and are turned to for aid and relief in all the crises, great and trivial, of everyday life.

I now turn to the techniques used in the worship of deities. As I have shown, the practical ends which the worshipper hopes to achieve by worship may vary—he may desire the cure of an illness, relief from financial distress, etc.—but the general principles underlying worship are always the same, namely, to please the deity which he feels most likely to help him in the problem at hand. What kind of thing, then, is regarded as giving the deities pleasure or as

[4] Alain Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*. Routledge and Kogan Paul, 1964, p. 4

soothing their wrath? The mere supplication of the worshipper evidently does not suffice in itself, though a reverent attitude is of course required. The ritual of a physical sacrifice is deemed necessary as the correct mode of propitiation, and this offering is made in the following way.

The worshipper must first purify himself by bathing and ideally also donning a clean suit of clothes, although this is not always feasible for peasant folk who may not possess more than one or two outfits of clothing; nonetheless it is done where possible. To approach the deity a state of more than everyday purity is necessary since divine beings are conceived as essentially purer than mere humans. The worshipper then places the image of the deity before him and prepares it also for the ritual of offering. Although I have used the term "image" it must not be imagined that an actual statue is always used. A framed print depicting the deity concerned, of the type available in the bazaars of any small town, or a traditionally recognized symbol of the deity can equally be employed. The nature of the physical representation is not very important so long as it is felt in some way to embody the deity to which the worship is addressed. Ritual attention is then paid to the image—if possible it is bathed with clean water, red "tika" is applied and the auspicious red thread used in much Hindu customary ceremony is bound round it. Incense is also burned before it. All these attentions are considered pleasing to the deity. The culmination of the ritual sequence takes place in the actual presentation of the offering to the god. The latter normally consists of food of some kind; conventionally some kind of sweet pudding or cake is prepared but the nature of the offering will to some extent vary with the nature of the occasion and the identity of the deity, as there are some deities which are conceived as having special predilections for certain types of offering. However whatever is offered must be "pure," that is prepared by someone in a ritually pure state in a kitchen previously purified by a fresh application of cowdung plaster on the floor. (Blood offerings do not seem to be usual in this part of India although live animals are occasionally offered to certain specific deities. For example live chickens are considered acceptable to the strange fairy-like powers known as the "Agassia"; women often visit their shrine in order to obtain offspring and release live fowls there. Live goats are commonly offered at the chief shrine of the saint Baba Balak Nath (though not at his lesser village shrines). A morsel of the offering is presented to the image, pressed against the "mouth" of the icon, whilst the devotee makes his request to the god, either uttered aloud or repeated inwardly.

The peasant is not so naïve as to assume that the food offered is actually consumed by the god and in any case he only presents a token portion. It is the act of presentation which is important rather than the quantity offered and the acceptance of the token portion sanctifies the whole. The remainder is then distributed by the sacrificer amongst his friends and family as "prasad"—consecrated food. This food is held to convey the favour of the deity to whomsoever consumes it, so that the consumption of prasad (and here again only a token portion need be taken for the gesture to be effective) is an act of piety in itself. The distribution of prasad is not just a secular concomitant of a religious act (although for people who so seldom have the opportunity to savour sweets and delicacies in their rather monotonous daily diet eating prasad is enjoyable for its own sake also). It rather demonstrates the way in which sacrificial worship becomes a form of communion between deity and devotee; the sacrificer approaches the god with his offering and his request, and the god replies by sanctifying the offering and conveying blessings to all those who consume it. The devotee naturally expects that his request will also be granted and if it is not then it is usually assumed that the rites were not correctly performed; alternatively it may be that some other deity should have been approached as the one responsible for the trouble the worshipper is trying to remove or as more powerful or willing to assist him in attaining the good he desires.

I have described here only the bare essentials of the acts by which villagers seek to propitiate

their gods. Since no ritual specialist needs to be called in to conduct or supervise proceedings, individuals are very free to vary the details according to their own inclinations. Most ritual taking place in the village, apart from the Sanskrit rites I shall describe later, are but variations, elaborations or extensions of this simple ritual sequence. In my view this sequence illustrates most typically the role of the image in village Hinduism.

In fact an image or symbol is not invariably used when deities are worshipped. There may be none available to the worshipper; peasants do not usually own more than one carved image although they often own large numbers of brightly coloured prints depicting the deities most popular locally. Indeed the. interiors of the village houses I visited were often literally covered with such prints alongside posters of filmstars, family photographs, pictures cut from magazines, calendars and advertisements. If a person does not possess an image of the deity he wants to worship he will try to borrow one from a neighbour or relative, or if there is a local shrine dedicated to that deity he will conduct the offering at the shrine. Here again, even if the shrine (as is quite often the case) contains no representation of the god this is of no consequence for the ritual performed there. Whatever part of the shrine—often a particular stone—is held to be the special locus of the god is treated exactly as if it were an image and the ritual attentions I have described are directed to it. In the absence of any image, symbol, or shrine, the offering can still be made; the devotee will then simply choose any convenient spot, usually in his own home, which is likely to be free from impurity and will there make the offering accompanied only by his supplicatory request for the deity's favour. The use of a physical cult object is thus not indispensible to ritual; rites can and do take place without one. It does however lend coherence and direction to the ritual sequence of sacrifice and is a logical desideratum. I do not think that peasants would be able to express their attitude to the image in such explicit terms, but their marked preference for the use of an image when one is available and the efforts they make to obtain one for the purpose of worship do, I think, demonstrate their tacit recognition of its logical desirability.

Like the sophisticated images used in the great Hindu temples of India, the cruder images used in the village are fashioned according to a traditional iconography. Anyone familiar with the local pantheon can identify the images seen in local shrines and houses by their attributes. The goddess Durga is always depicted as mounted on her tiger steed, just as she is in her well-known temples, and the category of deified ascetics known as *Siddhs* are always shown as sitting in a meditative pose and can also be symbolically depicted merely by replicas of the itinerant ascetic's wooden sandals, which indeed replace or serve as images in some shrines dedicated to Siddhs. The most famous of the *Siddhs,* Baba Balak Nath, is easily recognized in popular iconography since he is invariably portrayed as a small boy. This is because the god Shiva is said to have conferred the gift of immortality upon him when he was but a lad, and his body never developed further physically after that time.

Even when no known image exists, the appearance of a deity always seems to be known to the villagers who worship it. The water deity known by the seemingly Muslim name *Khwajah,* for example (who to my knowledge has no image in any of the shrines in the locality with which I am familiar) is described by peasants as wearing blue (or sometimes white) clothes and as being mounted upon a blue horse. This ability to describe the attributes and appearance of a deity is not merely a sign of the villagers vivid fancy but illustrates their deep conviction that the gods do really manifest themselves to men in physical forms. The devatas are not remote beings whose nature men can only guess at, but are intimately concerned with human affairs and both can and do reveal themselves to men in characteristic guises. One way in which gods manifest themselves to men is in dreams. This is frequently the means by which a person becomes aware of the identity of the deity responsible when he is suffering from some persistent illness or misfortune.

In the dream the dreamer recognizes the deity by the typical form in which the latter appears to him and will later hasten to appease the god by making an offering as soon as possible. But gods also reveal themselves to men in their waking state. One local deity, Baba Sindhu, is said to manifest himself to people quite often as an old man with a long white beard or as an old shepherd. Again men have direct experience of the gods when the latter descend to possess people at certain annual festivals; under the influence of the drumming and singing of low caste musicians some men are able to fall into a kind of trance and will begin to jerk and dance in an uncanny fashion. In this ecstatic state the subject may actually see the deity who is possessing him approach and will sometimes announce the deity's coming in excited tones, describing the deity by its known attributes.

In short the deities are regarded as, if not at all times visible, then essentially seeable, hence portrayable and essentially accessible to human experience. They do not manifest themselves in randomly chosen forms but are seen as mixing in human affairs in regular guises by which they can also be depicted in images and prints. Though they are not confined to any one physical body or place they can have embodiments, unlike the abstract concept of Bhagwan who is above physical manifestation.

In this context it might be appropriate also to mention shrines and the role they play in village religion, as well as the images they house. The shrines found in the villages in the area I studied were typically small structures of varying form and design, from a simple slab of stone set underneath a tree to a small temple which could be entered by one or two people at a time. Worship of the type I have just described can take place at a shrine although it can equally well be conducted at home if the individual so wishes. When it is performed at a shrine the image in the shrine is treated in much the same way as the image of the small portable type normally used in home worship, that is, it will be bathed, incense burned etc., and the offering made to it. If there is no image in the shrine, as is quite commonly the case, these attentions are directed to whatever part of the shrine seems to constitute its focus or centre. Usually this will be some conventional symbol of the deity who inhabits the shrine, such as the "lingam" in the case of Shiva. Quite frequently shrines contain some apparently neutral object, usually a stone, which is thought to embody the deity in some way. I remember one shrine dedicated to the god Thakur, a form of Vishnu, which contained no image. Outside its entrance however lay a rather large boulder generally referred to as "Thakur" itself. A local tale relates how a certain farmer many years ago had used this stone to weight down the jute he was soaking in a nearby stream, unaware that what he was using was anything other than an ordinary rock. But he began to be troubled by dreams in which the angry deity appeared to him demanding that he replace the stone. Thoroughly frightened he did this, and also built the shrine which stands to this day, and only then did he cease to be visited by these dreams. Many other local shrines, such as ones dedicated to Shiva and Khwajah, contain stones rather than images. Often there is nothing whatsoever which would appear unusual or noteworthy about these stones, yet they are evidently held to represent the deities whose temples house them and are treated in every way as are the representational images. At some shrines there is no object at all which could conceivably be treated as an image or symbol of the deity concerned. This was true of a newly constructed shrine dedicated to a local deity known as Baba Sindhu which was situated under a pipai tree in the village where I stayed. This consisted simply of a neatly made stone platform near the foot of the tree. When worship takes place at such shrines the ritual attentions which would normally be directed to an image are omitted, but the offering—the climax of the ritual sequence—is not omitted, the portion destined for the deity simply being deposited at the shrine.

