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

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Edited by F. Clive Ross

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Studies in Comparative Religion

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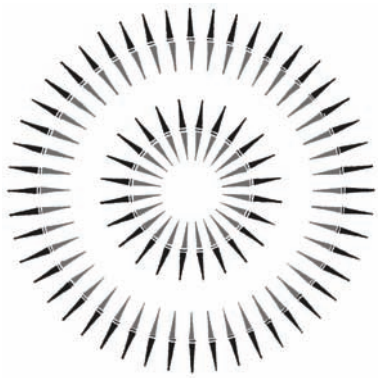

Old Lithuanian Songs

by

Martin Lings

LITHUANIAN is the oldest, that is, the most archaic in form, of all living Indo-European languages[1]. It still retains a complexity comparable to that of Sanskrit[1] and classical Greek. Various historical and geographical reasons are given by scholars for this "lack of development" so called out of deference to progressism and evolutionism; but there can be little doubt that the direct reason why the language has been so remarkably preserved from decay is the presence, until very recent times, of a deep-rooted oral tradition powerful and vital enough to fulfill many of the functions of literature. We are accustomed to distinguishing between living and dead languages; but in the domain of living languages a further distinction could be made between those which possess a written literature and those which rely entirely on oral tradition, for there is no doubt that "the letter kills" and that among peoples who are almost wholly illiterate, language can possess a vitality—and in consequence a relative immunity from degeneration—which for us is almost unimaginable. This question has been treated elsewhere[2]; the question now to be considered is not one of language in itself, but it is not altogether unconnected, for the songs which are our theme were handed down from a remote past by that oral tradition which has helped to keep the Lithuanian language so intact.

Since these songs form part of what is often called "Lithuanian folklore", let us quote what Guénon says about folklore in general:

"The very conception of *folklore,* in the generally accepted sense of the term, is based on an idea that is radically false, the idea that there are "popular creations" spontaneously produced by the mass of the people; and one sees at once the close connection between this way of thinking and "democratic" prejudices. As has been very rightly said, "the profound interest of all so-called popular traditions lies in the fact that they are not popular in origin"[3]; and we will add that where, as is nearly always the case, there is question of elements that are traditional in the true sense of the word, however deformed, diminished and fragmentary they may be sometimes, and of things which have a real symbolic value, their origin is not even human, let alone popular. What may be popular is solely the fact of "survival", when these elements belong to vanished traditional forms; and in this respect "folklore" takes on a meaning rather close to that of "paganism", if we consider only the etymology of the word "pagan", and not its "polemical" use as a term of reproach. The people preserve, without understanding them, the relics of former traditions which even go back sometimes to a past too remote to be dated, so that it has to be relegated to the obscure domain of the "prehistoric"; they thereby fulfill the function of a more or less subconscious collective memory, the contents of which have clearly

[1] It is also the nearest of the European languages to Sanskrit, not only in virtue of its undegeneracy but also by reason of its "orientality". Lettish, the language of Latvia, is the only other surviving member of the Baltic group of languages to which Lithuanian belongs, but it is less archaic than Lithuanian.

[2] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Bugbear of Literacy ;* and Martin Lings, *Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions,* pp. 8-15

[3] Luc Benoist, *La Cuisine des Anges, une esthétique de la pensée,* p. 74.

come from elsewhere[4]. What may seem most surprising is that, on the, closest scrutiny, the things so preserved are found to contain above all, under a more or less veiled form, abundant information of an esoteric order, which is, in its essence, precisely what is least popular ; and this fact suggests in itself an explanation, which may be summed up as follows: When a traditional form is on the point of becoming extinct, its last representatives may very well deliberately entrust to this aforesaid collective memory the things that would otherwise be lost beyond recall; that is in point of fact the sole means of saving what can in a certain measure be saved; and at the same time, that lack of understanding which is one of the natural characteristics of the masses is a sure enough guarantee that what was esoteric will be none the less undivulged, remaining merely as a sort of witness of the past for such as, in later times, shall be capable of understanding it"[5].

The four songs which follow illustrate every point which is made in the above quotation. As far as one knows, they were handed down entirely by word of mouth until the XVIIIth century; and in more recent times[6] children used to learn them by heart at school. As to their deeper meaning, the veil is in many places a thin one, and many if not all the comments made in this article will seem superfluous to the reader who has a knowledge of symbolism. In any case, it is preferable not to break up the text with comments, but to let each song be read uninterrupted as a poem, for they certainly have their rights in this respect. Would it be an exaggeration to say that the fourth and last of those given here is one of the greatest lyrics in the world? And through it, do we not breathe something of the fresh air of a remote antiquity?

The translations given here are taken from a little volume entitled *Old Lithuanian Songs*[7] which is an anthology of forty seven songs, selected and translated into English by Adrian Paterson. Let us quote what he says of them: "I have tried as far as possible to render the grace of cadence of the originals, and for this reason I have avoided regular rhymes, which would have given an effect too hard and glib; instead I have done my best to reproduce something of the Lithuanian assonance".

[4] "This is an essentially "lunar" function, and it is in fact to the Moon that the mass of the people corresponds astrologically, which is a clear indication also, of the purely passive character of that mass, incapable as it is of initiative or of spontaneity"

[5] *Le Saint Graal* in *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée,* pp. 50-51.

[6] That is, between the two World Wars. In 1940 the Soviet army occupied Lithuania, whereupon such members of the government as could not escape were sent to Siberia, and a carefully chosen Communist government was set up, whose first act was to request the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union. The request was granted. Except for the scarcely less terrible period of German occupation during the war, Lithuania has been swallowed up in Russia ever since, with no apparent hope of liberation except that the Western powers have never formally recognized the annulment of her independence. After the war, until about 1953 when they were finally rounded up, hundreds of thousands of young Lithuanian men and women took refuge in the forests of their country, preferring to live there in great hardship rather than be victims of the mass deportations to Siberia and elsewhere which were part of the Soviet method of russification and sovietization.

[7] This now very rare book was published in Lithuania only a few weeks before the war. One or two complimentary copies reached Western Europe, including one for me, since I had written the preface. I was intending to return, after the long vacation, to the University of Vitautas the Great in Kaunas (then the temporary capital of Lithuania) where I was lecturer, but the way back was blocked in the first days of the war, and I have never returned there since. Nor have I any reason to suppose that the entire edition, except for the few copies mentioned, was not destroyed during the terrible years which followed. The translator had left Lithuania several years previously, and at the time of publication he was in Egypt, where he died the following year.

1. *Moon took to be his bride*
Sun in the first spring tide.
When Sun woke up at dawn,
Moon from her side was gone.
Moon, as alone he roved,
Morn's Star beheld and loved.
Then Thunder, wroth, with His blade
cleft him in two and said:
Why didst abandon Sun?
Why, Morn's Star minion,
by night didst rove alone?

The language of symbolism is universal, and the Sun, whether it be feminine as here and in the Germanic tradition, or masculine as in the Hindu and Greek traditions, always has a spiritual or celestial significance in relation to the Moon which, in a positive sense, stands for earthly or human perfection. Thus in Christian iconography the Cross is often represented with the Sun on its right and the Moon on its left because Christ, the second Adam, unites in himself two natures, heavenly and earthly; and with the same symbolism the creation of the first Adam, also possessed of two natures, is represented in this song by the marriage of the Sun and the Moon in the first Spring.

The Sun, as Spirit, is the daughter of God (*Dievo dukryté*[8]). God Himself is *Perkurnas*[9], literally "Thunder"; and according to the discourse which Plato, in his *Symposium,* puts into the mouth of Aristophanes, primordial men were of a two-fold nature until Zeus, who like Perkunas has thunder for his chief attribute, cut them in two. But the doctrine of the song is more complete than that of the discourse, for it tells of a double scission: firstly and "vertically" there is the separation of Sun and Moon, that is, Spirit and soul; then, as a result of man's loss of connection with his higher possibilities, there is a "horizontal" scission within the soul itself. Man is inwardly divided, since he now lacks contact with the transcendent principle which alone can resolve opposites into complements. In other words, he has become subject to the "Knowledge of Good and Evil". It is this division within the soul of man which is represented in the song by the cutting of the Moon in two. The soul-dividedness of fallen man, as Titus Burckhardt remarks[10], is as it were the starting point of alchemy; the "chemical marriage", that is, the "Marriage of Sulphur and Quicksilver", would thus be, in Lithuanian terms, "the putting together again of the two halves of the Moon, whereas the "mystical marriage", would be the "remarriage of the Moon with the Sun"[11].

The Morning Star, *Ausrinè,* is in some respects none other than Lucifer, whereas in other respects she is comparable to Eve. In the song which follows, and which needs no comment, the correspondence is to Lucifer. But in the third song, *Ausrinè* represents, like Eve, the fallen human race as a whole.

[8] The Sanskrit equivalent, *Déva-duktri,* may be mentioned to show how close, on occasion, these two languages can be.

[9] In Sanskrit *Parjanya,* whom the *Rig-Veda* mentions as having thunder for his attribute.

[10] *Alchemy* (Stuart and Watkins, London, 1967), ch.11.

[11] In alchemy the "chemical marriage" is sometimes also called "the marriage of the Sun and the Moon", but in the Lithuanian perspective the Sun is always transcendent.

2. *Sun, 'tis time you went*
over the firmament,
Sun, 'tis time to fare
through the air.
Sun, 'tis time you counted
if all the stars are mounted.
Whether I count or no,
already one will not show,
and that the star most bright
which rose up with the light
and retired late at night.

3. *Morn's Star held a wedding feast.*
Thunder galloped through the gate
and struck down the green oak tree.
The blood of the green oak tree trickled,
and stained my apparel,
and stained my garland.
The Sun's daughter wept,
and for three years gathered
withered foliage.
And where, o mother mine,
shall I wash my apparel,
where wash away the blood?
O daughter mine so youthful,
go to the lake there yonder
where are poured the streams of nine rivers.
And where o mother mine,
shall I dry my apparel
where in the wind shall I dry it?
O daughter mine so youthful,
in yonder garden green
where are flowering nine roses.
And when o mother mine,
shall I put on my apparel,
put it on in its whiteness?
O daughter mine, so youthful,
on that same day of singing
when there shall shine nine suns.

Owing to a difference of symbolism this song appears on the surface very different from the first, except that the Morning Star's wedding feast clearly recalls the illicit union which, in the other song, likewise provoked the wrath of Perkunas. But if we consider the relationship between certain symbols, in particular the Sun and the Tree, we shall find that the theme of the first song is altogether comprised within the song of the Morning Star and the Oak, though

this last song takes us further, tracing out not only the Fall but also the path of return to the Primordial State.

The Tree of Life rises from the centre of the Earthly Paradise connecting earth with Heaven. Man's loss of connection with his higher possibilities is thus, in the language of *Genesis,* his loss of access to the Tree of Life, and we have also seen this same loss symbolized also by the Moon's separation from the Sun. In our third song the Tree of Life is the oak which in the Lithuanian tradition is the most holy of trees[12], being especially sacred to Perkunas[13]. It might at first seem strange that the Thunderer should strike his own tree; but history offers examples of great sanctuaries being destroyed by Heaven in reprisal for human sacrilege, and here also it is in reality against man's connection with the sanctuary that Perkunas aims his bolt. Ultimately therefore this symbolism comes close to that of Genesis, at least in the sense that in both cases man has lost his access to the Tree of Life. But in the song this scission is also represented by the separation of the leaves from the tree. The analogy between the leaves and the human soul (and therefore the "Moon") is clear enough if we remember that when the Cross symbolizes the two natures of Christ, the horizontal line denotes his human nature, which is likewise represented by the leaf-bearing branches of the Tree of Life, whose trunk, like the vertical of the Cross, stands for his Divine nature. The symbolism of the leaves becomes even clearer when we consider that the Tree of Life is sometimes also called the "Tree of the World" or the "Axis of the World"[14] and as such it is occasionally represented with its roots in Heaven[15] and its branches constituting this world or, microcosmically, the human soul.