To communicate with the gods through simple ritual actions at crises in his everyday life the

villager needs no priestly specialist as intermediary. He can perform all the necessary actions himself and (within conventional limits) in very much the fashion he chooses. But there is another category of village ritual in which, for all but the untouchable castes at least, the services of a Brahman priest ear indispensable. The chief rites in this category are the rites of passage or *sanskaras* which mark the critical points in the social and physical life process of the individual. Five main sanskaras are observed by hill villagers nowadays. These are the naming ceremony performed shortly after birth (the exact interval depends on the caste of the parents of the child), the first hair-cutting ceremony (for boys only), the investiture with the sacred thread (for boys of the "twice-born" castes only, and usually merged with the wedding ceremonies nowadays), the marriage ceremony, and the funeral rites performed at and shortly, after death (again the interval depends on the caste of the deceased person). Besides the sanskaras there are some other ceremonies which require the offices of a Brahman priest, the chief being the public scripture recitals known as *kathas* which are fairly frequently held as acts of piety by the villagers; here the priest is needed not only to actually recite and expound the ancient scriptural tales but also to conduct the preliminary worship to the gods which the sponsor of the katha must perform before it is to begin. There are other occasional rites and ceremonies which also fall into this category but it is unnecessary to describe these in detail as the pattern of ritual I shall now describe is common to them all.

On all these occasions the ceremonial includes the recitation of "mantras" from the Hindu scriptures which are in Sanskrit. These are known only to the Brahman priest who also knows the correct ritual gestures and acts which should accompany them. The individual rites of worship I have already described can be performed at any time and virtually any place at the discretion of the worshipper and do not as a rule form part of any wider ritual complex. The religious rites performed at weddings, funerals, kathas and the like are somewhat different. They are not generally conducted without regard to time; the naming ceremony must be performed a certain number of days after the birth of the infant, and the first hair-cutting ceremony only during certain years or months in the child's life. The crucial rites of the wedding ceremony can take place only at the exact hour decided upon by the priests as auspicious for the couple concerned. Moreover the religious ritual on such occasions generally forms only one element in a whole sequence of activities which may well—as in the case of a wedding—last several days. Apart from the ritual performed by the priest there may also be ceremonies of a non-religious nature, such as the presentation of gifts to kinsmen and retainers at marriages, or there may be religious "folk" rituals for which the priest's offices are unnecessary, such as the ritual visit to all the chief shrines in the groom's village after the bride's first arrival at her conjugal home. There are often numerous other secular activities such as the feasting of caste brethren at funerals and weddings which are felt to be as indispensable to the occasion as the scriptural rites I shall describe here. But in spite of these important differences I believe that as far as the ritual use of images is concerned a common idiom can be detected in both the private worship of individuals and the priestly worship at sanskaras and other public occasions.

It is neither necessary nor possible to describe the details of each ceremony here; I shall only attempt to outline the "style" and pattern of ritual common to all rites in the category I am concerned with here, illustrating especially the role of the image. In all these rites there are at least two chief actors, i.e. the priest and the member or members of the household on whose behalf or at whose behest the rites are being carried out (the bride and groom in the case of the marriage ceremony, the chief mourner at a funeral, the male head of the household at a katha). The usual pattern of events is as follows, and anyone who has observed Vedic ritual in any part of India will be familiar with it. The priest first prepares the site at which the ritual is to take place; this site—generally a square of floor-space in the house or courtyard of the family

concerned—has first been purified by a fresh application of cowdung by the womenfolk. Even if (as is usually the case) this site has no previous sanctity it is now regarded as "pure" and sacred by all; shoes are removed in its vicinity and no impure substance is allowed near it. Shortly before the rites are due to begin the priest, who has also purified himself by bathing, approaches this sacred area and on it arranges the various items and instruments needed for the ceremony—the rice, flowers, water and other substances which will be used as offerings, the sacred "kusha" grass which is tied round the fingers of the sacrificer etc. The chief preparation however which the priest must make is the construction of a sacred diagram on the ground. This consists of what looks like an intricate pattern executed in white flour. Its different elements actually represent the deities or sacred objects (such as the nine planets and the four elements) which will be invoked and to which offerings will be made in the ensuing ceremony. The deities are not shown in a strictly representational form. Usually each deity or group of deities is indicated by an appropriate symbol. Thus Ganesh is represented by the auspicious swastika, the goddess Durga by the "trisul" (trident) which she wields, and the four Vedas by a square divided into four equal sections.

At the commencement of the ceremony the principal participant, also having bathed and donned fresh clothes, seats himself before the sacred diagram with the priest sitting to one side of him. As the priest recites the appropriate mantras calling on the different deities his client performs the ritual gestures, which chiefly consist of the salutation of and presentation of offerings to the deities mentioned in the mantras which the priest is reciting. The sacrificer offers water, flowers, rice, red "tika" and other items at the appropriate moments to the figures or symbols on the diagram which represent the gods. This he does under the direction of the priest, for the Sanskrit mantras are incomprehensible to the unlettered villager and he depends on the priest who (although in all probability no Sanskrit scholar himself) does know the meaning of the sacred mantras in his repertory to tell him what he must do at each stage of the rite. When the correct offering has been made to each element in the diagram, any other necessary ritual actions performed, and all the mantras completed, the sacrificer and the crowd of witnesses who usually gather at such occasions rise and disperse. The priest replaces all the instruments used (such as the metal spoon with which offerings of water are sprinkled, and the texts containing the mantras he has recited) in the special bag in which they are kept. At some point either the priest or the sacrificer will take the items offered and throw them into a nearby stream or pool, the purpose of this being to prevent them from coming into contact with any kind of impurity.

I cannot here discuss the complex cultural and historical processes (which in any case remain largely unknown) which have produced these two main "styles" of ritual behaviour in the village—the private ritual performed for the gods by individuals and the Sanskrit rites conducted by the priest. However it is my opinion that the general ideas concerning images and their uses which are implied in both these forms of worship are similar enough to justify their being treated together. The ultimate purposes of a Sanskrit ceremony are of course far more complex than those which underlie a simple act of individual worship. The "purpose" of the funeral ceremonies could be said to include the ensuring of peace to the dead man's soul, the protection of the living, the public demonstration of filial ties, and so on—whilst an individual rite of worship will generally have a single ultimate purpose which is very clearly defined in the mind of the worshipper, i.e., to obtain a particular boon from the deity approached. But the immediate and manifest end of either type of ceremony is the propitiation of the divine powers through sacrificial offerings. In the case of private rites it is nearly always food which is offered before (or "to") an image or symbol; in the case of the Sanskrit rites "pure" offerings of flowers, rice or fruit are more commonly made and the different elements in the priest's diagram on the ground form the focus of the ritual. But the function of the tangible cult object—whether an

image, a symbol, part of a shrine or a figure drawn in flour on the ground—is essentially similar. The cult object acts as the intermediary through which men's sacrificial worship is directed to the gods. It acts as the point at which the holy world of the devatas and the world of ordinary human beings, with their everyday needs and aspirations, intersect. It mediates between the devotee and the deity he seeks to please by providing a focus for his cultic attentions and providing a physical locus of sanctity at which (or towards which) he can perform the physical act of sacrifice with its super-physical significance.

The role of the image is thus purely instrumental, and as Alain Daniélou has pointed out it "has no value once it has fulfilled its purpose."[5] As soon as they cease to act as points of communication between the divine and the human—that is, when they are no longer required for ritual purposes—images tend to lose their religious significance and become mere objects, admired and valued objects perhaps, but objects nonetheless. In the case of the Sanskrit ritual the sacred diagram is not even preserved once the ritual is finished. Although the offerings and the instruments used in the ritual are, even after the ceremony, treated so as to preserve their purity, the image itself becomes an object of indifference; the rites completed, the priest scrapes up the remaining traces of flour and the area of ground which was so carefully purified and on which the diagram was so precisely drawn becomes once more a mere patch of floor space. People pass to and fro over it no longer making sure to remove their shoes in its neighbourhood, and its religious significance is lost.

Similarly the image of a deity or a shrine which is no longer regularly used, though treated with a certain respect, loses its essential sanctity. For instance, there were in the village I studied several small disused shrines of neglected and decrepit appearance which had long since lost their effective sanctity and were no longer treated with special reverence. The shrines in active use also often appeared somewhat decayed and in need of repair but they were distinguished by the reverent air maintained by villagers in their vicinity and the fact that no-one would ever approach them wearing shoes or indeed bringing any other article made of leather (which is always regarded as an impure substance). One shrine had been dismantled recently and rebuilt on more grandiose lines at the expense of a Brahman family, who had also provided new images to furnish the handsome new edifice. The various discarded images from the old shrine were removed and set up against the wall of a nearby house. The chief image (depicting the deified ancestor of the Brahman families of the village to whom the shrine was dedicated) was kept in the house of the family who had rebuilt the shrine. But being no longer the object of any cult it was not treated as having any special sanctity and was produced readily and without ceremony when I asked if I might remove it to the courtyard to make a drawing of it. It was treated as a valuable and interesting object, but its sanctity had evidently not survived its active use. One might say that it was treated in much the same manner as the image of a Hindu deity might be treated by a trained curator in an occidental museum.

The tangible cult object is thus sacred by virtue of being used as a focus for worship, and the acknowledgement of its sanctity is shown in the preparations which the worshipper makes before using it; so long as it fulfils the role of sacred intermediary it must be approached for ritual purposes only by those who have undergone some kind of preliminary purification, and in no case by a person who for any reason is in a state of more than usual impurity (such as members of the "untouchable" castes in the case of a shrine or image used by "caste" Hindus, or a menstruating woman). In the case of some Sanskrit rites the purificatory process may be the subject of some ceremony itself, such as when the bride and groom are purified before the wedding rites begin. Both are given a ritual bath by the women of their respective households

[5] *op. cit.,* p. 364

and their bodies are rubbed with turmeric. They cannot approach the wedding booth where the priests have laid out the sacred diagrams and where the crucial rites uniting them will take place until this purification has been completed.

It is distinctive of the popular forms of Hinduism that the image has virtually no religious use beyond the ritual of the kinds which I have described here. For instance, the image is not normally used by the peasant as a focus for meditation; its function is not primarily to "remind" the devotee of some aspect of the divine, although it may do this as well. The primary function of the image, as I hope I have shown, is in ritual. It is the ritual which converts it from a profane to a sacred object and as such it is regarded in a fairly literal fashion. That is, villagers do not identify the god permanently with its image but for the purpose of the ritual there is a sense in which the image *is* the deity it depicts. It does not merely make the devotee think of the deity which he addresses but actually represents that deity by "receiving" the offering made to it.

Summary

The image or the locus of sanctity acts as the intermediary between the worshipper and the divine being which is external to himself. The *devata* which the image represents is regarded as a distinct being, a personality separate from the devotee and with whom communication is necessary, just as it is necessary between human beings who enter into relationships with each other. The image functions as the focus for ritual activity to which the sacrifice can be presented in a physical act. It is never, I repeat, mistaken for the divine being itself; people will speak of a picture of Durga as if it embodied Durga herself or of Shiva's lingam as if it were indeed Shiva, but they are not in fact so naive as to equate the symbol with what is symbolized.

God (Bhagwan) is not conceived as having His being external to man or indeed to any part of creation. Immanent in everything, He is within men as in other things. There can thus be no need for any intermediary ritual to communicate with God, and consequently any image would be superfluous as well as impossible to fashion, for who can depict the unviewable? God can be reached by unuttered prayer—indeed He knows what is in men's minds before they make such silent supplication. *Devatas* may also be spontaneously addressed in this way but this kind of prayer will normally accompany and not replace the ritual proceedings I have described. The chief idea behind the ritual worship of the gods is not merely to address them and beseech them, but actively to please and propitiate them in order to gain their practical help. To this end the ritual of sacrifice is necessary.

The image and its use on the part of Hindu peasants represents an awareness of a phase of the divine which is external to man, whilst the non-ritualized devotions to God represent awareness of the immanent and transcendent phase of the divine. There is thus the maximum of consistency between the ways in which the different modes of worship correspond to the different modes of regarding the divine principle.

A Thomist Approach to the Vedanta

by
Bernard Kelly

Editor's note: *The distinguished Thomist metaphysician Bernard Kelly (1907-1958) was a collaborator of Eric Gill and Walter Shewring and for many years a correspondent of Ananda Coomaraswamy. Bernard Kelly was unique in that he was not only well versed in scholasticism, but also knew and loved Vedanta and Sufism. By kind permission of Blackfriars Publications and Mrs. Brenda Kelly, we reprint below the text of a lecture given by Bernard Kelly to the Aquinas Society of Cambridge on 26th October 1955 and subsequently published in BLACKFRIARS in January 1956.*

WHEN I was asked to read a paper to this Society on some aspect of the Eastern religions I was glad to accept, not because I have the kind of scholarship I think would be necessary to speak about so vast a field, but because I have been engaged in what may be called the border-problems, the problems connected with the approach of a Thomist to the truths expressed in, e.g. the Hindu or the Moslem traditions, for some considerable time, and am quite sure that it would be a benefit to myself to discuss these problems in such company as this Society affords.

The plan of this paper has therefore two ends in view: to ventilate the problems connected with our approach to Eastern religions, and to attempt that approach in the case of some essential aspect of an Eastern tradition so that the discussion of the approach problem should not be left floating in the air. That appears to be the requirement of the task and I beg you to be patient with me, for it is nothing if not difficult.

The choice of Hinduism and, in particular, of the approach in the Vedanta to God as the Self, was made because it seems to me that this represents a key difficulty without tackling which one gets nowhere. It has the advantage of being so well known that little or no time need be spent in searching out and imparting information. We can set to work straight away in trying to understand what is known to every-body. From my own point of view I must broach this problem if I am to defend at all the position I am just about to outline in the approach of a Christian to other traditions.

I take it that the serious interest of, e.g. Hinduism is its truth. Its truth rather than its difference. Here a preliminary attitude of *crede ut intelligas* is I think necessary, and if this seems to be begging the question I can only insist that unless at least you do not disbelieve you can never hope to make the transition even momentarily from a Western to an Indian point of view. The differences involved are much deeper than differences of language but they are not the primary concern of the serious interest I assume.

As a practical observation I would say that an approach of Christians to Eastern religions which involved our being satisfied with a classification of each according to its specific difference would condemn us from the outset to an external and superficial point of view, a point of view which might even—in fact must to some extent—reflect back on our own world-view and theological attitude. To the extent that it would then be in the light of what we might take to be the *difference* of the Christian revelation that we should tend to view revealed truth as such, as well as the revelations, if we allowed them that term, on which other traditions are founded. From this point of view it is not the primordial revelation to mankind, in which in their origins other traditions may be deemed to share, which is the vitalizing source of light to us, but uniquely the historical canalizing of this revelation towards the fulfilment of all revelation in Christ. The differences of other traditions are from this point of view their straying from this source of light and life.

But the truth of a given tradition is the measure of its not straying from Christ.

If it is the truth of Hinduism that one is looking for, one can set no limit at the outset to what one is going to find. It will require from us an interior rather than an external approach and will set in a very different light the question of differences.

For any here who are not Christians I should perhaps explain that the reference of the truth of other traditions to the truth of Christ does not mean that I propose to judge those other traditions by a limited truth external to them, but that I refer them to the illimitable radiance of Truth itself.

For a Christian it seems to me that a certain theological emphasis is required by this approach on the supernatural truth implicit in the primordial revelation to mankind of which we have a record guaranteed to us in the first chapters of Genesis—an emphasis wholly consonant, as far as I am aware, with patristic and liturgical tradition. The consequences of this may be very far-reaching. As I see it the present availability to us of the light of other traditions does and must revive the interest of Christian thinkers in a vast field of truth to which they may have become accustomed to give a less than central importance.

When I say the truth of other traditions requires of us an interior rather than an external approach I mean that neither that truth nor the mind understanding it may be separated from the truth of Christ, and until we have got it and see it in that perspective we may be only chasing a will-of-the-wisp. To seek the truth of another tradition as something extrinsic is to run after strange gods and to make divisions in Truth itself.

As something intrinsic to Truth itself, the truth of Hinduism for example is the making explicit of depths available to us in principle in the Truth of Christ but relatively inaccessible in the circumstances of our place and time without the stimulus and discipline of finding them in strange forms. I do not doubt for a moment that the availability of the scriptures of other peoples made so indiscriminately easy by modern publication, is for our education—not in encyclopaedic knowledge, but in Truth.

What is called in question by such an approach is not the uniqueness of Christ but may well be our understanding of that uniqueness. One has not gone far on this path before the words "only," "alone," "unique" and the rest, as so often used nowadays defensively by Christian writers in the context of Eastern religions, evoke in the mind a somewhat hollow response. Indeed there is a question which haunts the mind in seeking to understand the truth of Hinduism: "What do you mean by another?" We shall return to it.

It is a commonplace that the Indian tradition is metaphysical. This is true not only of the dialectical exposition of Vedanta which you get in the commentaries upon commentaries on Shankara's commentary on the Brahma Sutras, but it is true too of the way in which a Hindu student learns grammar or dancing. Those who have seen Ram Gopal on the London stage explaining as he performs them the beautiful gesture-figures of Indian dance will have an inkling of that unfolding of truth by dancing which takes place when the student understands his art by a participation in the analogy of the cosmic dance of God. It is said that it takes twelve years to learn Sanskrit under an Indian teacher, but by the end of that time the student will not only compose grammatically but will also have been introduced into the understanding of the metaphysical tradition. Indian metaphysics is not thought of, as ours tends nowadays to be, as a special department of abstract thought; rather abstract thought, so far as it is true, together with the art of weaving, the unfolding of flowers and the spiritual attainments of the *yogi* are special applications or realizations of metaphysical truth.

I make these remarks in view of what I believe to be a current assumption that although Indian metaphysics are false they may yet vehicle, or be the oblique expression of, a genuine mysticism. Of a tradition to which direct metaphysical insight is an occasional and fortuitous

thing I could understand such an assumption being made, but of Hinduism in which the direct metaphysical insight is central and essential, vivifying everything else, I confess I find it quite unintelligible. Such an assumption may seem to convey something to us because of the extraordinarily restricted sense we give to the word "metaphysics," meaning by it an ontology drawn by abstraction from the world of our daily experience and safeguarded rather than interiorly lit by the light of faith. From an Indian point of view such a metaphysics suffers from a poverty of means, implied in an over-valuation of the merely abstract or conceptual reaches of the mind, and it suffers too from not drawing its light directly from revelation. From an Indian point of view it would, I think, be evident that the first chapter of Genesis is more metaphysical though it is obviously less dialectical than the metaphysics of Aristotle.

If it is possible for us to adjust ourselves to this point of view, and I think it is possible if we free the metaphysical principles of St. Thomas from the limitations imposed by the textbook, we may attempt to explore a position which is a commonplace in the Vedantic writings but, I think, always rather shocking to us: the approach to God as the Self. Our reaction is at first, I think, either to regard the position as out-and-out pantheism and so to have nothing to do with it, or else to think that it may contain a valuable truth provided it does not mean exactly what it says. Then commences the task of adaptation of possible meanings which may take us upon a long and interesting philosophical journey but one in which we have no sure guidance and certainly no authority. On the contrary however there is no aphorism in the Vedic tradition which enjoys greater authority than "That art Thou." It represents not a philosophical opinion—not indeed a human opinion at all—but the realization in a given subject, which by that very realization is the transcendent subject, of the purity and fullness of primordial truth.

It is closer, very much closer, to this of St. Paul, "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me" (in which statement an Indian would at once recognize the utterance of *a jivanmukta—one* liberated already in this life) than to any position attainable to Western pantheism, solipsism, idealism or the individual opinions of philosophers. But it is one thing to say this, another to realize that it is so. The context of grace and of the supernatural virtues in St. Paul assures us of the authenticity of his statement even apart from the other argument of its truth: that it forms part of the inspired word of God. We recognize in it that mysterious transference of subjectivity in Christ which is a principal element of the theandric life.

And that, perhaps, is precisely what we miss in the Vedic affirmation. We miss the mediation of Christ in which we could recognize at once the possibility of its truth. We lack context to validate it, and to assure ourselves of the kind of affirmation it is.

This difficulty is pressed even harder in another Vedic affirmation: Brahmasmi—"I am Brahman." We could only translate it "I am the Godhead." As with the affirmation of our Lord, "Before Abraham was made I am," none but Christ could make it—and yet, you know, these affirmations are current in Indian writings and in the lives of Hindu saints as what everyone is born as a human being in order to verify.

It would be quite impossible in a paper like this to build up a sufficient background from Indian sources to show at all adequately the context of these affirmations. For one thing I lack both the knowledge and the art to do it. Rather I would refer you to anything you can get of the works of Ananda Coomaraswamy, particularly the beautiful essay on Hinduism in his *Hinduism and Buddhism:* that, together with René Guénon's *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta,* of which Coomaraswamy wrote that it is the best exposition of Vedanta yet written in any European language. What can, and I think must, be attempted is to construct from positions traditionally known to us certain lines—rather of metaphysical meditation than of argument — which brings us within sight of the truth as it is affirmed in the Vedanta.

For us it would appear at first that subjective transcendence is a contradiction in terms. The

relation of subject, whether of substance to accidental determination, of prime matter to the forms of material things or of the thinking subject to the intellection which takes place in it, is a relation of potency to act. Transcendence, the ascent beyond nature to a higher degree of being and of knowing, is possible in virtue of what already is—"in act"—at that higher degree. Transcendence, i.e., is by way of act, and so far as we are subjects it is effectively in virtue of the objective actuality of God.