If the separation of the foliage from the tree corresponds to the separation of the Moon from the Sun in the first song, the subsequent scattering of the foliage corresponds to the cleaving of the Moon, that is, to the psychic disintegration consequent upon the Fall. The gathering together of this foliage is thus the first phase of the spiritual path, the reintegration of the psychic elements. When all the foliage has been gathered, fallen man turns again to the Spirit. It is as if the Moon, now on the way to regaining his primal fullness, were to turn once more to the Sun; but the song we are now considering shows us another aspect of the Sun. Instead of being man's Celestial Bride, she is here, as in most other Lithuanian songs, his Divine Mother. For if she is the daughter of Perkunas, she is also, as the Hindus would say, his *Shakti,* and as such she is the personification of Mercy and the other "feminine" attributes of the Divinity.

In the purification by the elements, that is, by water, wind and sun, which now takes place under the direction of the Spirit, the element earth is not mentioned, perhaps because man himself is in a sense earth.

Nine, which is, one might say, the very essence of this song, is a celestial number. There are nine celestial spheres, and nine degrees in the hierarchy of the Angels. Moreover nine corresponds,

[12] As also for the Celts and others. See René Guénon, *Le Roi du Monde,* p. 21, note 1.

[13] We see here yet another connection between Perkunas and Zeus who is not only the God of thunder but also the God of the oak.

[14] See René Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross,* ch., IX, note 1.

[15] A symbol, being merely a reflection, can never show every aspect of the higher reality which it symbolizes. To have a fuller representation of the relationship between Heaven and Earth we have therefore to conceive of the Tree of Life as a tree which grows not only upwards, in the direction of man's spiritual aspirations, but also downwards, because it is in fact rooted in the Spirit, that is, in the "Sun". In the case of the "normal" tree the sun is, as we shall see, the fruit ; but there is no contradiction here, for the fruit contains the seed which is itself virtually the root.

geometric-ally, to the circumference of the circle[16], and therefore to the movements of the heavenly bodies, and to the visible form of the firmament which is itself the great symbol of Heaven. Nine is therefore also—and here lies the key to this song—the symbol of the Earthly Paradise which, as the chief reflection of Heaven upon earth, is always represented as circular; and although in the perspective of later and more "sedentary" religions the restoration of perfection is the "squaring of the circle''[17]—the Heavenly Jerusalem, for example, is square—in the earlier and more nomadic perspectives the inverse of the Fall is always a return to the Earthly Paradise. It is therefore not surprising that the number nine should be so much stressed in this song whose theme is, precisely, the recovery of the Primordial State.

In particular, as regards the "nine suns", there may be here an implicit reference to the restoration of the Tree of Life, for in various traditions there is mention of the shining of a plurality of suns at the end of the cycle, and as Guénon remarks ; "The image of the sun is often connected with that of the tree, as if the sun were the fruit of the Tree of the World"[18]. He mentions, as regards the Hindu doctrine of the end of the cycle, "the tree whose fruits are twelve suns"[19]. He also draws our attention to the fact that even where there is no specific mention of suns in connection with the Tree of Life, it is often represented as bearing "solar" fruits : "The fruits of the Tree of Life are the golden apples of the Garden of the Hesperides ; the golden fleece[20] of the Argonauts, which was also placed on a tree and guarded by a serpent or a dragon, is another symbol of the immortality which man has to reconquer"[21]. Finally he mentions that in China one finds also, as a symbol of the completion of the cycle (which in the macrocosm means a new Golden Age and in the microcosm the return to the Primordial State), the tree with ten suns ; and this brings us back to our song for, as we have already seen, nine and ten are sometimes inter-changeable in that both can represent the circle which is itself the figure of cyclic perfection. Analogously one can say of the Garden of Helicon which, as Dante tells us, is none other than the Earthly Paradise, that it, bears the seal of nine or of ten according to whether or not we count, with the nine Muses, Apollo himself who is the centre round which they form the circumference.

4. *Fly little hawk,*
near to the lake,
near that same lake
where a whirlpool seethes.
Near to that whirlpool
there's a rue garden.

[16] As Guénon remarks, 10 is the number of the circle, being the number of cyclic perfection, and he adds: "I corresponds to the centre and 9 to the circumference... It is because 9, and not 10, is the number of the circumference that it is normally measured in multiples of 9 (90 degrees for the quadrant, and then 360 degrees for the whole circumference)". *La Tétraktys et le Carré de Quatre,* in *Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée,* p. 128.

[17] As regards the relationship between the square and the circle, see Titus Burckhardt, *Sacred Art in East and West,* p. 18, and as regards the roundness of nomadic and semi-nomadic sanctuaries, see *ibid.,* p. 22.

[18] *The Symbolism of the Cross,* p. 52.

[19] *ibid.* (See also, by a strange coincidence, p. 28, note 8, of this Journal/Commemorative Edition. Ed.)

[20] A doubly solar symbol, in virtue of the solar animal as well as the solar metal.

[21] *ibid.*

In that same garden weeps a maiden.
I have no mother,
a dowry to gather,
I have no father
to apportion my share.
I have no brother
to saddle horses,
I have no sister
to plait a garland.
Sun, thou mother,
Sun, thou mother,
Sun, thou mother,
gather me a dowry.
Moon, thou father,
Moon, thou father,
Moon, thou father,
apportion my share.
Star, thou sister,
Star, thou sister,
Star, thou sister,
oh plait my garland!
Greatwain, thou brother,
Greatwain, thou brother,
Greatwain, thou brother,
oh drive me through the meadows!

The hawk, with all the other members of its tribe, above all the eagle, is a solar bird, and as such a symbol of the Spirit. But in particular it may be remembered that whereas the eagle is the bird of Zeus, the hawk is one of the emblems of Apollo, God of inspiration, and in this song the prayer of the maiden is clearly uttered under the inspiration of the hawk, whereas there can be no doubt that the initial imperative addressed to the hawk is a divine command. In ancient Egypt the equivalent of Apollo was Horus; and it is perhaps not irrelevant to recall here, especially in view of the end of the song, the temple paintings which represent him as the hawk-headed usher of righteous souls into the Presence of Osiris.

Rue has been used from time immemorial to ward off evil influences and to purify sanctuaries and habitations in cases of pollution, so that among plants it is one of the outstanding symbols of purity. As such it plays a particularly important part in Lithuanian tradition[22]. The "rue garden" or "Garden of Purity", which is difficult of access and "guarded" by the whirlpool as by a dragon, and which is, moreover, to be the starting point of the maiden's celestial journey, can be none other than the Earthly Paradise. This is also confirmed by the out-standing "simplicity", "childlikeness", and "spiritual poverty" of the maiden herself, these being among the terms in

[22] Rue (Lithuanian *ruta,* Greek *rute*), is also called in English "herb of grace" which suggests that its symbolism was originally the same here as there. But already by Shakespeare's time it had acquired a somewhat sorrowful significance (see for example the last lines of Act III in *Richard II*), no doubt because of frequent punning on it and the verb "rue" which, etymologically, is quite unconnected with the name of the plant.

which readiness to enter "the Kingdom of Heaven" is universally described by religion.

The "garland" mentioned in this and in the previous song (there the "staining of the garland" means loss of innocence) is the garland of rue which in Lithuania was traditionally part of the insignia of maiden-hood and especially of the virgin bride who wore it as a wreath on her wedding day.

The "dowry" which the "Sun" is to "gather"[23] is contrasted with the "share" to be "apportioned" by the "Moon". Together they represent the maiden's title to be married, that is, since the marriage is celestial, her "eligibility" in the eyes of Heaven. As such, the solar treasure can be nothing other than spiritual riches, whereas the lunar "share" consists of the human virtues which are the "reflections" of those riches. Being of this world which is the world of forms, the virtues can be analysed[24], differentiated, counted and measured[25]. But the synthesis of the spiritual treasure itself is above form and beyond all reckoning it is therefore to be "gathered" and "stored up" but not "apportioned".

This song begins where the previous song ended; its theme is not the Lesser Mysteries but the Greater Mysteries, for the starting point is the state of human perfection. The Sun and the Moon are once more in their primordial relationship, and the maiden is to set off on her journey wearing the Crown[26] of Purity.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

Anyone can say the prayers, repeat litanies and keep fasts many times and read the Qur'an. Even an old woman can fast, pray at night and read a few chapters of the Qur'an. The vocation of the men of God is different That comprehends three things. First, anxiety as to what they shall eat and what they shall wear does not enter their heart. A dervish into whose heart concern for what he shall eat and what he shall wear has entered is no good at all. Secondly, in private and in public they remain absorbed in God: that is the essence of all spiritual striving. Thirdly, they never utter anything with the idea of pleasing people and attracting them towards themselves.

Shaikh Fariduddin of Ajodhan.

[23] This is somewhat free though adequate translation of *kloti* which means literally "cover". The reference is no doubt to the bridal treasure which the mother would store up for her daughter and which would not be displayed, whereas the "share" is the marriage portion which would be assessed by the father.

[24] Since light is a symbol of knowledge, reflected light, of which moonlight is the outstanding example, is a symbol of indirect, "analytical" knowledge that is, individual, human, mental knowledge. In other words, moonlight is a "mental" feature of the macrocosm just as the mind is a "lunar" feature of the microcosm; and it is to be noticed how persistently in the Indo-European languages this profound yet not immediately obvious connection between man (characterized by mind) and moon (Lithuanian *menuo*) is stressed by the recurrence of the root MN in connection with things or actions specifically mental and therefore, reflective or analytical, such as *mind* (Sanscrit *manas,* Lithuanian *manymas,* Latin *mens*) and *memory* (the lost N is found in *reminiscence,* Lithuanian *mintis,* Greek *mama*). Let us cut short this list of examples, which could be a long one, with the name of the Roman Goddess of learning, that is, of indirect knowledge, *Minerva,* whose bird is the owl, nocturnal and lunar, as opposed to the hawk which is as we have seen the bird of Phoebus Apollo, the God of inspiration, that is, of direct knowledge.

[25] The lost N is found in such words as *incommensurable* which are closer to the Latin *mensura.*

[26] *Vainikas,* "garland", is also the ordinary word for "crown". The Star is not named ; but if she is *Ausriné,* the Morning Star, then it is at the very least a remarkable coincidence, as the translator once remarked to me, that according to the Jewish tradition Lucifer was, before the fall of the angels, *Hekathriel,* that is, the "Angel of the Crown".

A Glance at Agriculture

by

Lord Northbourne

THE crust of this earth periodically undergoes upheavals of various kinds and on various scales. In the course of the bigger ones, continents are submerged and new continents are raised up, and in between there are ice-ages, and ages of rain and of warmth affecting the whole surface or parts of it only. All such occurrences, gigantic and overwhelming as they are from our point of view, are trivial incidents in a continuous series of changes occurring on a cosmic scale, staggering our imagination by their immensity and their duration, and reducing all terrestrial phenomena to a quantitative insignificance. Quantitatively speaking, human life is doubly insignificant, since it plays so small a part in the geophysical history of this planet, and it will undoubtedly continue to do so, since this planet cannot be considered as if it were isolated from the solar system, nor as if the solar system were isolated from the rest of the universe.