It involves in us the elevation of the subjective principle to a higher order of receptivity both of being and, in consequence, of knowing and of loving—what is wholly equivalent to a rebirth—but transcendence by way of potentiality, of passivity, alone is inconceivable.

Much of what is presented in the Upanishads in what may be called the argument towards sameness does strongly suggest to the Western reader the recession into the indeterminacy of the material and potential principle.

In the instruction to Svetaketu we find:

> "Just as by one piece of clay everything made of clay may be known . . . the reality is just clay. Just as by one copper ornament everything made of copper may be known . . . the reality is just copper . . . so, my dear, is that teaching."

But we have to note that the teacher here is correcting the vanity of Svetaketu, his complacency in various achievements. He goes on:

> "In the beginning this world was just Being, one only, without a second."

In order to realize that primordial Being as the Self it is necessary to turn away from accidental determination and from every particular intellection of the mind—to what? Maritain appears to be on the right lines when he suggests that the Hindu approach to God is by way of recession into the substantial *esse* of the soul. For that would satisfy the turning away from particular actualizations to a central abiding "act." In the nature of the case I do not think this suggestion goes or can go far enough. It is Thomists with the boldness and padadox of Eckhart who could set these lines in a dimension in which they really arrive where Indian metaphysics are situated. Nevertheless we may note a possibility of transcendence in the very immediacy of God's presence imparting being—esse---to the soul.

Although the images in the passage I have quoted suggest to us a recession into the material principle, there is in the Indian doctrine no transcending of the individual ego by way of passivity: rather by way of act. Not however, act in the sense of action: and not (and this goes a good deal deeper) by way of *act* understood by the direct analogy of action. None better than the Hindu understands the passivity which is at the heart of action as such. It is by way of *esse in actu primo* that the supreme Principle in the Upanishad I have quoted is to be approached. That supreme reality transcends distinction.

Pure and self-subsistent *Being—esse* in the illimitable and absolute sense in which it is applied by St. Thomas to the Divine Essence—transcends distinction, as we know, in that each divine perfection, known to us analogously by the distinct perfections of creatures is, in God, nothing else than the Divine Essence. But with regard to the transcendence of distinction there is this consideration too: difference between things is relative to their being components, if you like, of the same world. Without a common ground in which they participate things cannot be said to differ. All things are intrinsically related to God, but God is not related to his creation. If God then is said to be distinct from the creature this distinction is of another order than any distinction of creatures among themselves. To content oneself with expressions which are admittedly little more than babbling, God's transcendence is infinitely more than any difference and because it is infinitely more it is also in some sense infinitely less.

The creature is distinct from God, yes. But God is not another.

These two propositions contradict each other because there is a shift of the sense of "being"

between the one and the other. We may note that St. Thomas is often at pains to insist that the Divine Being is determinate, definite, even individual—in order to underline that It is not vague or indefinite in the ordinary sense of those terms, and that It is not a logical abstraction. But in principle this way of speaking is concessive to a point of view (not a voluntary point of view but our own natural mental disposition) which is situated in the midst of the distinction and variety of creatures and with difficulty transcends that situation by means of analogies drawn therefrom.

And if it is true, so far as we may presume to speak so of the Divine Essence, that God is qualified by no otherness—for the Divine *Esse is* unqualified pure actuality—then it is also true that there is something in the creature not so far as it is particular and limited but so far as it is—which corresponds to, reflects if we may use the word—not just the limitation of actuality which establishes it in the rank and variety of creation but that unqualified actuality of God himself. According to Genesis it is in Man that this correspondence is primarily to be found, so far as man is created in the Divine Image. The primordial light of other traditions confirms this even sometimes in language remarkably akin. In Hinduism one encounters in Shankara, for instance, in Ramakrishna and more or less passim the insistence on the inestimable privilege of being born a human being, for it is from the human position —in all the vastness of Hindu cosmology—that liberation from the chain of causation *(mukti)* is to be attained.

So far as we are not God, our approach to God is to a principle outside ourselves. In him, not in ourselves, is the perfection, the Truth, the Good we seek, for God is absolute plenitude of being in whom all perfection resides.

Ultimately we are not God so far as we are not. *Non potest esse quod ens dividatur ab ente inquantum est ens.*[6]

If, when we speak of the creature we mean what is not God, then precisely to that extent the heart, the self of the creature is a nothingness. The realization of this nothingness—not merely the theoretical assent to it—is fully equivalent to a death.

It is said of Shri Ramana Maharshi—a saint of the Hindu "way of knowledge," *a jnani,—that* the question which possessed his childhood was this, "Who am I?" At length, as a very young man he left his home and, taking nothing with him, lay on a tomb determined not to get up until he had verified the answer to his question. He never came back.

Mystical death—to discuss this as experience is to discuss it under the aspect in which it is not death. It has been said that into the depths of God none but the very dead can enter. And in this context mystical death is incommeasurably more decisive than the death of the body. When this death is accomplished there is nothing left but God—nothing that is not God.

We know that this death and this entrance into the depths of God are available to us in Christ "who through his own blood entered the Holies." His blood being the torrent of the Divine Essence.

In this Indian way of knowledge which most troubles us by its directness which goes beyond the personal relation to God we miss the subjective transference from the individual human subject "in itself" to human subjectivity in Christ made possible by the economy of grace. It is true that we find frequent reference to grace *(prasada)* where the personal God is in question, e.g. in the devotion to Rama or Krishna, and in the Gita itself, but it is not here that the full resource of Indian metaphysics is brought to bear in what I should call a central way.

That central approach baffles us by transcending any point of view possible to the individual as such.

So long as the creature is understood as what is not God, the immediacy of creator to creature, of the first cause to its effects, is under-stood as presence, as of one to another; the

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[6] *St.* Thomas *in Boethium de Trinitate,* IV, art. 1

theandric life as a receiving and a giving as between two. But if we attend to the reality into which that giving and that receiving introduces us, what is present to us here is, in that reality, neither, to speak properly, present nor absent; but an unqualified and unconditioned plenitude of being: what is given to us here is, in him, what can be imparted to no other and what no other can receive. It is an eternal Self-abiding which for us indeed is transcendent Gift, because it is the transcendent Self.

Pilgrimage to Mecca

by
Abu Bakr Siraj ad-Din

OUR first taste of the Pilgrimage had been at the very end of September 1948, when we saw the *Kiswah,* the brocaded black hangings of the Kaaba, being carried in a festive procession through the streets of Cairo. Ever since the Middle Ages, this rich silk and cotton cloth has been specially woven in Egypt. The expert weavers do no other work, for as soon as they have finished one *Kiswah* they start on the next, a new one being sent as offering to the Holy House every year. A few days after this procession we set off by boat from Suez down the Red Sea. But I did not realize until we reached Jedda that we had had the honour of travelling with the *Kiswah* itself which was on board with us.

The Pilgrimage is the fifth of the "five pillars of Islam," and it is the only one of these basic elements of the law which is not obligatory. In the words of the Qoran, "the Pilgrimage to the House is God's due from men, from him who can make thereunto his way." At the same time there is also a lesser pilgrimage to be performed. The Qoran also says: "Fulfil for God the Pilgrimage and the Visit." These are two distinct rites, and pilgrims have to decide which of them to perform first, the Pilgrimage *(al-Hajj)* or the Visit (*al-`Umrah)*. Unlike the Pilgrimage the Visit can be made at any time of the year, and although it is not one of the "five pillars," no visitor to Mecca, pilgrim or non-pilgrim, would miss the opportunity of performing it. This rite is a special visit to the Kaaba and it differs from those made to other holy places in that the Kaaba must be gone round not once only but seven times, and the visitant must be in a state of *ihram* (this word might be translated "consecration" or "dedicated abstinence") that is, wearing special clothes and fulfilling certain other conditions such as not using scent, not cutting the hair or nails, and not killing any wild animals or insects except such as might be dangerous. The conditions of *ihram* are the same for the Visit as for the Pilgrimage.

We decided to make the Visit first, so when the time came to consecrate ourselves, as our boat drew level with a little oasis midway between Medina and Mecca, about thirty hours after leaving Suez, we made the greater ablution, put on pilgrim's dress, prayed a special prayer and formulated the intention of entering the state of *ihram* in order to perform the Visit. The clothes are supposed to be light in colour, and in fact most pilgrims wear white. For the women no particular style of dress is required, but the whole body must be covered, except for the face and hands which must be left uncovered. For the men the conditions are much more specific: they must be bare-headed, and also bare-heeled which means wearing a special kind of sandal; and they may wear only two garments, neither of which may have a single stitch of sewing in it. One of these is girded round the waist and must be broad enough to hang below the knees. It may be kept up with a knotted cord. The other, about a yard in breadth and at least three yards long, is draped over the left shoulder so that one end hangs down in front almost to the ground. The other end is passed round the back, under the right arm leaving that arm and shoulder bare, and then thrown over the left shoulder again to hang down the back, thus balancing the other end. Some pilgrims buy a particularly long cloth for this garment so that later it can also serve as their shroud. In any case, one is exhorted to keep death continually in mind. The whole atmosphere on board boat was suddenly changed. It is true that there is no garb on earth more noble than true Arab dress, provided it be crowned with nothing less than a turban worthy of the name. But most of our fellow passengers had been wearing nothing more distinguished than what is called "the foreign *jalabiyyah*" which might be described as a long European nightshirt, and the change

from that to the simple and ennobling dress of the *ihram* was a startling and moving transformation.

The boat anchored outside Jedda the next morning. We were travelling in a group of pilgrims who were all connected in some way with the University of Cairo or with that of Alexandria—lecturers, students and servants. The *Kiswah,* together with its body guard, naturally had to be taken on shore first, which meant, owing to other delays also, that we did not leave Jedda until after sunset. Some two hours later, the cars drew to a standstill, and we were instructed to get out and perform the ablution, as we were about to enter the Sacred Precinct, *al-Haram,* which comprises not only the city of Mecca but also the country for a few miles all round it.

On reaching the sacred city itself we were taken straight to an old school where we were to lodge. They gave us three or four empty rooms and we each took a small floor-space and spread out our bedding. Then we set about praying what prayers were due. It must have been about midnight when our *mutawwif* [7] (one who arranges for the lodgings and tents of the pilgrims and who tells them, if they require it, what to do and say) came to take us to the Kaaba. As we went through the narrow streets we met one or two groups of pilgrims coming back—Indians, Javanese, Chinese—who chanted in greeting to us the pilgrim's invocation *labbaik Allahumma labbaik,"* here I am at Thy service, O Lord God, here at Thy service."

We entered the Great Mosque by the Gate of Peace. Only the outskirts are roofed over, leaving a large open courtyard in the middle;[8] from the gates there are stone-paved terraces, one below the other, until you reach the pebble-strewn courtyard, which is intersected by narrow paved paths like the radii of a circle all leading in a gentle slope down to the centre, where there is a large circular precinct paved with marble; in the middle of this is the Kaaba itself. Because of the uninterrupted stream of pilgrims, I had the illusion, and I had it afresh each time I entered the Mosque, that the marble precinct itself was actually revolving round the Kaaba.

We went straight down to the Black Stone, which is built into one of the corners of the Kaaba. It is the *sunnah*[9] to begin each of the seven circuits by kissing the Stone three times, but even so late at night, in the small hours, there were so many people that I could do no more than put my hand on it and then to my lips. After the seventh circuit we stood and prayed in front of the door of the Kaaba which is a little to the right of the Black Stone. Then we withdrew to the edge of the central precinct where, enshrined like the tomb of a saint, there is a small rock which has in it the imprint of feet. This is *Maqam Ibrahim,* the Station of Abraham.[10] It was originally beside the Kaaba but was moved a little distance away—at the order of the Caliph Umar, so I was told. It is said that while building the Kaaba Abraham[11] was standing on this rock and Ishmael handed him a stone the weight of which caused his feet to sink into the rock. I prayed in front of the Maqam and asked for many blessings. Then I went to the Well of Zamzam which is just beside it and I was given a large vessel of the holy water. When I had drunk I poured what was left over my head so that it ran down over my clothes and body.

Zamzam was a Divine gift to Hagar and Ishmael after Abraham had left them at Mecca. The sacred spring is said to have gushed forth miraculously when Ishmael thrust his foot into the desert sand while his mother was searching for water nearby between Safa and Marwa. by the

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[7] The word means literally "circumambulation-guide."
[8] Since this was written many changes have been made, and the Mosque is considerably less open than it was.
[9] Recommended but not obligatory practice of the Prophet.
[10] Qoran, II, 125.
[11] In Islam it is a lack of spiritual courtesy *(adab)* to speak of a Prophet by his bare name. The original version reads "our liege-lord Abraham (our liege-lord Ishmael, etc.)—Peace be on him!" But we have reluctantly decided to conform in this respect to European custom, so as to avoid unnecessary strangeness.

time that I had drunk from it I was beginning to be more and more conscious of something which every pilgrim to Mecca is bound to feel in some degree or other. Everyone of course is told of the Pilgrimage from his earliest years and he sees members of his family or of neighbouring families set off for Mecca and hears them recount their experiences when they return. But this voluntary rite, which the vast majority of Moslems are never able to perform, remains none the less a secret dimension in Islam, hidden from all those who have not actually explored it for themselves; and this dimension is the link between the present moment and the past. It is by no means only in virtue of the Pilgrimage that Islam is named "the religion of Abraham" and "the primordial religion"; but the Pilgrimage is an eloquent demonstration of what these names imply, for it is not only a journey in space to the centre towards which one has always turned one's face in prayer, but also a journey in time far back beyond the missions of Muhammad, Jesus and Moses. Consciousness of this regress in time was heightened for most of us by the feeling of a return to childhood; all except those few who have made a special study of the rites suddenly find themselves snatched from a relative mastery of their religion and placed once again in state of utter dependence on others, quite helpless in themselves and having to be told what to do and say at almost every turn. "This is not the Islam that I know" is a thought that must occur to many. But that is only incidental, whereas the return to the far past must be felt by everyone, even, and perhaps above all, by those who are familiar with the rites. Strangely archaic is the Pilgrim's invocation itself, *labbaik,* which is used at no other time and which on occasion even replaces that so characteristic feature of Islam, the greeting of Peace; and one is keenly aware that Mecca is the city of Abraham. Moreover, unlike the other pillars of the religion, the Pilgrimage rites were not newly instituted at the outset of Islam; the Qoran confirms them but they were instituted by Abraham; and for him too they were a return to the past. The return to him is thus only the starting point of the Pilgrimage, a point from which, as we shall see, it sets out into a still remoter past.

We left the mosque by the Gate of Safa in order to visit Safa[12] itself which is a rocky mound about two minutes' walk away. From Safa we went to Marwa, a similar rocky eminence about a quarter of a mile distant, and then back again to Safa going between the two seven times, mostly walking but always breaking into a run between two points where the land was lowest. As we went back again to Safa we met, coming back to Marwa, those who had been going to Marwa when we were going to Safa, and at each course we would pass almost the same pilgrims moving in the opposite direction. It was like a strange and marvellous dream; many of the white-robed figures that we met face to face might have stepped out of the pages of the Old Testament. One might have expected them to say: *La ilaha illa 'Llah, Ibrahim Rasulu 'Llah* (There is no god but God, Abraham is the Messenger of God). It was especially remarkable to see the Arabs themselves, as they are to be seen at no other time, with nothing to hide their hair which most of them wear long. No doubt many if not most of these were from remote Arabian villages into which the modern world had not penetrated. There were patriarchal old men with flowing white hair and beards, and men of middle age, and also no lack of young men, some of them scarcely more than boys. Among the Arabs one takes majesty of bearing for granted, but I was none the less struck and deeply touched by the wonderful dignity and grave solemnity of the young; and as they drew nearer one realized that they stood not only for the beauty of youth but also for the beauty of a proud and noble race and the beauty of an uncontaminated theocratic civilization. This threefold beauty shone from their faces to such a degree that I felt that I was seeing the full flower of youth for the first time in my life; and at that most holy season and place, and in that unearthly hour, they inevitably made one think of the immortal youths,

[12] Qoran, II, 158.

wildan mukhalladûn, that the Qoran mentions as the cup-bearers of Paradise.

At last we completed our seventh course, which ended at Marwa. Then those of us who were performing the Visit had some hairs cut from our heads, as an alternative to having our heads shaved, and the rite was completed. Those who were already on the Pilgrimage kept their state of *ihram* and did not have their hair cut until the first day of the Feast. Then after the Feast Days were over they put on their pilgrim's dress again, went outside the sacred precinct, formulated the intention of making the Visit, came back to Mecca and performed this rite also.

We stayed in Mecca for the next five days. Every morning at day-break we were woken by the call to the dawn prayer, which we prayed in the Great Mosque. One of the most beautiful things in the world, and one of the great glories of Islam, is the call to the prayer. But the beauty of this, as of so much else, is ruined by the use of microphones which that very year they had installed at Mecca for the first time. However, most fortunately, they were not always able to make them work; and without them, as I heard it once or twice, the call was indescribably moving. The chief muezzin calls from one minaret and he is answered by six other muezzins calling simultaneously from six other minarets. The Arabs of the Hijaz have in general rather high-pitched piercing voices; a good Arab voice when raised is so thrilling and penetrating that it scarcely seems human. I shall never forget how they chanted, at the end of the call to this particular prayer the words *as-salatu khairun min an-naum,* "Prayer is better than sleep." My wife remarked: "Those are the voices of jinn, not of men!"

I usually went to the Mosque about an hour before the noon prayer, but the most pleasant time to be there was between the mid-afternoon and sunset prayers. Then there was no need to sit at the edge of the Mosque under cover of the roof, as after mid-afternoon the Western side of the open courtyard was mostly in the shade. I used to take my prayer mat and spread it out on the pebble stones as far away from the people as I could. In front of me, full in the light of the sun, was the Kaaba, robed in the thick black *Kiswah,* into which is woven a pattern of the supreme Name *Allah* and the *Shahadah, La ilaha illâ `Llah* (there is no god but God) repeated like countless affirmations, black upon black, while upon its coronal band are embroidered, in gold and silver and green, verses from the Qoran. So powerful a manifestation is it of the Divine Majesty and Immutability and Reality that all else beside it seems unsubstantial. About it, in its concentrated immobility, the endless ever-changing stream of pilgrims was flowing, and above them the sacred pigeons were flying, and above these the swallows were darting to and fro, and far above these a few kites were wheeling slowly in the calm air. On the top of the Eastern hill I could see the little white mosque that is named after Bilal,[13] which caught the light of the sun until it set. Sometimes—it happened once, I remember, during one of the prayers, as we rose from the obeisance while the seven *muballighün*[14] were chanting their response to the imam—all the pigeons would suddenly fly up into the air as with one impulse so that there was felt the presence of myriads of wings, and they would wheel round and round the Kaaba, all coming to rest again as suddenly as they had taken flight.

On the morning of the fifth day after our arrival, two days before the Feast, those of us who had made the Visit went into ihram again, this time for the Pilgrimage. The first rite to be done, the *tawaf al-qudūm* (the circumambulation of arrival) is like the opening of the Visit, that is, seven circuits round the Kaaba. This is followed by seven courses between Safa and Marwah. Strictly speaking, if you make the Visit on arrival in Mecca as we did, you are excused these initial rites. Those of our companions who had chosen to make the Pilgrimage first had

[13] An Ethiopian slave who became one of the Prophet's closest Companions and who was the first muezzin of Islam.

[14] They who respond in a loud voice to those words of the imam (prayer leader) which indicate a change of posture in the prayer, so that people at the back can hear. In other mosques there is usually only one muballigh

performed them while we were making the Visit. The Mosque was already much less crowded as many of the pilgrims had already left Mecca, and more were leaving every hour. The new *Kiswah* was spread out on the ground, waiting to replace the old one.

We waited all day for the cars to come and take us to Mina where we were to spend the night. After sunset one car came and took as many as it would hold. I decided to wait till it came again and I went with one of our companions to pray the night prayer in the Mosque. For the first time I was able to pray in the front, so that my head almost touched the Kaaba at each prostration. I was a little to the left of the Black Stone. After the prayer we made seven more circuits which is a rite that may be performed at any time, and which is, according to the Imam Malik, (whose rite I follow) the proper way of greeting the Great Mosque instead of the two prayer cycles with which one greets other mosques. However it was still impossible to kiss the Black Stone without a struggle, which I could not bring myself to make, and I left the Mosque with a feeling of regret that I had never been able—and probably never would be able—to put my lips where the lips of the Prophet had been. But later that night, while we were sitting in our lodging still in wait for the car, we heard that the Mosque was practically empty, so we went, I and one or two others, and greeted it once more, and this time at each of the seven circuits, without any difficulty, I was able to kiss the Black Stone three times.