Therefore, if human life has any significance at all, it is not in the domain of quantity but in the domain of quality, and it can only be worth preserving in virtue of its qualitative content or potentiality. Nevertheless, it has an inherent quantitative aspect, which cannot be preserved unless its quantitative requirements are met; the satisfaction of those requirements is however justified only in so far as it is necessary for the development of the qualitative potentialities of mankind. The main difficulty that arises in following up this statement is that the nature of those qualitative potentialities cannot be precisely defined. Quantity alone is, measurable; quality as such is nameable but not measurable; it is forever what it is, and it is either perceived for what it is or not perceived at all. Nothing can convey its nature to anyone who cannot perceive it directly. Yet one must talk about it, for it is the key to everything; without it there is nothing but the chaos of indistinction, the abstractness of pure number. The most that one can do is to compare things that possess a quality with things that do not, but even then the comparison is meaningful only to someone who knows from experience what the quality in question is. Of no quality is this more true than of the quality, or qualities, that can be called "spiritual". The word is inevitably misapplied or misunderstood by anyone for whom the limits of reality coincide with the limits of the measurable, the measurable being in the last analysis everything that can be brought within the analytical and descriptive powers of the human brain. If there is nothing that transcends those powers, all quality can be in principle reduced to quantity; but then there is no real difference between treasure and rubbish; either will serve, provided that there is enough of it. One can only assert that the essential qualitative distinctiveness of man resides in his spiritual potentialities and leave it at that. One cannot prove it scientifically.

Terrestrial upheavals involve the periodical destruction of lives, human and other. This is apt to strike us as very terrible, and to make it difficult for us to understand how an all-merciful God can have ordered matters so. We forget that the law of birth and death is applicable, not to individual living creatures alone, but to everything on which an association with quantity confers a form, from universes downwards. All must perish; the Spirit, which is pure quality, alone is imperishable and always wholly itself. Both as individuals and as human societies we are perishable. Man has always known this, but at the same time he has always seen that there must, so to speak, be something behind it all, something imperishable and greater than him-self. If that were not so, both he himself and the perishable world of forms would be wholly unreal,

a mere fleeting illusion, causeless and aimless. Not only is any such conception contradicted by our own consciousness of existence, but it is also probably in the last analysis devoid of meaning. To accept the perishability and dependence of ourselves and of the entire universe of forms, with all the humility that this acceptance implies, is a necessary prelude to the understanding of our situation, and such an understanding is indispensable to effective action. Nevertheless, it seems that for the present our achievements in the domain of the quantitative and perishable have obscured for us our dependence on the qualitative and imperishable, thus confusing our sense of direction and frustrating much well-intentioned action.

What has all this to do with agriculture? Everything really; for the double reason that the soil, which is a product of terrestrial upheavals, provides its physical foundation, and that the relation of quality to quantity, not only in the final products of agriculture, but also in our approach to its problems, touches every one of us more closely than most people seem to think. For, from the point of view of biology and economics alone, agriculture is the foundation of human life on this planet, and it has been so ever since the growth of population, following on the last major geo-physical cataclysm, outstripped the food-producing potentialities of virgin Nature. Once established, it becomes the main expression of the relationship between man and Nature; all other human activities are as it were outgrowths arising from it and are dependent on it. We could get on without them, but not without agriculture; it therefore affects us more directly and more nearly than any other activity; the quality of our lives and our outlook is reflected in it, and its quality is in turn reflected back on them. This self-evident truth has tended to become overshadowed by the attractions and disturbances of industrial development, but it is now being forced on us again in its 'quantitative aspect by the rapid increase in world population. For reasons not yet fully elucidated, such an increase always seems to accompany an industrial revolution[1]. In an incredibly short time, industrial progress has become the aim of almost all nations, and an aim once established is not readily abandoned, especially when wealth is its target and seems to be within its grasp. Consequently, although we are faced with a danger of world starvation within a few decades, we continue to devote an ever-growing proportion of our money and energies to developments in the industrial field, the demands of which are insatiable. Industry is continually putting out fresh outgrowths which can only intensify the problem of feeding the world by creating new opportunities and with them new desires. Curiously enough—or perhaps it is not curious at all—the newest desires are at the same time the most expensive and the most absurd, for instance, colour television, ever faster travel and putting men on to the moon. Expansion for its own sake is the watchword; it can be achieved most quickly only at someone else's expense; when everyone is aiming at it, rivalry between sectional interests, national or otherwise, is everywhere exacerbated, and preparations for war, whether "cold" or "hot", become the biggest drain on resources of all.

The dominant consideration in industry, the very principle on which it is founded, the consideration to which all others must give way, is the progressive reduction in the financial cost of producing and selling any given article. The purpose of that reduction is to free resources, both human and physical, for the production of a wider range of articles. The process is inherently cumulative and accelerative. It implies continual change of a kind that would nowadays be called a "redeployment of resources". It also necessitates an unremitting stimulation of the

[1] A population explosion is not necessarily or solely a result of more or better food, housing or medical attention, all of which were for instance conspicuously lacking in the earlier stages of the British industrial revolution, and of some others. They can no doubt help to keep it going once it has started, but they are not its cause.

demand for goods, in other words, of desire; it is a case of continually persuading people to want what they did not know they wanted, otherwise expansion would be delayed or halted. It would be difficult to invent an economic background less well adapted than this to the fulfillment of the vital functions of agriculture. Nevertheless, as the industrial outlook becomes ever more universal, it becomes increasingly difficult, and eventually impossible, for agriculture to retain an outlook and methods incompatible with those of industry. Agriculture is affected above all by the unceasing world-wide pressure to reduce unit costs by adopting new methods showing only marginal financial advantages, and continually being superseded by yet newer methods, despite the resulting instability which does nothing but harm. Agriculture therefore adopts the industrial outlook as nearly as its circumstances permit; but once caught, there is no escape. It resisted for a long time, but is now thoroughly involved.

The typical organization of agriculture has been until relatively recently of the kind known as a peasantry; it disappeared perhaps sooner in Britain than in most other countries. Its essential features are relatively small economic units, usually worked by families who derive most of their sustenance from their own holdings and sell or exchange only their surplus. Each unit or group of units is more or less self-contained and more or less self-supporting both economically and biologically. The techniques of cultivation and care of animals are handed down with little alteration from generation to generation. Within this type of framework many variations can be found and have been studied; some of them have survived here and there to the present day, though not without modification. The way of life of a peasantry is above all traditional; its resistance to change has in the past perhaps been the main stabilizing factor in human civilization, while at the same time it has been a breeding ground of fine human qualities. Even today, among the few survivors of the ancient peasantries, it is possible to find outstanding examples of dignity, poise, and pride of function joined to real craftsmanship, all no doubt related to a real sense of the place of man in Nature, and therewith of his relation to God. These qualities can make up for many faults, but they are not sufficiently appreciated in these days, for they are not money-spinners; civilization is nevertheless seriously impoverished when they are rare. The peasant has always been the butt of the smart townsman, yet at the same time his way of life has often been romanticized. There is no justification for the disparagement, the function of the peasant being indispensable in a settled people; that function is much more than simple food-production, since it is the function through which man is integrated with his environment, at least in so far as a peasantry retains some vestiges of the Edenic state from which it sprang. Its romantic aspect is closely associated with that origin, although in its decadence very little of the kind remains. The peasant way of life has by now almost been wiped off the map of the world. It is true enough that it cannot meet the needs of our times, but then the people of our times do not know what their real needs are. If a peasantry can preserve something that conforms to the most profound human needs, that would at least explain why, of all the forms of human society, it is the most tenacious of life. But even where it has hung on up to the present day, it seems to be doomed. The tractor is replacing the draft animal, electricity is everywhere, television is in the living room and a motor car is in the stall of the beast of burden, and in many places where, in spite of all, something of the ancient spirit might survive a little longer, tourism is swamping it with artificiality.

The European and Asian peasant, who is evidently in mind here, is taken as the typical representative of a traditional agriculture. The way of life of the hunting nomad is by definition minimally agricultural, and is therefore excluded from the present discussion, except in order to mention that the true nomad may in many respects often be nearer to the Edenic state than

the peasant, and that the advent of modernism has destroyed his way of life even more quickly and more completely.

It may be worth while to summarize the nature of the outward changes brought about in agriculture by the rise to dominance of the modern outlook.

Firstly: a progressive reduction in the number of persons directly engaged in agriculture, both in relation to the volume of its products and to the non-agricultural population. This tendency has gone further in Great Britain than elsewhere, the proportion of agricultural to total population being now under 4 per cent, and still falling. This has been made possible by the mechanization of an ever increasing number of agricultural processes and tasks, including the care of animals; this is the most typical feature of industrialization in all its forms, and it is accompanied by the substitution of the wage-earner for the worker having a proprietary interest.

Secondly, and arising directly from the above; a progressive increase in the average size of farms and of fields, so that the cost of elaborate and expensive machinery and equipment may be spread over a large area, and so that its use to full capacity may be as far as possible unrestricted. Consequential changes related to systems of tenure, finance etc., need not be considered here, important though they be.

Thirdly: the substitution of chemical methods for older methods, both for the maintenance of the productivity of the soil and for combating diseases, weeds and pests.

Fourthly, and arising directly out of the three changes already out-lined: a progressive loss of economic independence, both in the individual agricultural unit and in agriculture as a whole. Agriculture is already virtually dependent on industry for the fulfillment of its functions, and even, particularly in England, on the industry and products of distant lands. Herein lurks a risk of famine so far largely unrecognized as such.[2]

Fifthly: a growing demand for the standardization of agricultural and horticultural products, to meet the requirements of a mainly urban population, and of the distributors who not only serve it but also persuade it to want what it suits them to offer, namely products that are uniform, well packed in standard quantities and as nearly as possible imperishable. A consequence of all this is the widespread practice of adding preservatives, and substitutes for perishable or costly constituents, to a growing range of foods, to an extent that amounts to a more or less serious adulteration. The materials used have usually been shown by short-term experiments to be harmless, but, to say the least of it, we are entitled to expect from our food something better than harmlessness. Once again, cheapness is the supposed justification of such practices, but even that advantage is more than neutralized by costs of processing, packing and distribution. There is an ever-growing gap between primary producer and ultimate consumer, conspicuous in its financial aspect although less so in its more important biological aspect. This, of course, is a very big question, covering as it does the whole field of human nutrition.

Sixthly, a growing instability arising out of the increasing rapidity with which the new ideas

[2] For instance, British agriculture today is absolutely dependant on machinery, together with supplies of the necessary spare parts, fuel oils, lubricants, electricity and other requirements such as baler twine, many of which come from abroad. Intensive stock farming on modern lines would be impossible without protective and curative drugs and supplements to natural foods; and for so long as existing economic pressures continue, present-day standards of crop production could not be approached without a liberal use of chemical fertilizers and weed-killers. It has been calculated that to keep one man employed full-time in agriculture in Britain, two men must be employed full-time in industry

produced by research, together with economic and political changes, necessitate the adjustment or alteration of methods and of the approach to current problems. Agriculture ceases to be the main stabilizing factor, either economic or social, in a civilization, and finds itself involved willy-nilly in what is commonly and pointedly called the "rat-race"[3]. It is perhaps not too wild a guess to say that there has been more change in the past hundred years than in the previous thousand, and more in the last twenty than in the previous two hundred. This acceleration shows no sign of slackening, although one cannot see how it could go on forever. If it were necessary to pick out the biggest single difference between ancient and modern agriculture, it would be this.

All these changes mark the abandonment of a traditional approach in favor of an industrial approach. Industrial progress is founded on modern science, and so it is not surprising that agriculture claims to be more and more scientific, and to a large extent lives up to its claim. Most farmers accept this situation and many welcome it, for they are far from being immune to infection by the ideology of industrial progress. By them as by others every step in this progress is hailed as an advance, and so it is from the purely industrial point of view. Every innovation brings at least a potential financial gain, but it is necessarily obtained at a price. The only motivation of industry is gain that can be measured in financial terms, but the price may have to be paid in a less measurable currency, one that is qualitative rather than quantitative. No instance could be more self-evident than that of the sacrifice of beauty associated with industrial development, including the development of agriculture on industrial lines; a loss not only of natural beauty, but also of beauty in the things man makes for use or pleasure. This is one of the qualitative losses that has not passed unnoticed. It is regretted, and many attempts are made to minimize it, but little is done to attack or even to understand its cause.

There are other comparable cases. For instance: there has been a considerable outcry against what is called "factory farming" as applied to animals, mainly on the grounds that it is cruel, and there has been much argument on both sides. Without going into that argument, it can be asserted with confidence that so long as any producer who can cut his costs while still producing a saleable article can squeeze a producer who cannot do so out of business, there will be "factory farming" or something very like it, with all its inevitable effects on the quality of its products and on the animals involved, however those effects may be disguised.

Another instance is that of the controversy about the quality of food grown by "natural" as against "artificial" methods. It is really a question, not of natural against artificial, but of the degree of artificiality, the only natural foods being those that are produced without human assistance; but questions of degree can be crucial. The subject can be argued *ad nauseum* and any answer arrived at is sure to be liable to criticism as being a result of prejudice, since no scientific proof is ever likely to be possible. Nothing less than experiments with whole communities prolonged over several generations could provide anything that could be called scientific proof, and by then it would be too late to be of much use[4]. Meanwhile, a return to older methods of cultivation and fertilization does not by itself touch the root of the matter. This does not imply that it may not be worth while for its own sake, provided that too much is not expected of it. A few people have tried and are still trying to produce food without the help of chemical

[3] It has been described as "doing unto others before they do unto you".

[4] Studies of living populations can however be informative. See, for example, *The Wheel of Health* by Dr. G. T. Wrench; C. W. Daniel Co. London, 1938, a study of the Hunza people of N.W. India; and *Farmers of Forty Centuries* by F. H. King; Mrs. King, Madison, Wisconsin U.S.A. 1911, a study of the Chinese peasantries.

fertilizers and sprays, and a few people—perhaps a growing number—prefer to buy food thus produced, and who dares to say that they are wrong? These counter-movements carry very little weight at present; a large majority of people are not interested and much prefer to swim with the stream, while dismissing the objectors to food grown by modern methods as being mere faddists.

The new techniques are adopted by farmers because they know that if they do not keep up to date they will be squeezed out of business; and modern farming is much more a business than a way of life. The pressure towards an ever more complete industrialization of agriculture is still growing; farmers are officially encouraged to expect nothing less; in Britain, where certain minimum prices are fixed by the Government, farmers are told that these prices will be based on an expected increase of so much percent per annum in their "efficiency", and the measure of that efficiency is exclusively financial. That is why most of the few farmers who have tried in one way or another to fight against contemporary trends have already been squeezed out; they have found out that what was economically possible yesterday is not so to-day, and will be less so tomorrow. If anyone wants to protect himself from con-temporary trends and influences which he believes to be pernicious by growing his own food on his own land in his own way, as he has a perfect right to do, he will get no help and little sympathy. He must be in a position to face an economic isolation which is in practice extremely difficult to realize. It is even more difficult to realize an isolation from the influence of modern civilization in other domains, yet, unless this can be done, the purpose of an economic isolation will be only very partially fulfilled.

The principal criticism that would be directed against any such attempts at economic isolation made by individuals or groups is that they are not playing their part towards solving the problem of feeding the world in the future. They might reply that it is useless to feed the world on poison, but time alone could show whether they were right or wrong. One thing abundantly clear is that it is impossible that the growing population of the world should be fed at all in the future otherwise than by the full employment of modern scientific agricultural techniques: If it is possible that it should be fed without using those techniques, a condition would be the abolition of all the quantitative and sentimental ideals of modern civilization and the desires they engender, and the recovery of a sympathy with and an understanding of Nature now in abeyance. It is undeniable that very dense populations have fed themselves for long periods without modern techniques[5] but their approach to life and its problems and their sense of values were so different from ours that we cannot as a society even understand them, let alone live as they did.

Wherever the line that divides the artificial from the natural may be drawn, their separation has now reached a point at which one can say that the agricultural revolution which has followed on the heels of the industrial revolution has brought about something like a divorce between man and Nature. Formerly, man lived more or less in harmony with Nature as a whole, and played his part in maintaining what we call a "balance of Nature". That natural balance, if we could but see it so, represents a fulfillment of the divine ordinances whereby all living things are related one to another through their common origin in God, and those ordinances have both a gentle and a rigorous aspect; a fact which modern sentimentality refuses to recognize[6]. From

[5] See preceding note. The works referred to are equally informative in connection with the feeding of large populations from small areas of workable land.

[6] When we speak disparagingly of the "law of the jungle" we are looking only at the rigorous aspect of the divine

the modern point of view, ancient man was "superstitious", meaning that his motives appear often to have been other than purely rational. No account is taken of the fact that those motives may have been in origin super-rational; or, in other words, of the fact that agriculture—in common with all other human activities, social, artistic, military and so forth—can ever have been sacred, although we often describe it as having been traditional. The words "sacred" and "traditional" are, or ought to be, very close together in meaning; both have come to be more or less assimilated in meaning to the word "superstitious", which properly speaking is applicable to things that have lost their virtue through the loss of their attachment to their divine origin. The ancient practices cannot be understood in purely economic terms; and when no other terms are regarded as seriously significant, they cannot be understood at all. Many of the ancient practices have in fact become superstitions in the proper sense of the word, and that perhaps is why they no longer seem to be effective[7]. The attitude of ancient man to-wards Nature was probably one of a more or less non-analytical acceptance, accompanied by a sense of reverence for the wonderful works of God, a reverence too often caricatured nowadays as "nature-worship". But our ancestors no doubt realized, consciously or unconsciously or semi-consciously, that there is no end to the complexities and subtleties of the relationships between living things, so that they are beyond the power of the human brain alone to resolve, as we are just beginning to find out once more. Our ancestors were not overweeningly inquisitive about their environment, having been taught by their religions and traditions to accept their human situations. The justification of all such teaching is that the direct and unelaborated human experience provides as much as, and more than, most people can comprehend in. depth, whereas too wide a range of enquiry can distract attention from experiences which, though outwardly simple and even commonplace, are symbolically adequate for all spiritual needs. An excessive inquisitiveness concentrates attention on matters the outward complexity of which creates an illusion of comprehensiveness, although in reality they are concerned only with appearances, and are therefore superficial.

The surface of an expanding sphere moves away from the centre, the principle of its sphericity, and at the same time, as the surface expands, its constituent parts move away from one another. Such is the image of all outward-looking and peripheral knowledge; in becoming more extensive its constituent parts move away from each other and from their common principle[8]. In this analogy the surface of the sphere represents the visible universe, the world of appearances with which alone modern science is concerned, while the whole sphere, surface

ordinances. It is undeniable that wild animals are liable to misfortunes which sometimes appear to us to be cruel and even unnecessarily so, but it is doubtful whether they are any worse than those to which humanity is liable, more particularly because human troubles are so much more varied, subtle and persistent. It is evident to the most casual observation that wild animals seem almost always to be vigorous and well nourished, or else dead. Nature's methods of eliminating disease and injury, and with them the suffering they cause, may seem harsh in our eyes, but they are undeniably effective; and where the conscious apprehension of death is, as far as we can see, absent or only momentary, they could scarcely be more merciful, given that pain in one form or another is inevitable in a world which is necessarily imperfect. The wild animals certainly look happier than we do.

[7] An instance would be the regulation of sowing or planting by the phases of the moon.

[8] What, one wonders, is the reality underlying modern astronomical theories of an expanding universe? To what extent are they a reflection of the purely outward-looking tendencies of the modern mentality? It is perfectly possible that the physical universe should appear to be expanding when it is looked at from a particular point of view, necessarily limited but not necessarily illegitimate; whereas from a different point of view, no less legitimate but perhaps less limited, it would appear otherwise.

included, represents reality as a whole, centered on unity. The surface is indefinite in extent; it has no boundaries, and no part of it is principial with respect to any other; therefore a search confined to the surface can have no finality. If finality is sought in the surface, the search for it inevitably becomes more and more extensive and fragmented, and at the same time more frantic. The resulting multiplicity and diversity are represented as being an enrichment, but it is a false and ultimately harmful enrichment because it is more and more quantitative and more and more out of touch with the purely qualitative centre. The apparent need for experimental research grows rapidly as the field covered by observation grows, because each single experiment can cover only an ever smaller fraction of that field. The approach of science, being experimental, is' the approach of trial and error, that is to say, it is purely empirical. If it be true that sound practice, in agriculture or in anything else, can be established on no other foundation, it follows that inquisitiveness and inventiveness are the true measure of intelligence. If that be so the intelligence of our ancestors was indeed inferior to our own, and one must envisage the recent occurrence of a change in the power of the human brain so great, so rapid and so world-wide that no theory of evolution conceived as a gradual process of adaptation could possibly account for it. It could only be accounted for as being something like what biologists call a mutation; but it would be a mutation of a magnitude and a universality to which our present knowledge can suggest no parallel. It almost becomes necessary to invoke the intervention of a mysterious external power; but that would never do. What has really happened is that a change of outlook, which can take place without the acquisition of any new powers, has brought about so many changes in our lives that it has been mistaken for an acquisition of new powers.

We have chosen the direction in which we want to go, and we have arrived at a point at which the only hope for the future seems to lie in the extension and acceleration of research, so that changes in the chosen direction may take place more and more quickly. This acceleration, which is comparable to that of a heavy body falling from a height, is extremely bad for agriculture, and if it is bad for agriculture it is bad for humanity. The soil, animals and plants have a limited range of adaptability, and adaptation is slow within that range, which is there-fore narrowed by rapid changes. When the process of forcing up out-put has reached a certain point, it will have gone too far, but by then it will be too late. Nobody can say what that point is, because before any innovation has had a chance of a fair trial, and before the creatures involved—men included—have had a chance to adapt themselves to it, it las already been superseded by another. There is no chance at all of assessing or anticipating long-term effects, simply because they can only be assessed at the end of a long term; there is simply not time to take more than the most obvious and immediate effects into account. The one thing we know about these long-term changes is how complex and unpredictable they are, and that they are often irreversible, as for instance in the case of soil erosion. Any attempt to predict their nature is mere guesswork. So far the dangers seem to be, in the soil, loss of texture and trace-element deficiencies; in animals and plants liability to diseases and to genetic troubles; and in agriculture as a whole, invasions of weeds and pests. So far, and up to a point, science has been more or less able to keep pace with tendencies in these directions as the need has arisen, but new problems arise ever more quickly. All this emphasizes the growing dependence of agriculture on a complicated and vulnerable scientific and industrial organization over which it has virtually no control.