At last the car came and took us to Mina, a small barren valley mostly surrounded by rocky hills. It is within the Sacred Precinct, about six miles to the East of Mecca, I think, between it and Mount Arafat which is outside the Precinct. The whole valley was full of tents; we had six pitched close together in a little encampment, but there was no need of a tent except as shelter from the sun, and that night I lay out in the open. The air of the wilderness was wonderfully refreshing after the heat of Mecca (though, as we discovered later, Mina was much the hotter of the two by day). I woke up the next morning to see a beautiful yellow light breaking over the eastern hills; the camels were already setting off for Arafat and they passed quite close to where I lay in a seemingly endless chain. I would gladly have given up my place in the car for a seat on one of them.

We spent that day in a large tent on Arafat; in the late afternoon when the great heat had cooled a little, we walked to one of the higher parts of the Mount, which is called *Jabal ar-Rahmah,* the Mount of Mercy. This is the zenith of the Pilgrimage, for if Mecca is the City of Abraham, Arafat is sacred to Adam, and the pilgrims go to the Mount of Mercy to be alone with God and to renew, each one for himself, the forgiveness and mercy which God gave to Adam after the Fall. Thus, unlike other places outside the Sacred Precinct, Arafat may be said in a sense to transcend the Precinct, being above it rather than below it, in that it is holy with the holiness of primordial nature which cannot admit of any circumscription.

It is a condition of the Pilgrimage to spend part of the day and part of the night on Arafat: the noon and mid-afternoon prayers are prayed there at noon in a shortened form, one immediately after the other. The pilgrims wait on the Mount for about twenty minutes after sunset but they do not pray the sunset prayer until they reach a place called Muzdalifah which is just within the Sacred Precinct, between Arafat and Mina, on the lower slopes of the hill called *al-Mash`ar al-Haram,*[15] ("The Holy Monument"). Here they pray the sunset and night prayers together, and then each one must gather forty-nine small pebbles with which to stone Satan at Mina on the three following days. At Muzdalifah there is a mosque with a large open courtyard, marking the place where the Prophet used to spend the night. No tents are pitched; the first-comers from Arafat fill the mosque; the others (ourselves amongst them) simply settle down for the night in the open as near to the mosque as they can. It was strangely moving to look about

[15] Qoran 11 198.

and see on all sides, by the light of the moon and one or two lamps here and there, thousands of white-robed figures, some praying, others sitting motionless on the ground, and others searching wearily in the sand for their pebbles. Next to us were a group of Sufis from Morocco; they were singing softly, in two voices, a most beautiful hymn to the Glory of God and their song seemed to express the union of that holy time with that holy place.

After the dawn prayer we set off for our tents at Mina. There are three rocks in the valley which represent Satan. On the first day of the Feast, before noon, everyone has to throw seven pebbles at a certain one of them, and on the second and third days, between noon and sunset, seven pebbles at each of them. The increasing difficulty and hardship of performing this rite (the rocks are small and the pilgrims this year were about 700,000 in number) is no doubt in proportion to the increasing power of Satan over mankind. I confess that at one moment I almost turned back in despair.

After throwing our pebbles on the first day we had rams sacrificed and had some hairs cut from our heads as after the Sacred Visit; then we were free to change our clothes, cover our heads, and go to the Kaaba, as is ordained in the Qoran.[16] Some of the pilgrims did so, coming back again to Mina the same night; but most of us did not leave Mina until we had thrown the last of our pebbles, that is, until the afternoon of the third day, and then we moved our quarters back to Mecca and brought our Pilgrimage to an end with the seven final circuits. The new *Kiswah* in all its splendour was now hanging on the Kaaba.

On the morning of the day we were to leave Mecca we all made the seven circuits of farewell to the Kaaba and duly left the Mosque by the Gate of Farewell. But as it happened this was not to be my last visit. I now come to something of a digression about a rather personal incident which only after some hesitation I have decided to put down in writing. May all who read it be indulgent!

Not having enough money to buy rich presents, and at the same time not wishing to return from the Pilgrimage quite empty-handed, I had taken one or two small stones from the Mount of Mercy. Then after the Pilgrimage it had occurred to me to enrich each of these by the addition of a pebble from the courtyard of the Holy Mosque. The idea had come to me when I was sitting on my prayer-mat in the courtyard, surrounded by pebbles, so I had then and there picked out a few of these and taken them back to our lodging. But just before leaving Mecca, as we were gathering together our belongings, I suddenly remembered that although it is perfectly licit to take a stone from Arafat, that is, from outside the Sacred Precinct, it is sacrilege to remove any natural object from within the Precinct itself. At first I did not know what to do; clearly no one could take pleasure in a gift which was the fruit of a violation of the sanctuary; on the other hand, how could I replace the pebbles seeing that after the rite of farewell one was not supposed to turn back? Then it occurred to me that since our lodging was well within the Sacred Precinct, the pebbles could be left there, so I put them down in a corner of the room where I had slept. But before leaving, when I took a last look round to see if I had left anything behind, my eyes fell on the pebbles and it was as if they had spoken to me, saying: "We are stones, yet even stones are beings, and we were once glorious of our kind, in our hope that on the Day of Judgment we should be found lying among the pebbles of the Holy Mosque. But now, through you, this glory has been taken from us. Be merciful to us, even as you yourself hope for Mercy!" I took them in my hand once more, and notwithstanding my already made farewell—which I pray may not be effaced from the Book of Record —I went back to the Mosque. We were expecting to leave at any moment; there was no time to repeat the farewell. I laid the pebbles on the ground, putting them nearer to the Kaaba than they had been before with the words *Bismi*

[16] Qoran XXII, 29.

`Llahi 'r-Rahmani 'r-Rahim (in the name of the All-Merciful God) and after making a gesture of reverence with my hand I turned away.

I will not describe our two-day journey by car to Medina. It was inevitably treated as something to be got through as quickly as possible. But before cars came to raise clouds of dust and disturb the silences of the desert between the two sacred Cities the eleven-day camel journey must have been a wonderful experience, with rest during the heat of noon at some little oasis and travel during the cool of the early morning and the evening and part of the night. Night especially must have been wonderful in that strange country of sand and thorn trees and chains of low rocky hills, lit by the waning moon of *Dhu'l-Hijjah* (the Pilgrimage Month)—a country whose very barrenness seems an inseparable part of its sanctity.

I had wept several times during the Pilgrimage, and I wept once again when, going over the top of a rise in the land, we suddenly saw, lying in front of us, the City of Muhammad, a little city of palms and domes, amongst which all eyes came to rest on the green dome of the Mosque of the Prophet.

It was Friday morning; we went straight to our lodging, made ready for the prayer, and then went to the Mosque. But I did not have much joy of this visit as I was in some pain with a poisoned foot which had gradually got worse on the journey. After the prayer I went back to our room, and lay there for the next three days—almost the whole of our stay in Medina, as we left the following Tuesday. I saw neither Mount Uhud, with the graves of the first martyrs, [17] nor the many other holy places visited by my fellow pilgrims such as the first mosque of Islam with its two prayer-niches, one oriented towards Jerusalem and the other towards Mecca, and the tomb of Fātimah, the Prophet's daughter, to whom he promised that only the Virgin Mary would rank higher than her amongst the women of Paradise. I deeply regretted being unable to visit this shrine. But at least I was in a pleasant, quiet room not far from the Great Sanctuary, and I was alone as much as I could wish.

On the night before we left, my foot was a little better and I went down to the Mosque, about three hours after the night prayer, when most of the Pilgrims had retired. The Sanctuary is not only the tomb of the Prophet but his whole house (which is enclosed like a large sepulchre) and also the space between it and the pulpit of the Mosque, *ar-Raudat ash-Sharifah* (the Noble Garden), so called because the Prophet said of it: "The space between my house and my pulpit is a garden of the gardens of Paradise." I sat here for about two hours. If I may be forgiven for trying to describe the indescribable and always remembering that the Spirit may manifest one aspect to one person and another to another, I would say that in the City of Abraham the *Barakah* (Blessing, Spiritual Influence) had seemed like wine. At times one had almost the impression that one's body was dissolving, as though a process the opposite of creation were taking place. Here on the other hand, beside this most holy tomb, the stress seemed to be on sobriety, the serene, transcendent sobriety of a profound and luminous peace.

Before leaving the Mosque I went back to the South door of the Sanctuary which, if it were opened, would lead straight into the apartment of `A'ishah[18] where the Prophet is entombed. I invoked Blessings and Peace upon him, and prayed for many things that are near to our hearts, as I had done at the Kaaba and at the Station of Abraham and at the foot of the Mount of Mercy. So overcome was I at being in his presence that I forgot to greet my great namesake and the great 'Umar who lie beside him; but I greeted them both the next day, when I went to bid farewell

[17] In Islam the word *shāhid* generally translated by "martyr," is used above all of those killed in Holy War.At the outset of Islam, when the Prophet was still in Mecca, prayers were made facing towards Jerusalem. It was only after the first mosque was established, soon after the Prophets' migration to Medina, that he was ordered to change the orientation

[18] The Prophet's favourite wife who, by consent of the other wives, tended him in the brief illness of which he died.

just before we left for Jedda.

Abu Bakr Sirāj ad-Din, November 1948[19]

[19] Although written nearly twenty years ago, this is now published for the first time (Ed.).

A Zen Master

by
Irmgard Schlögel

THE late Oda Sessō Rōshi was born in a little village on the Japan Sea coast. Oda was his family name, Sessō (snow window) his teaching name. Rōshi (old teacher) means, in the Rinzai School of Zen, somebody who has both satisfied his teacher that his insight, including that into the koans, is correct and who from his teacher has received permission to teach koans. The spiritual head of a community of monks is the Rōshi. Lay people have always been accepted as students.

Sessō Rōshi became a temple novice at the age of twelve. His own account of it is characteristic, for hidden in the simplicity, frankness, and humour is a deep point that anyone wishing to undergo religious training might well consider.

His mother used to go to the Shingon Temple in the neighbourhood, and on busy occasions also help in kitchen and gardens. As is the custom, she took the child with her. The little boy was fascinated by it all, especially the Sutra chantings, and he much wanted to become one of the temple novices whom he saw so often, sitting erect and quiet, chanting mysterious sayings. So when he approached the acceptable age, and his mother being agreeable, he asked the head of that temple to receive him as a novice. But the priest laughed outright, and told him, "You are far too lively a child, and with your mother living next door and coming here frequently, why, you would do nothing but be running to and fro, and that would not be at all good for you. But if you are really serious, and very much want to, and if it is not just the robes and the mysterious chanting and ceremonies that attract you here, there is a Zen temple far in the mountains, and you can go there. I shall introduce you myself." And he went there. And it is also typical that after he himself had become a teacher, he went back to that Shingon priest to thank him.