Perhaps this is the place to mention the recent development of the relatively new science of genetics, which offers possibilities of the artificial production of what would be in effect new species of plants and animals. So far most of its work has been confined to inducing variations in existing species or hybrids by the selection and combination of existing genes, but the production

of artificial genes has been seriously propounded. Whether something of that kind is possible or not, future developments are sure to be much more far-reaching than present achievements. We have good reason to know how potentially dangerous to living creatures experiments on the structure of atoms can be, though no such outcome was foreseen by their inaugurators. What then, of experiments on the genetic constitutions of those creatures themselves? One can say that the unintentional production of uncontrollable monstrosities, though they might be no larger than viruses, cannot be ruled out as impossible. A discovery that would be described journalistically as a "major break-through" is greatly to be feared, if only because it would encourage the prevalent attribution to humanity of a new "creative" power, although a greater and more insidious danger is probably that of a qualitative deterioration in the animals and plants with which we are so closely associated[9]. And will such experiments always be confined to plants and animals? The notion of the recent acquisition by humanity of a quasi-divine creative power, considered in conjunction with the almost equally prevalent notion of the future evolution of a "superman", strongly suggest that experiments on the human constitution itself are not likely to be long deferred.

In looking at the picture as a whole, and more particularly at the factor of acceleration that dominates it, it is difficult to see how a severe crisis in agriculture can be avoided, or even postponed for very long. It is impossible to predict the form it might take, chiefly because its proximate cause might not be internal to agriculture. It might be connected with its recent loss of independence and self-sufficiency. It might also be connected directly or indirectly with the growth of world population, and then something not unlike the existing pressure would probably continue, although its cause would be very different. It is not at all difficult to envisage a situation in which the demand for cheap food had been replaced by a demand for food at any price; indeed such a situation seems almost certain to arise if the world persists in directing most of its endeavors to the provision of things that are, to say the least of it, far less necessary than food. There would then still be pressure, perhaps fiercer even than it is now, and it would certainly be even more quantitative and even less qualitative. The nature of any future crisis is impossible to foresee; but in so far as it affects agriculture as a whole, it will affect every man on earth. Meanwhile Great Britain is allowing an average of 50,000 acres of agricultural land to be permanently alienated for other purposes every year. Comment is superfluous.

One of the forms the crisis might take is that of what used to be called an "Act of God"; for instance, it might be precipitated by a readjustment of the earths crust. It is worth while to remember that, in the days when unpreventable disasters were attributed specifically to God, it was at the same time customary to thank Him for benefits received. The two attitudes combined represent an acknowledgment of dependence on God, good for the soul. It is good for the soul be-cause it keeps it in touch with reality; nothing is worse for the soul because

[9] This association is one of mutual dependence. Our dependence for survival on the plants is total, our dependence on the animals is less so, though in practice it is real enough; in both cases the quantitative aspect is more evident than the qualitative, although we ignore the latter at our peril. The plants and animals on the other hand, except for the cultivated species and varieties, are not physically dependent on us in the same way; they could survive if we were to disappear. Scientifically speaking, to say that the dependence of the plants and animals on man is of a spiritual order means nothing, because science is not equipped to take account of that order; nevertheless it is the truth,' and therefore must be stated. The function of humanity is essentially spiritual and mediatorial and it is exercised on behalf of the whole creation. When it is neglected the whole creation suffers. Therefore the plants and animals will bear witness against this generation of men in the day of judgment, despite all our societies for the conservation of Nature and for the prevention of cruelty.

nothing is more false, than any assumption of its independence of God in matters great or small. If in the past disasters were "acts of God", they are so still; if they were then "judgments" they are so still, as we admit involuntarily when we use the word "crisis", the literal meaning of which is "judgment. That the course of events in these days should be made up of a succession of "crises" following one another ever more closely, is no doubt more significant than most people seem to think.

Both the soul of man and the crust of the earth are subject to God's over-riding dispositions and to His judgments. The world with its inhabitants is multiple, but by virtue of its origin in the divine Unity it constitutes a unity. Whatever may affect one part affects the whole, and whatever affects the whole affects every part. That being so, it would be strange if changes in the crust of the earth and in human mentality were mutually independent, either in their preparatory stages or in their accomplishment. It is not so much a case of a change in one causing a change in the other, as of their proceeding from a common cause, although either may appear to play the part of cause at one time or another. For instance, a terrestrial upheaval may be the apparent cause of a change in human mentality, or man might be the apparent cause of a terrestrial upheaval by exploding the wrong thing in the wrong place, or by interfering with the penetrability of the atmosphere to certain types of radiation, and so on. In other words, all things move together, towards the fulfillment of the plan of the Great Architect of the Universe, and are interrelated at all stages and not only in their critical or explosive or conspicuous phases preparatory phases may nevertheless not be recognized as such. They may be imperceptible in the case of changes in the earth's crust, while at the same time evident in human affairs, wherein they can be "signs of the times" to anyone who can read them.

The accomplishment of any phase may be a disaster from the human point of view, not least when it is accompanied by a terrestrial upheaval. We forget that a terrestrial upheaval, though it is a death from the point of view of what precedes it, is a birth from the point of view of what follows it. The world or a world, is reborn, and it is reborn on a new soil, more fertile than that of the ancient worn-out lands. And if the cataclysm is a divine judgment so far as the preceding humanity is concerned, it is also the divine inauguration of a new humanity, restored to its Edenic state because no longer remote from a direct divine intervention and forgetful of it. And so a new cycle begins, and somewhere in its course an agriculture of some kind will become necessary, as it did with Adam. Science agrees with religion concerning the periodical occurrence of terrestrial cataclysms, on a lesser or on a greater scale; but the two differ profoundly concerning their implications[10]. Science can only see a way out for man through a hypothetical enlargement of his inventiveness, whereby the even more hypothetical opportunities for a human life on the terrestrial pattern afforded by the stellar universe might be opened up to exploration and exploitation. Religion offers a release of an entirely different kind; it is a release from all entanglements, physical or otherwise, and man can only find it in the unchanging Centre of his own being and of all being, wherein the Spirit dwells eternally and by

[10] The Hindu cosmology takes full account of the succession of cycles through which every "world" and every humanity passes on the way to its final reintegration in the Absolute. The first chapter of the Book of Genesis and the New Testament (in particular the 24th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel and the Book of Revelation) appear to be concerned only with the cycle in which the present humanity is involved; nevertheless, since every cycle, whether great or small, is a manifestation of universal laws, all cycles are basically analogous; the Biblical statement is therefore of more general application than it may at first sight appear to be. In other religions the point of view may be different; but in every case there is an adaptation of a comprehensive truth to the particular mentality of the people to whom the message is addressed. The message is always essentially the same.

its radiation confers on all that is peripheral whatever qualitative excellence it may possess.

If we seem to have wandered at times rather far from agriculture, it is because agriculture cannot be considered in isolation and at the same time realistically. It is the principal expression of our relation to Nature, far more so, for instance, than any aesthetic or sentimental relationship; it is woven into the texture of our whole existence and touches us at every point. From our creatural point of view, there is God and there is Nature and there is also man, whose body and mind are one with Nature, but who is made in the image and likeness of God, and is thus by appointment mediator between God and Nature.

Man cannot exercise his mediatory function effectively if he allows his gaze to wander from the God who appointed him to it and is always present to guide him if he will look for guidance. If he uses his God-given dominion over Nature, not in view of God, but of his own aggrandizement, he soon finds himself lonely and insignificant, vainly struggling against the forces of Nature; in the end even his own powers are turned against himself, so that he becomes his *own* worst enemy.

Nature manifests in change the changeless dispositions of the Almighty God; Nature has no choice. We have a choice, and we have exercised it in a manner and up to a point at which there seems to be no escape from the involvements it has brought upon us. The industrialization of agriculture is one of those involvements, and it may well prove not to be the least of them.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

The artist was not a special kind of man, but every man a special kind of artist. It was not for him to say what should be made, except in the special case in which he is his own patron making, let us say, an icon or a house for himself. It was for the patron to say what should be made; for the artist, the "maker by art", to know how to make. The artist did not think of his art as a "self-expression", nor was the patron interested in his personality or biography. The artist was usually, and unless by accident, anonymous, signing his work, if at all, only by way of guarantee: it was not who, but what was said, that mattered. A copyright could not have been conceived where it was well understood that there can be no property in ideas, which are his who entertains them: whoever thus makes an idea his own is working originally, bringing forth from an immediate source within himself, regardless of how many times the same idea may have been expressed by others before or around him.

Ananda K. Coomaraswamy.

Some Aspects of the Symbolism of the Fish[1]

by
René Guénon

THE symbolism of the fish, which is to be found in numerous traditional forms, including Christianity, is extremely complex and has many aspects which need to be clearly distinguished one from another. As regards the origins of this symbol, it seems to have come from the North, and may even be Hyperborean[2]; attention has been drawn to its presence in North Germany and in Scandinavia[3], and it is probably nearer in these regions to its starting point than in Central Asia, where it was no doubt carried by the great stream which, flowing from the Primordial Tradition itself, was later to give birth to the doctrines of India and Persia. It is moreover, generally speaking, in the symbolism of the peoples of the North above all that certain aquatic animals are to be found, as for example the octopus, which is particularly wide-spread among the Scandinavians and the Celts, and is also to be found in early Greece as one of the chief *motifs* of Mycenaean ornamentation[4].

Another fact which bears out these considerations is that in India the manifestation in the form of the fish (*Matsya-avatāra*) is considered as the first of all the manifestations[5] of Vishnu, the one which marks the very beginning of the present cycle, and that it is thus directly related to the starting point of the Primordial Tradition. It must not be forgotten, in this connection, that Vishnu represents the Divine Principle especially in its world-preserving aspect; this function comes very close to that of "Saviour" which is, more precisely, a particular instance of the wider function of Preserver; and it is truly as "Saviour" that Vishnu appears in some of his manifestations which correspond to moments of crisis in the history of the world[6]. Now the idea of the "Saviour" is also explicitly attached to the Christian symbolism of the fish, since when the fish stands for Christ, its Greek name *Ichthus is* considered as being made up of the initial letters of the words *Iesous Christos Theou Uios Sōtēr* (Jesus Christ God's Son Saviour). Nor can we take this last word simply as a matter of course because of its context in connection with Christ, for he has other emblems which allude more directly to other attributes of his and which do not formally express the function of "Saviour".

[1] *Symboles Fondamentaux de la Science Sacree*, ch. XXII

[2] See Rene Guenon, "The Wild Boar and the Bear" in *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Vol. I., No. I.

[3] L. Charbonneau-Lassay, *Le Poisson* in *Regnabit*, December 1926.

[4] The arms of the octopus are generally straight in Scandinavian figurations whereas they are coiled in spirals in Mycenaean ornaments. Here the *swastika,* or figures clearly derived from it, is also very often to be found. As a symbol, the octopus is related to the zodiacal sign of Cancer which corresponds to the summer solstice and to the "bottom of the waters"; hence the "malefic sense" which it can some-times have, the summer solstice being the Gate of Hell, *Janua Inferni*.

[5] The habitual Western term "incarnations" is not used here because the word is altogether inexact; the term *avateira* means the "descent" of the Divine Principle into the manifested world.

[6] It should be mentioned also, in this respect, that the last manifestations, the *Kalki-avatāra,* "He who is mounted on the white horse" and who is to come at the end of this cycle, is described in the *Purānas* in terms identical with those of the references, in the *Apocalypse,* to the second coming of Christ.