Sessō Rōshi was a man of few words, and relied on teaching by personal example. He never taught or talked abstract theories, but he embodied and lived them. And he was a master in making a point by means of homely, deceptively simple similes. Here are two of them:

We grown-ups with our opinionated views and tenacious clinging to them—we are just like little children at a fair. (At a fair in Japan, there are always goldfish for sale. The children take them home in plastic bags filled with water, to put them out in the little pond which almost every house has, or into the goldfish tub). We select and buy our fish and on the way home we hold up our bags and compete with each other: Mine is the best—the most golden—the most beautiful—the biggest etc. So we all praise ours, and soon we start quarrelling, until a stone is thrown, the plastic bag is smashed, the little glittering thing dies, and there are tears and rage and sorrow.

One afternoon he received me with: "Of course, the really important thing cannot be translated." I nodded, thinking he was referring to the translation of koans. He immediately shook his head—no, no, that's not it. Words can be used to express exactly—yet can never convey what really matters. Again I nodded, my mind still caught on the koans. Seeing I had not got his point, he said: Think of a Shinto shrine. The people come to it, throw in a coin as an offering, and then they pull the big straw rope with the bell to summon the god. Then they clap their hand thrice to draw his attention, and in the Presence they bow with folded hands. You have seen all this, and you can accurately put it into words. But it is not that which really matters; nor does it matter here whether the god is there or not—he cannot be seen anyway. The important thing is the feeling in the heart of the believer as he bows in the Presence—that is

the profound thing for which one can only be grateful.

As Zen Master, he was a father to his community, and an exacting teacher who allowed no short-cuts. But his great warmth of heart and his humaneness left an indelible imprint. His simplicity of manners and bearing, his unvarying calm and gentleness, his acute observation of people and situations, his very inability to give rise to feelings of vexation in himself or others and his inexhaustible patience were tempered by a great but quiet humour and were contained in a great warm heart that knew the human foibles yet would not judge them but rather try to transmute them through the filter of his own clarity.

His monks both loved and respected him. Only the other day, his head-monk paid him what I think is the highest tribute. "The community has had no father for a year. I expected the monks to scatter, to go elsewhere. But they all remained here, working quietly and diligently, helping to keep the place alive for the new teacher to take over. It is Sessō Rōshi who has kept us together."

Sessō Rōshi died in September 1966 at the age of 65. He had known of his approaching end. True teacher that he was, living he had shown how to live; dying he showed how to die. He was a rare teacher and a truly great man who carried in his heart that light of which he said that it radiates out by its own warmth and touches and moves what comes in contact with it.

Nine prostrations to the teacher. How can the pupil presume to do him justice?

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

Dreams and visions should not be incautiously believed. For the devil easily deceives those who lean upon them, seek them, and think much of them. It may even be that after many true visions the wicked spirit, under the guise of an angel of light, may at last, perhaps only once, mix himself in them, and overturn an imprudent man. Visions must be examined carefully according to the teaching of Holy Scripture and the writings of the saints, and if they perfectly tally they may be received, but if not they must at once be rejected.

Ludovicus Blosius

Book Review

SHINTO, THE FOUNTAINHEAD OF JAPAN
by Jean Herbert
(Allen and Unwin, 70s.)

Review by Sebastian Swann

Since W. G. Aston published his *Shinto, the Way of the Gods* in 1905 curiously few reliable studies of the native religion of Japan have appeared in western languages. We have had some valuable monographs during the last sixty years on specific aspects of the cult and its history, but no overall study of Shinto in the light of modern scholarship in the history of religions.

M. Herbert's book looks at first glance as though it might fulfil this need. It is a large book, handsomely produced at 70s. by Allen and Unwin. The Introduction reads very encouragingly. The author assures us that in collecting material for his book he has not confined himself to the usual literary sources—the myths, that is to say, in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki,* the liturgies in the Engishiki, the exegetical works of the 18th century Shinto revival. He has gone enterprisingly further. During various stays in Japan between 1935 and 1964 he travelled the length and breadth of the country interviewing the priests of well over three hundred shrines. Every chapter of the book, moreover, was translated into Japanese and submitted to "specialists" for comment and criticism. To Professor Akira Nakanishi of Chuo University alone he submitted well over three thousand, two hundred questions, while meetings of the staff of Kokugakuin University deliberated further on his findings.

Such careful checking with Japanese authorities and such enterprising fieldwork looks promising enough. But alas, from the first page of the text the distressing suspicion arises that something is badly wrong. by page four and five the suspicion becomes a certainty. by the end of the second chapter the tragic conclusion emerges that the thirty years which the author spent in patient research, in travel, in tireless questioning of priests and professors have resulted in a book which is virtually unreadable.

What has gone wrong?

In the first place M. Herbert apparently regards Shinto as a monolithic expression of revealed truth, not susceptible to changes in time. "Shinto was born with the Japanese race and is one with it" (p. 15), is a statement which directly contradicts all the recent Japanese scholarship proving that neither the Japanese race nor the Shinto religion was a homogeneous whole. The race was an admixture of many ethnic streams, and the resulting cult likewise shows mingled Altaic, Chinese and Melanesian features. M. Herbert is therefore both dogmatic and inexact when he declines to deal with questions of origin at all, refuses to look to the Ainu, the Ryukyu islands or continental shamanism for any light on the original components of the cult, and pleads instead what seems to be a theory of miraculous virgin birth.

Further, he seems oddly unaware that Shinto has undergone any major change throughout Japanese history. Nowhere does he draw any distinction between the pre-Buddhist cult, usually known as early or primitive Shinto *(genshi-Shinto),* and later versions when the original archaic features had become modified under Buddhist and Confucian influence. Nowhere does he tell us that during the medieval period "pure" Shinto virtually disappeared, and that the attempt to revive it by theologians of the 18th and 19th centuries embodied features undreamt of in the 5th and 6th centuries.

This absence of any sense of historical change has led to the author's odd manner of exposition, whereby he juxtaposes pell mell on the same page the opinions of authors of greatly differing periods and degrees of reliability. On the first page, for example, we are given quotations from the 17th century Confucian historian Arai Hakuseki (described as "another modern Japanese writer"), the interesting but extremely tendentious 19th century scholar of the Shinto Revival Hirata Atsutane, the modern writer Harada Tasuku, and, most oddly of all, the late Professor Fujisawa Chikao, a fanatical apologist of the excesses of State Shinto and a frequent contributor to the dubious journal *Cultural Nippon.* These diverse authorities are not mentioned by name in the text. The quotations with which almost every page is covered are introduced by such phrases as "one modern Japanese author says ... ", "as a modern writer puts it," "most great Japanese thinkers still agree with one of them who wrote . . ." To discover who these authorities may be one has to turn each time to the back of the book, where there are listed seven hundred and seventy-eight numbered entries, comprising both written works and live informants. Despite its length, however, this list includes not a single work by Yanagida Kunio, Hori Ichiro or Ishida Eiichiro, whose studies are surely indispensable nowadays to a proper understanding of Japanese religion.

Nor is this curious presentation in any way justified by clarity or even elementary communication with either the scholar or the general reader. Take his treatment of the important idea of *kami,* for example, the spiritual beings who are the objects of worship in Shinto. The reader is confronted at the outset with nineteen different etymologies of the word, ranging from "a modified form of *kabi,* mould, fungus," "a mispronunciation of the word *yomi* or *yomei,* Hades," to "a combination of *ka (a* demonstrative prefix) and *mi,* which stands for *hi,* the Sun." There follow several different definitions. We are given Professor Fujisawa Chikao's "invisible power which unites spirit and matter into a dynamic whole, while it gives birth to all things without exception," followed by a quotation from the 17th century Confucian thinker Kumazawa Banzan, rendered baffling by absence of context : "The Kami have no form but only function. On the contrary man has both form and action. The Gods cannot surpass the actions which have form and man cannot surpass the wonderful actions which have no form." (It is no good hoping to go to the original Japanese for any clarification of this mysterious passage, for the note at the back of the book refers us simply to the three volumes of Kumazawa Banzan's complete works.) After several more such resounding descriptions M. Herbert at last comes to the reader's rescue. The best definition of *kami,* he says, is "a sacred entity." A statement on a par with the Irish diagnosis of a mysterious sickness as "fever."

Nor is this all. In the chapter entitled "History and Main Subdivisions of Shinto." the author ignores all semblance of historical sequence and order. The reader is whirled incomprehensibly from a long quotation from Aston's *Nihongi* describing the introduction of Buddhism into Japan in 552 A.D. to Zen Buddhism. And Zen Buddhism, furthermore, described in ludicrously misleading terms by Professor Fujisawa Chikao. "Few people," we are told, "are aware of the undeniable fact that Zen Buddhism was able to reach the culminating point of its development under the overwhelming influence of Shintoism." Few indeed.

On p. 48 and 49 the confusion becomes baffling. Short sentences and statements, apparently copied verbatim from jottings in a notebook, are flung together with the intention of describing Shinto during the Tokugawa period and the Meiji Restoration. Even with no dates and no background explanation, it is still possible to see that many of these statements are misleading or even false. "In matters political," we are told for example in an isolated paragraph, "the Buddhist monasteries became so powerful and arrogant that the Shogun had to destroy some of the most important and exterminate their inmates." Who, when, where? If Nobunaga's sack of the Hieizan monasteries is meant, then how did all the careful double checking with Japanese

authorities fail to reveal the fact that Nobunaga was never a Shogun?

Worse still, the author either ignores or distorts any aspects of Shinto of which he does not happen to approve. The entire rise and development of State Shinto, from the Meiji period until the Pacific War, is reduced in this chapter to three asterisks. From an account of the separation of Buddhism and Shinto in 1868 the reader is flung straight, but for the three asterisks, to what the author calls "the American *diktat" of* 1945. Here we are told that the disestablishment of State Shinto under the American occupation was an act of wanton and meaningless revenge. Shinto had no more to do with "Japanese patriotism and loyalty to their Sovereign" in the war than did Catholic priests blessing the guns in Christian armies. The astonishing thing about this statement is that the bibliography at the back of the book *does* include *Kokutai no Hongi,* the celebrated document wherein the doctrines of ultranationalism taught in Japanese schools during the 1930s are specifically justified by distorted versions of the ancient Shinto myths. The author also fails to mention that it was the Religious Bodies Law *(Shukyō hôjinha)* enacted under the American occupation in 1945 that gave the Japanese people complete religious freedom for what was virtually the first time since the Meiji period. Likewise the reader is told nothing of the persecution of new religious movements during the 1930s under the tyranny of State Shinto. On the contrary he is assured that, unlike almost every other religion, Shinto has always been completely tolerant.