In the form of the fish, at the end of the previous Maha-Yuga, Vishnu appears to Satyavrata[7], who is to become, under the name of *Vaivaswata*[8], the *Manu* or Legislator of the present cycle. He tells him that the world is going to be destroyed by the waters, and he orders him to build the ark which is to contain the seeds of the future world; then, always in the same form, he himself guides the ark over the waters during the cataclysm; and this representation of the ark piloted by the divine fish is all the more remarkable for having its equivalent in Christian symbolism also. There is a "pontifical vestment brocaded with figures in which the remains of a Lombard bishop of the VIIIth or IXth century were enshrouded, and on which is to be seen a boat carried by a fish, image of Christ sustaining the Church[9]". Now the Ark, as well as the boat[10], has often been considered as a figure of the Church; the idea that we find expressed both in Hindu and Christian symbolism is thus one and the same.

There is yet another aspect of the *Matsya-avatāra* which is particularly worthy of note: after the cataclysm, that is, at the very outset of the present *Maha-Yuga,* he brings to mankind the *Vēda,* that is, according to the etymological meaning of this word which is derived from *vid* (knowing), Sacred Knowledge in its integrality; we have here an unmistakeable allusion to the Primordial Revelation, or to the "non-human" origin of Tradition. It is said that the *Vēda* subsists perpetually, being in itself prior to all the worlds; but it remains as it were hidden or enveloped in itself during the cosmic cataclysms which separate the different cycles, and it then has to be remanifested. The affirmation of the perpetuity of the Véda is moreover directly connected with the cosmological theory of the primordiality of sound among the sensible qualities, sound being the quality which belongs to ether, *ākāsha,* which is itself the first of the elements[11]; and this theory is ultimately the same as what other traditions express when they speak of creation by the Word: the primordial sound is the Divine Utterance through which, according to the first chapter of *Genesis,* all things were made[12]. Thus it is said that the *Rishis* or the Sages of the first ages "heard" the *Vēda:* Revelation, being like creation itself a work of the Word, is strictly speaking an "audition" for him who receives it; and the term that denotes it is *Shruti,* which means literally "that which is heard[13]".

During the cataclysm which separates this *Maha-Yuga* from the previous one, the *Vēda* was concealed in a state of envelopment in the conch shell (*shankha*), which is one of the chief

[7] The name means literally "dedicated to the Truth"; the element "Truth" is also to be found in the name of *Satya-Yuga* which denotes the first of the four ages or yugas of the *Maha-Yuga*. Noticeable also *is* the similarity between the word *Satya* and the name *of Saturn* who, precisely, was considered in Western Antiquity as the regent *of* the Golden Age ; and in the Hindu tradition, the sphere *of* Saturn *is* called *Satya-Loka*.

[8] Proceeding from *Vivaswat,* one of the twelve *Adityas* who are considered as so many forms of the Sun, in correspondence with the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and who, it *is* said, will appear simultaneously at the end of the cycle (cf. *Le Roi du Monde,* ch. IV and IX).

[9] Charbonneau-Lassay, *ibid.*

[10] In Ancient Rome the boat was one of the emblems of Janus, as were also the two keys, and both boat and keys have remained, together with the title *Pontifex Maximus*, among the chief emblems of the Papacy.

[11] Inversely, when a man is dying, the first of the senses to be "lost" or reabsorbed is normally the sense of smell corresponding to the element earth , then taste corresponding to water, then sight corresponding to fire, then touch corresponding to air, and finally hearing which corresponds, as we have seen, to ether. See the author's *La théorie hindoue des cinq éléments* in *Etudes Traditionnelles,* 1935.

[12] Compare also the beginning of the Gospel of St. John.

[13] For the distinction between *Shruti* and *Smriti* and the relationship between the two, see *Man and his becoming according to the Vedanta,* ch.l.

attributes of *Vishnu*. The conch is considered as containing the imperishable primordial sound (*akshara*) that is, the monosyllable O*m,* which is the name *par excellence* of the Word in its manifestation in the three worlds, while being, through another correspondence of its three elements or *matras,* the essence of the triple *Vēda*[14]. Moreover these three elements when reduced to their essential geometrical forms and graphically arranged in a particular manner, form the very shape of the conch; and by a rather remarkable concordance, this is also the shape of the human ear, the organ of audition, which in order to be fitted for the perception of sound must in fact have a disposition in conformity with the nature of sound. All this is clearly connected with some of the most profound mysteries of cosmology.

Like *Vishnu* in India, and also in the form of a fish, the Chaldaean O*annes,* whom some have expressly considered as a figure of Christ[15], likewise teaches men the primordial doctrine—a striking example of the unity that exists between what are, in appearance, the most diverse of traditions, a unity which would remain inexplicable if we did not admit their attachment to a common source. The symbolism of O*annes* or of *Dagon* seems moreover to be not only that of the fish in general but more especially that of the dolphin; among the Greeks the dolphin was connected with the cult of Apollo[16] and had given its name to Delphi; and particularly significant is the fact that this cult was formally recognised as having come from the Hyperboreans. The relationship between Oannes and the dolphin (there is, on the contrary, no clear indication of any such relationship as regards the manifestation of *Vishnu*) *is* above all implicit in the close connection between the symbol of the dolphin and that of the "woman of the sea[17]"(the *Aphrodite Anadyomene* of the Greeks); it is she, under various names, such as *Istar, Atergatis* and *Derceto* who appears as the consort of O*annes* or of his equivalents, that is, as representating a complementary aspect of the same principle—its *Shakti,* as the Hindu tradition would call her. This "Lady of the Lotus" (*Istar,* like *Esther* in Hebrew, means "lotus", and also sometimes "lily", two flowers which in symbol-ism are often interchangeable), like the Far-Eastern Kwan-yn, is also, in one of her forms, the "Goddess of the bottom of the seas".

To complete these remarks, we will also add that the figure of the Babylonian *Ea,* the "Lord of the Deep", represented as a being that is half goat and half fish[18], is identical with the figure

[14] On the presence of the same ideogram A U M in early Christian symbolism, see *Le Roi du Monde,* ch. iv.

[15] It is interesting to note in this connection that the fish head, which formed the head-dress of the priests of Oannes, is also the mitre of Christian bishops.

[16] This explains why the symbol of the dolphin is linked with the idea of light (See L. Charbonneau-Lassay, *Le Dauphin et le crustacé,* in *Regnabit,* January 1927, and *Le Bestiaire du Christ,* ch. xcviii, v.). Also worth mentioning in this connection is the function of saviour of the ship-wrecked which was attributed to the dolphin by the ancients. The legend of Arion provides one of the best known examples of this.

[17] This "woman of the sea" is not to be confused with the mermaid, although she is sometimes represented as having a similar appearance.

[18] Moreover, *Ea*, like the Egyptian scarab, holds in front of him a ball which represents the "Egg of the World". This "Egg" (*Brahmanda*), which contains the seeds of the world that is to be manifested, corresponds, as does also the conch shell, to the Sign of Cancer which is not only the opposite of the Sign of Capricorn, but also its complement. The positive aspects of Cancer have been treated at some length by the author in his article *L'Hiéroglyphe du Cancer* (*Symboles fondamentaux de la Science Sacrée, ch. XIX*) and elsewhere; and since in the present article the references have been mainly to its malefic aspect, it should perhaps be mentioned here also that it is only malefic as a gate of exit. But Cancer is necessarily the gate of entry into the individual human state for all except the *Avatara* who alone can enter through the Gate of Capricorn. Connected with this "initiatory" aspect of Cancer is its correspondence to the Feast of St. John the Baptist, to the silver key of the two keys of St. Peter, and to the Lesser Mysteries. (Translator's note).

of the Sign of Capricorn in the Zodiac and may well be its prototype; now it is important to remember, in this respect, that the Sign of Capricorn corresponds to the Winter solstice. *The Makara,* which takes the place of Capricorn in the Hindu Zodiac, is not unlike the dolphin; the symbolic opposition between the dolphin and the octopus must therefore have its roots in the opposition between two solsticial signs of Capricorn and Cancer (*in India* Cancer is represented by the crab), or between the Gate of Heaven and the Gate of Hell, *Janua Coeli* and *Janua Inferni*[19]; and this explains also why these two same animals should be found together in certain cases, as for example beneath the tripod at Delphi, and beneath the feet of the stallions that draw the solar chariot, as marking the two extreme points reached by the sun in its yearly course. It is important not to confuse the two signs in question with another sign of the Zodiac, that of Pisces, whose symbolism is different and should be related exclusively to the symbolism of the fish in general, especially in its connection with the idea of "vital principle" and of "fertility" (above all in the spiritual sense, like "posterity" in the traditional language of the Far East); those are other aspects, which can also moreover be related to the Word, but which are none the less to be clearly distinguished from those aspects which manifest it, as we have seen, under its two attributes of "Revealer" and "Saviour".

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

If anyone has these three qualities you may know God holds him to be His friend: First, a generosity like the generosity of the river; secondly, a benevolence like the benevolence of the sun; thirdly, a hospitality like the hospitality of the earth.

Chisti Shaikh Mu'inuddin.

[19] The function of the dolphin as guide of blissful souls towards the "Islands of the Blessed" is also evidently related to the *Janua Coeli*.

An Introduction to the Religious Thought of C. G. Jung

by
Philip Sherrard

TWO preliminary remarks must preface this paper. The first concerns the source material on which it is based. Jung had no "religion" in the commonly accepted sense of the word. He did not belong to any branch of the Christian Church, nor did he affiliate himself to any other explicit religious tradition, like Islam or Buddhism. Therefore on the face of it he did not accept any system of doctrine or dogma based on revelation and elaborated by the spiritual interpreters of the tradition in question. On the contrary, he claimed that he was a natural scientist, and that such religious ideas as he had were developed over the course of his life in relation to his empirical experience as a psychologist and the reading he undertook in order to reach an understanding of what he had experienced. If this is true, then his religious thought was in a continual state of growth and modification. It was fluctuating, rather than something stable. What he perceived or believed at certain times might be altered or even reversed by subsequent experience and reading. Therefore one would risk being unfair to Jung if one were to extract concepts and thoughts from the developing body of his work and to say that these represent his religious ideas. One would have to make sure that they were concepts or thoughts he maintained up to the end, and did not reject or modify out of recognition. Consequently, for the purposes of this short paper, it has seemed best to confine attention to his autobiography, *Memoirs, Dreams, Reflections* (London 1963), put together during the last years of his life and expressing his ideas at their most mature and most intimate level. This has the advantage that the English edition at least of this book has been supplied with a glossary giving, through extracts from earlier works, explanations of his central psychological concepts and terminology.

The second remark can be put in the form of a question: to what extent are we entitled to speak of "religious thought" at all where Jung is concerned? Religious ideas normally speaking derive from and refer to a world or truths that are regarded as supernatural or meta-physical. They are to do with metaphysical realities. It is not that Jung refused to discuss problems commonly called religious. It is even stated in the introduction to his autobiography that he "explicitly declared his allegiance to Christianity". But, as the introduction continues, he looked at religious questions from "the standpoint of psychology, deliberately setting a bound between it and the theological approach". In fact, this is an understatement, at least where intention is concerned. Jung not only sought to set a bound between psychology and theology. He denied the very basis of theological statement altogether. This he did from, as it were, both ends. First, he denied the objective existence of those metaphysical or meta-psychical realities which theological statements presuppose, and affirmed that there is no truth but purely subjective truth. "We are still a long way from understanding what it signifies", he writes (p. 15), "that nothing has any existence unless some small—and oh, so transitory—consciousness has become aware of it". Then he denied—as a necessary consequence, it might be said, of this initial denial—that there can be any statement or comprehension at all other than the psychological. The passage is worth quoting in full, since it shows how far Jung was willing to go in rejecting the validity of the theological standpoint (at least as theologians themselves understand it), and illustrates the contradictions in which he is involved as a result. "All conceivable statements",

he writes (pp. 322-323), "are made by the psyche . . . The psyche cannot leap beyond itself. It cannot set up any absolute truths, for its own polarity determines the relativity of its statements . . . In saying this we are not expressing a value judgment, but only pointing out that the limit is very frequently overstepped ... In my effort to depict the limitations of the psyche I do not mean to imply that only the psyche exists. It is merely that, so far as perception and cognition are concerned, we cannot see beyond the psyche . . . All comprehension and all that is comprehended is in itself psychic, and to that extent we are hopelessly cooped up in an exclusively psychic world". There are, in other words, no supra-psychic realities that man can comprehend, and all so-called theological statements that pretend to derive from and refer to such realities are really no more than psychological statements (if that) invested by their authors with a status which in the nature of things they cannot possess.

As is so often the case with those over-anxious to deny a point of view other than their own, Jung in fact is led into a position which contradicts what he wishes to affirm. In saying that "every point of view is necessarily relative" (p. 198), and that "all conceivable statements are made by the psyche", and that "all comprehension and all that is comprehended is in itself psychic", clearly what he wishes to emphasize is that no theological or metaphysical statement has the significance which a theologian or metaphysician would claim for it. It must in the nature of things be subjective, relative, psychic, and refer only to subjective, relative, and psychic realities. We are exclusively doomed to this relative, subjective, psychic world. But if that is the case, Jung's statements themselves are not exempt from these conditions. They too are relative, subjective, psychic. In that case, their categorical appearance is all bluff. Objectively, as enunciations of general truths they can have no significance. To say that "every point of view is necessarily relative" is virtually a meaningless thing to say, since, taken at its face value, then it itself represents but a relative point of view and so cannot apply as a general statement valid for every point of view. For a statement to be valid for every point of view there must be some point of view which is not relative but capable of embracing all points of view. Similarly, if all comprehension and all that is comprehended is in itself psychic, then Jung's statement that "all conceivable statements are made by the psyche" is again virtually meaningless. It has no status at all as a general truth, applicable to all statements, but simply represents Jung's own relative and subjective point of view. It could only have a general validity applicable to all statements on condition that it is true in a non-relative and non-subjective manner. But this, Jung says, it is impossible for any statement to be. Why, then, does Jung make this statement in such categorical terms, as if he were making a pronouncement which applies to all statements? Why, in effect, is he issuing a dogma—one, it is true, designed to undermine the traditional basis of religious dogma, but no less a dogma on that account?

The answer would seem to be fairly clear. Indeed, it is precisely this, that he did wish to undermine the traditional basis of religious dogma, as well as of all theological thought of the traditional kind. He wanted to clear the ground, establish a kind of *tabula rasa* on which to build afresh. So long as the great structure of Christian doctrine and dogma, regarded as sacred and inviolate, stood in the way, his own ideas could make little progress. But if he could show that this structure shared in all the necessary limitations of human thought as he conceived them, and was in fact essentially subjective and relative and psychic, its authority would be shaken. It would be seen to have no greater claims to validity and belief than any other system of thought. Indeed, it might even have fewer claims than other such systems, since these could often point to what is called empirical evidence in their support, whereas many of the dogmatic formulations of Christianity appear to flout such empirical evidence. Jung's task had therefore a

twofold direction. First he had to demonstrate that the claim of theology and dogma to possess a kind of eternal and objective status independent of the judgment and even the consciousness of particular individuals was groundless, and that in the nature of things they could possess no greater or more significant—less relative and subjective—status than any other thought-forms or mental formulations; and this he attempted to do in the way we have shown, by insisting that all statements are made by the psyche and that where our understanding is concerned we are hopelessly cooped up in an exclusively psychic world. And second, he then had to create his own system of thought, and to put it forward not as the truth in a theological sense, but simply as a series of tentative, limited observations based upon his purely pragmatic investigations of the human psyche. In other words, his system of thought could claim validity not because it was metaphysical, but precisely because it was not metaphysical; and he frequently asserts that unlike the theologians he does not overstep the limit, but bases what he has to say, individual and relative as it is, on solid scientific ground. "My Answer to Job", he writes (pp. 206-207), "was meant to be no more than the utterance of a single individual . . . I was far from wanting to enunciate a metaphysical truth. Yet the theologians tax me with that very thing, because theological thinkers are so used to dealing with eternal truths that they know no other kinds. When the physicist says the atom is of such and such a composition, and then he sketches a model of it, he does not intend to express anything like an eternal truth. But theologians do not understand the natural sciences and, particularly, psychological thinking".

This is very disarming, and one might well be taken in by it were it not for the fact that when it comes to the point Jung is quite as capable of making categorical statements lacking all so-called empirical basis as the most dogmatic theologian. Those few already cited could be matched by others occurring throughout the book. Indeed, it is quite clear from a reading of this book that Jung's thought is essentially religious. It may even be said that he regarded himself as the apostle of a new religion, one that should replace for western man the exhausted formulae of Christianity, and one that in this scientific age would stand far greater chances of acceptance if its own tenets could be presented in the guise of scientific theory, underpinned by solid psychological observation. Moreover, there seems to be little doubt that Jung regarded' his mission as God-given. He was, it may be recalled, the only son of a Protestant pastor, and eight of his uncles were also pastors. Religion, one might say, was in his blood. But it was not the religion of his father, or indeed of Christianity as the Church presented it. This religion was in many ways abhorrent to him. In his youth, he tells us (p. 55) the Church was a place of torment for him, and not until the age of thirty could he confront *Mater Ecclesia* without a sense of oppression (p. 30). Though greatly traveled, he could never go to Rome, and when in old age he at last decided to make the journey he had a fainting fit while buying the tickets and had to turn back (p. 269). But this dislike of the Church and its theology did not mean that he was therefore an atheist. On the contrary—and it is here one can discern to what extent he felt his mission was God-given—he considered that God disliked the Church and its theology just as much as he did, if not more. When still quite young, he had a terrifying and "sinful" thought. He thought of God sitting high up in the clouds on a golden throne and excreting a large turd which fell on the cathedral of his home-town and shattered it (p. 50). Later, in relation to this experience, he writes (p. 98): "Now I understood the deepest meaning of my earlier experience: God Himself had disavowed theology and the Church founded upon it". Therefore in undermining and denying the basis of traditional Christian theology and in propagating his own new gospel in its place, Jung did not feel he was acting in an arbitrary and irresponsible or godless manner. He felt he was carrying out the will of God. He had been entrusted by God with this mission: to make

clear to men what God had disavowed and why He had disavowed it; to save God Himself, and man with Him, from the theology and the Church which smothered them, and to proclaim a new religion of life to take the place of a moribund Christianity.

It is this that entitles us to speak of Jung's ideas as religious without doing them any violence. The main lines of his thought, his central concepts and images, constitute what really amounts to a theology and a mythology. Moreover, he did not himself regard this theology and mythology as anti-Christian. As we have seen, he professed his allegiance to Christianity. He thought Christianity of central importance for western man (p. 200). But he considered it needed to be "seen in a new light, in accordance with the changes wrought by the contemporary spirit". Otherwise, he writes, "it stands apart from the times, and has no effect on man's wholeness" (pp. 200-201). In effect, he thought Christianity had concentrated too much on the ideal, bright, and good side of man's nature, and this at the expense of the non-ideal, dark, and sinful side. When he was a young boy he had a dream of a phallus on a throne in an underground cavern. This had made it difficult for him to accept the conventional image of the Christian Saviour. "Lord Jesus never became quite real for me", he writes (p. 27), "never quite acceptable, never quite lovable, for again and again I would think of his underground counterpart, a frightful revelation which had been accorded to me without my seeking it". According to one interpretation of the dream the phallus represented the dark side of Jesus. Later it was revealed to him as "the breath of life", the "creative impulse" (p. 36). He thought that God, who had disavowed the theology and the Church that had concentrated on the ideal and good side of man, was now wanting "to evoke . . . his darkness and ungodliness" (p. 77). As we had, through traditional Christianity, failed to overcome or escape our anxiety, bad conscience, guilt, compulsion, unconsciousness and instinctuality from the bright, idealistic side, "then perhaps we shall have better luck by approaching the problem from the dark, biological side" (p. 149). In a way, one might say that Jung regarded it as his task to redeem the Devil. The Devil in Christian thought had come to represent everything that was evil, godless, instinctive, dark in life. All this was regarded as the opposite of God, Who was exclusively good, rational, bright. Consequently Christians had concentrated on suppressing all these "diabolic' aspects of themselves and on developing only their good, rational, bright aspects. The result had been the warping and sterility of human life. Now these "diabolic" elements needed to be released and integrated into man's experience of himself. Moreover, they must be seen not as belonging to the Devil as the enemy of God, but as aspects of God's own nature. What traditional Christianity had foisted on to the Devil as a figure diametrically opposed to God and had driven out into the wilderness as a kind of scapegoat, must now be seen to have its source in God. The Devil is also God. God is "the dark author of all created things, who alone was responsible for the sufferings of the world" (p. 97). The chthonic spirit, the spirit indicated in the dream of the underground phallus is the "other face of God", the "dark side of the God-image" (p. 163). It is God who has created the world and its sins (p. 206), and in failing to recognize this, in failing to recognize that God is the author of evil just as much as of the good, Christianity had promulgated a false idea of God whose acceptance had resulted in the gradual atrophy of man's creative life. Now God was calling for His dark evil side to be recognized and accepted once more, so that the dark evil side of human nature could also be recognized and accept-ed. Both God and man were seeking to be liberated from imprisonment in the good, ideal, bright, rational side of themselves, so that they could again function in their original wholeness. It was this call for liberation on the part of God and man to which Jung felt compelled to respond. It was this that constituted his religious mission and it was to the realization of this mission that he devoted his creative life and developed his

religious thought and mythology.

From an autobiographical and historical point of view, Jung's religious thought may be said to have begun as a reaction against the type of Protestant Christianity represented by his father, and then, by extension, against the extreme rationalism of the nineteenth-century western world. This Christianity seemed to amount to a more or less blind adherence to various articles of faith which one never questioned and which effectively cut one off from any real experience either of man or God. "The arch sin of faith, it seemed to me", he wrote (p. 98), "was that it forestalled experience". Together with the passive acceptance of this untested and unlived religious dogma went an elementary moral code based on a clear-cut and equally unquestioned opposition between good and evil, black and white. Living the Christian life seemed to consist solely in maintaining faith in this abstract bundle of Christian precept by turning a deaf ear to everything that assailed it, and in conforming to the prescribed moral code. It was a mixture of mental bigotry and moral will-power. Nor did the rationalism of current nineteenth-century scientific thought, against which men like Jung's father were so stubbornly opposed, seem any more satisfactory. This too seemed solely a device for shutting man off from any living contact with real life. The attempt to dominate everything by the reason seemed but to serve the secret purpose of placing one at a safe distance from real experience and "of substituting for psychic reality an apparently secure, artificial, but merely two-dimensional conceptual world in which the reality of life is well covered up by so-called clear concepts". Both the intellectual idealism and ethical dualism of Protestant Christianity and the naive rationalism of nineteenth-century science seemed to leave out of account and provide no explanation for those realities of which his youthful visions and experiences had made him aware. They seemed to leave out of account and offer no explanation for the whole irrational, dark, primitive, "evil" side of man's nature. This he was able to perceive more objectively when at a later stage in his life he made a journey to North Africa and came into contact with the Arab world. The passage in which he speaks of this, though it includes expressions and ideas deriving from a more fully formulated phase of his thought, deserves to be quoted because it demonstrates what he must have less explicitly realized when at the outset of his intellectual development he reacted against the religion of his childhood and the rationalism of modern western man. "The emotional nature of these unreflecting people (the Arabs)", he writes (pp. 230-231), "who are so much closer to life than we are exerts a strong suggestive influence upon those historical layers in ourselves which we have just overcome and left behind, or which we think we have overcome. It is like the paradise of childhood from which we imagine we have emerged, but which at the slightest provocation imposes fresh defeats upon us . . . The sight of a child or a primitive will arouse certain longings in adult, civilized persons—longings which relate to the unfulfilled desires and needs of those parts of the personality which have been blotted out of the total picture in favour of the adopted persona . . . The predominantly rationalistic European finds much that is human alien to him, and he prides himself on this without realizing that his rationality is won at the expense of his vitality, and that the primitive part of his personality is consequently condemned to a more or less underground existence ...".