This leads to another serious shortcoming of the book—its gross misrepresentation of the part played by Buddhism and Confucianism in the history of Japanese religion. Buddhism is represented throughout as a pernicious foreign creed, which contributed nothing to the original Japanese spirit further than to make it "more conscious of itself" by contrast. Phrases such as "deeply tainted with Buddhism" appear again and again. The overwhelmingly important part played by Confucian ethics in Japan from the 17th century onwards, and the manner in which they were consciously amalgamated with the Shinto "spirit" in the 19th century, is likewise ignored. The Japanese are represented instead as being entirely free from qualms of moral conscience "such as those which are so prominent in the west."

Much of the book is concerned with the exposition and discussion of the early Shinto myths in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. Here it is surprising to read (p. 230) that "another critic, considered to be now the most influential thinker in the Jinja-honcho," stresses the historical authenticity of the myths and disapproves of attributing to them any symbolic or esoteric meaning. M. Herbert's technique is to juxtapose in a daunting manner a number of varying interpretations of these myths, while giving us himself "an interpretation which I beg to offer has never been presented before." This alas reads more like (p. 229) a mere description of the more obvious aspects of the myths than an attempt at interpretation.

What chiefly seems to vitiate the author's attitude is the notion that any attempt at objective or systematic scholarship should be rejected in favour of "explaining Shinto from the inside." To this end he has throughout the work "abstained from consulting any person who did not profess Shinto." Again and again he pours pejorative language on "scholarly" or "intellectual" explanations as necessarily distorting the true spirit of the Shinto religion. Far be it from this reviewer to insist on an "intellectual" approach to religion where obviously it is irrelevant or inadequate. To exercise the intellect on the deliverances of such depths and ranges of the mind as mystical illumination, for example, would be simply a waste of time. But to plead a rejection of scholarship as an excuse or reason for misrepresenting verifiable facts, for ignoring the findings of authorities who do not happen to "profess Shinto" (whatever that may mean), for confusion of presentation, for inability to discriminate between different sources of information, does not help the cause of truth. The publisher's claim on the jacket blurb that the book gives "the most authentic and authoritative picture of what Shinto means in the twentieth century" does not

stand up to serious examination. Indeed I am astonished that a shrewd commercial publisher like Allen and Unwin should have risked what must have been a considerable outlay on a book quite twice their usual size. It seems tragic that so much patient research over so many years should in the end benefit neither the scholar nor the general reader. But I fear that to the scholar it will prove too inexact and tendentious, and to the general reader too boring to be readable.

Book Review

THE EASTERN KEY
Kitab al-ifadah wa l-i`tibār of 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdādi. Translation by K. Hafuth Zand and John A. and Ivy E. Videan
(Allen and Unwin, 63s.).

Review by Martin Lings

This volume contains a facsimile edition of the autograph Arabic manuscript of 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdādi's eye-witness description of Egypt written in 1204 A.D. The text given here is the author's own abridgement of his longer and more detailed work which has been lost. The Arabic original is accompanied throughout by an English translation on the opposite page.

The work falls into two parts: the first is a general description of Egypt, its fauna and flora, the Egyptians themselves and the food they eat and above all the remains of the civilization of Ancient Egypt which the author found especially fascinating. The second part is about the Nile and about the terrible famine which took place at the turn of the century in the years 1200-1201 A.D. because the river did not rise high enough. In the famine it was not long before uninhibited cannibalism, starting in the Cairo underworld, became prevalent in a large section of the community. Not only were children and also adults continually being kidnapped and eaten but even the cemeteries were robbed. The Governor of Cairo decreed that anyone found eating human flesh should be burnt alive, but this appeared to make no difference, and the bodies of those who suffered this punishment were often eaten before they could be buried. This part of the book is perhaps not without its significance for the modern Western world, and in particular for England, for we live perpetually on the brink of famine, overcrowded to an extent without parallel in history and utterly dependent for our food upon a fantastically complex organisation. If anything ever went seriously wrong with this—and sooner or later is it not bound to happen?—nothing could save us from famine; and we may well ask ourselves whether or not a few weeks of extreme hunger would produce cannibalism and with it, here as in Cairo, an almost total moral collapse in other respects. As regards this last point few will be likely to maintain that the underworld of London in 1967 is in any respect better, to say the least, than the underworld of Cairo in 1200; and if anyone doubts whether any Englishman is a potential cannibal, let him remember that 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdādi himself could scarcely believe his own eyes and ears.

The translators have been, one feels, unnecessarily free in one or two places. Also it is little short of a mystery why, in transcribing Arabic words into Latin letters, they have so often totally ignored the indications given by the author himself, who inserted the vowel marks wherever he felt that a reader might hesitate. His etymological paragraph on the derivation of the word "Nile" is unnecessarily marred in the English, and among the other examples I may mention, at the risk of pedantry, the names *Dinouri* in mistake for *Dinawari, Maizz* for *Muizz,* and *Sha'ari* for *Shi`ra* (Sirius). But these are small points. The translation on the whole is good and readable and together with the fine Arabic manuscript in facsimile (the author, though not a professional calligrapher, had a good hand of archaic Naskhi) it serves to make this handsome volume an asset to libraries of far more general scope than those few which are attached to schools of Oriental studies.

Correspondence

REINCARNATION

Sir,

IF the belief in Reincarnation is the belief that individual essences return to body after body seriatim, and it is further assumed that these essences are *distinct,* then such a belief is traditionally false, for the Lord is the only Essence and so "the Lord is the only Transmigrant."

This is, of course, at the level of the Absolute, or at least at that of Being. At the level of an incarnation, it is again obviously true that any two incarnate persons, born contemporaneously or consecutively (in whatever order), are different; so that any identification isolating one integral person in incarnate form could not, obviously, cover a second.

Is there any further sense we could make of the concept of Reincarnation? Obviously elements, both subtle and gross, from our present incarnation (or incarnations) will reappear, even, as Guénon points out, during our lifetime. Could any groupings of these be considered as entities transmigrated?

Within Buddhism, at least, it seems obvious that the Skandhas regroup to form the equivalent of a further life. It is not the *same* life, but then this itself is changing continually, so that the gap between one individual and another would seem no wider than that between an individual in one phase and the same individual in another, say in childhood and in manhood. A Buddhist certainly would object (as I do) to the canonising of one existence, an integral incarnation, as the "individuality"—in *contrast to* one grouping of Skandhas through several lives. To Guénon's "individuality" one would oppose "anatta"—and I thought we were not alone in doing that.

So that either there is no "individuality" (there is only the Real), or else there are identifiable lives and series of lives, characteristics and their reincarnations. And if this is not true, and someone must cleave to an "individuality" during life then relinquish it at death, I fail to see how there can be deliverance—for you must adhere to this "individuality" you have. To speak nothing of the return of a Bodhisattva to succour others.

In addition, Guénon rather peremptorily dismisses a very human argument for Reincarnation—on the grounds of justice—with fallacious rejoinders. First, he argues that there would be disadvantages simply as each individual is at a different stage in manifestation. It seems obvious to me that, just as the child is at no disadvantage when compared to the man, a person at an inferior stage would be at no disadvantage when compared to one at a superior stage. Guénon, as I understand him, bolsters his argument with the demand for an explanation of how differences, at all, began. Fairly obviously, *in time*. One does not need to explain *the commencement* of a person's evolution (or, better, revolution) by laws of karma.

He might, in this latter section, be asking how *any* differing accounts of the lives of men can be given by the proponents of Reincarnation, while still allowing for equality. In fact, he argues that "had the individuals been perfectly equal they would have been alike in all respects" under the pain of "contradiction." The "perfectly" gives the argument away. It is no contradiction to maintain that two things can be equal, even "perfectly" equal, yet not "alike in all respects": seven plus three plus two is "perfectly" equal to four plus eight, yet they are not alike in all respects. What *would* be a contradiction would be to maintain that two identical things were not alike in all respects, for two identical things are of course one. It seems fairly obvious that Guénon is confusing identity and equality.

This confusion is quite certainly engendered by what Guénon calls, following Leibnitz, the "principle of indiscernables," "by which he meant that there cannot exist anywhere two identical beings, that is to say, two beings alike in every respect" *(The Reign of Quantity* P64). A discussion of this "principle," *in brief,* would be wholly inappropriate, not to say presumptuous. But even if we allow that there is some sense in which it is true, is it relevant to Guénon's argument against opponents envisaging a cosmic justice? Their position does not require that individuals be alike in every respect but simply that they be equal in the amount of justice or the quality of justice allotted to them. We can, I think, fairly easily imagine cases in which two vastly different people receive equal justice. If we extend this to groupings of lives, it would seem easier still.

CLIVE FAUST
Japan, 18.2.66

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

There is no Natural Religion . . . As all men are alike (though infinitely various), so all Religions, as all similars, have one source.

William Blake.

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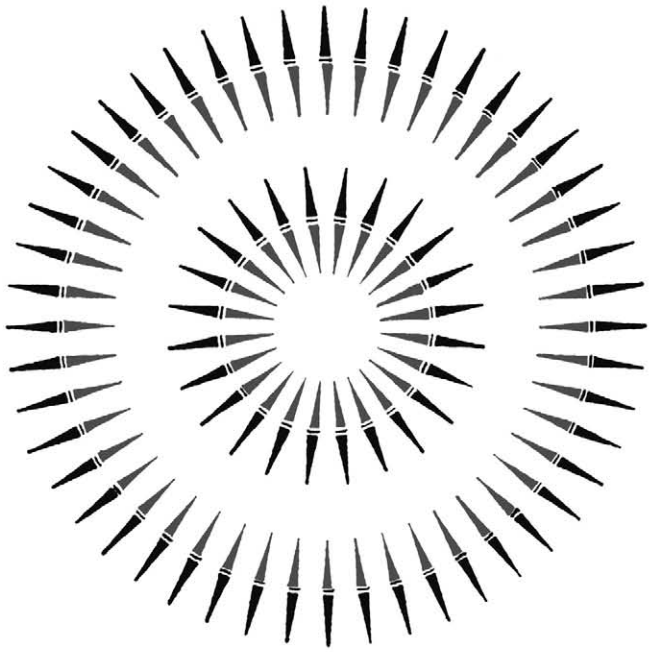

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