Since the lifeless abstractions of the Christian faith, though supposedly referring to supernatural realities, and the two-dimensional conceptual world of the rationalists were both creations or at least appurtenances of man's everyday consciousness, and belonged to what he consciously believed or thought, Jung found it convenient to give that primitive part of the personality which modern western man had condemned to a more or less underground existence an opposite label and to call it the unconscious. This concept of the unconscious, later

elaborated into the "collective unconscious", is crucial to Jung's whole system of thought, so it is important to try to get clear what he meant by it. This is not an easy task, since in spite of its crucial position in Jung's thought it nevertheless remains a somewhat vague concept. To begin with, Jung seems to have thought of the unconscious as a kind of repository of all those psychic elements and drives which have either not entered man's conscious world, or been driven out of it, suppressed, because of his inability or unwillingness to admit them on the conscious level. He first became graphically aware of it in a dream. In this dream, Jung found himself in a two-storey house. He was on the upper floor. He first descended to the ground floor, and then to the cellar, and finally down into a cave cut out in the rock beneath the house, where there were two human skulls lying among scattered bones and broken pottery (p. 155). He interpreted the dream as a kind of structural diagram of the human psyche. The upper floor where he first found himself represented the consciousness; the ground floor stood for the first level of the unconscious, while the cave itself was the world of the primitive man in every human being. This primitive and deepest part of man's unconscious psyche borders, he writes, on the animal soul, just as the caves of prehistoric times were usually inhabited by animals before men laid claim to them (p. 156). On this interpretation the dream appeared to postulate "something of an altogether *impersonal* nature" underlying the psyche (p. 157). This, Jung says, was his first inkling "of a collective *a priori* beneath the personal psyche". He took it to be "the traces of earlier modes of functioning". Later, "with increasing experience and on the basis of more reliable knowledge", he recognized these earlier modes of functioning "as forms of instinct, that is, as archetypes" (p. 157). These archetypes and forms of instinct ("archetype" and "instinct" are synonyms in Jung's terminology, and their sense must on no account be confused with that of "archetype" in the traditional Platonic meaning of the word) constitute the unconscious. He calls this unconscious "collective" because, "unlike the personal unconscious (represented by the ground floor in the dream), it is not made up of individual and more or less unique contents but of those which are universal and of regular occurrence . . . The deeper "layers" of the psyche lose their individual uniqueness" (p. 357, note on the *Unconscious*). The collective unconscious is common to all people (pp. 136-137) and it consists of "archaic psychic components which have entered the individual psyche without any direct line of tradition" (p. 35).

This schematic representation of the psyche in the form of a house gives what one might call its vertical cross-section. But this vertical progression from lower to higher, from the cave to the upper storey, has its corresponding horizontal extension in man's actual historical evolution. Although Jung had become aware of limitations in the rationalism of nineteenth-century scientific thought, he did not on that account reject its theories, or at least all of them; and one of these theories which he accepted totally and interwove with his own thought so intimately that one can say that they stand or fall together, was the Darwinian theory of man's evolution. This theory he "married" to his own conception of the human psyche, and particularly of the unconscious. That is to say, he thought that the various layers of the human psyche had their counterparts in the various phases of man's evolution through the centuries on earth. The conscious aspect of the psyche represented man's present phase of evolution; those aspects of the psyche which in the course of his evolution western man has condemned to a more or less underground existence correspond to those historical layers in himself that he has overcome and left behind in the course of his evolution, but that still remain buried within him. Thus it is that the deepest level of the collective unconscious, the deepest part of man's nature, "borders on the life of the animal soul" (p. 156). This correlation of the psyche with man's evolutionary progress led him, inevitably, to reject Christian ideas of man's creation and

consequently of the structure of the human psyche, and to substitute his own ideas. "If the unconscious is anything at all", he writes (p. 320), "it must consist of earlier evolutionary stages of our conscious psyche. The assumption that man in his whole glory was created on the sixth day of Creation, without any preliminary stages, is after all somewhat too simple and archaic to satisfy us nowadays. There is pretty general agreement on that score... Just as the body has an anatomical pre-history of millions of years, so also does the psychic stream. And just as the human body represents in each of its parts the result of this evolution, and everywhere still shows traces of its earlier stages—so the same may be said of the psyche. Consciousness began its evolution from an animal-like state . . .". The Christian idea of man's psyche—that man's consciousness has its roots in the Divine and that only as a consequence of his degradation and immersion in earthly and animal existence has it become obscured—would seem here to be turned on its head: human consciousness began in the world of the animals and plants and over the centuries has been gradually emerging into the light of complete evolution. Perhaps nowhere does Jung's thought appear to be more non-Christian, not to say anti-Christian, than in relation to this crucial concept, the idea of the collective unconscious.

Man's psyche, then, is made up of its conscious and its unconscious components; and although fully-evolved consciousness is the goal towards which man's life is ultimately directed, only too often his actual state of consciousness, even in this latter-day phase of his evolution, is pathetically meager. Largely through an over-development of his reason, and his refusal to admit into consciousness anything which is not rational or capable of being rationalized, he has driven underground, suppressed, locked up in the unconscious all those primitive, irrational, instinctive contents of the psyche on which his vitality and creativeness depends. To such an extent has he done this that what one may take to be the proper relationship between consciousness and the unconscious in fully-evolved man has now been reversed; and far from man being truly aware of what he is, what he thinks he is bears little or no relationship to his total being. In fact, his true life now is not his conscious life at all, but his unconscious life. "Our unconscious existence", he writes (pp. 299-300), "is the real one and our conscious world is a kind of illusion, an apparent reality constructed for a specific purpose, like a dream which seems a reality as long as we are in it." The tenacity with which none the less modern western man clings to this conscious world, this illusion, at the expense of the unconscious world results not only in reducing his existence to a kind of shadow-play but also in chronic psychic dislocation. It is in fact the extreme resistance which the consciousness of modern western man offers to the unconscious contents of the psyche that produces the vast range of psychic disorders, both individual and collective, that characterize our time. Modern man has identified himself with what is at best but a superficial aspect of himself, and his real self lies buried within him, in the obscure substrata of the unconscious. It follows from this that if modern man is to recover his psychic health and realize what Jung calls his wholeness or complete form he must once again allow his submerged, suppressed, unconscious existence to enter his conscious world.

To this process whereby man bit by bit releases the submerged contents of his unconscious into consciousness and so achieves his wholeness of being Jung applies the term *individuation*. Individuation, the glossary states (p. 352), "means becoming a single, homogeneous being, and, in so far as individuality embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as "coming to self-hood" or "self-realization". It must not on any account be confused with the coming of the ego into consciousness, which results simply in ego-centeredness and autoeroticism. The self, that has to be realized through individuation, comprises infinitely more than the

ego. The self embraces not only the conscious, but also the unconscious psyche; and it does not simply embrace them, it is the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of the conscious mind. The self is the wholeness of the personality (p. 187), that which we are, the "principle and archetype of orientation and meaning" (p. 190). It is realized through a process of self-knowledge by means of which "we approach the fundamental stratum or core of human nature where the instincts dwell . . . This core is the unconscious and its contents" (p. 305). Through self-knowledge the psyche is transformed by changing the relationship between the ego, or human consciousness in the ordinary restricted sense, and the contents of the unconscious. What was before hidden and forced underground is now brought out into the open and liberated. In this psychic transformation what Jung calls the *anima* (or, in woman, the *animus*) plays a vital part. The *anima is* in a sense the transforming instrument, the go-between operating between the conscious and the unconscious world. She is a kind of psychopompos, establishing the relationship with the unconscious. Related to the unconscious in this way, she has, like the unconscious, a strongly historical character. "As the personification of the unconscious she goes back into prehistory, and embodies the contents of the past. She provides the individual with those elements that he ought to know about his prehistory. To the individual, the *anima* is all life that has been in the past and is still alive in him" (p. 267). She functions thus as a bridge or a door, leading into the unconscious. There, in the unconscious, she produces a mysterious animation, and gives visible form to ancestral traces, the collective contents (p. 183). Like a medium, she gives these contents a chance to manifest themselves. This they do in terms of images and myths. Images and myths are not human inventions. They are the spontaneous forms in which the unconscious reveals itself. Projected by the unconscious into the *anima* they can be grasped by the consciousness. Received in the consciousness, and there interpreted, they provide the means through which the contents of the unconscious are released into the consciousness. It is through myth and symbol that individuation is achieved. Through them, man can begin to live all those phases of his evolutionary past that are still present within him. Through them too he comes into contact with his primitive instinctive life, with those pre-existent dynamic factors which ultimately govern the ethical decisions of his consciousness (p. 305). Consciousness and unconscious are thus brought into relationship and harmony. Man reaches the goal of his psychic development, represented by the self. He achieves his wholeness.

These notions of the unconscious, the *anima,* and the process of individuation could be derived, Jung claimed, from empirical observation of his own and other people's psychic activity, although, as he admits (p. 192), psychology is subject far more than any other science to the personal bias of the observer. In fact, he seems to have arrived at them after a lengthy and dramatic confrontation with his own unconscious (see chapter VI), a confrontation which lasted over some eight years (1912-1920) and on which he embarked after his split with Freud. Hence it could be maintained that these notions are purely scientific notions and do not enter into the sphere of religious ideas at all. But they not only are so embedded in his religious ideas that it is impossible to speak of the latter without including them; they also—and this is more important—presuppose the acceptance of certain ideas which in this context one can only call religious. This is particularly true where the process of individuation is concerned. The process of individuation, or psychic transformation, through which the contents of the unconscious are released into the consciousness depends entirely on the understanding and interpretation of the myths and symbols in which these contents have revealed themselves to the consciousness. Their meaning and significance must be known and recognized. If they are

not understood and interpreted there is danger of miscarriage and the whole process of psychic development is in danger of failing or at least of being arrested. This means that before one can successfully complete the process of psychic transformation one must already be in possession of certain *a priori* principles of understanding and interpretation in the light of which one can give significance to the myths and images which the *anima* bears from the unconscious to the consciousness. Without these principles, one is simply working in the dark. There is no objective pattern of meaning, nothing according to which one can read the signs in which the unconscious is urgently seeking to transmit its messages. The process of individuation therefore pre-supposes the acceptance of certain ideas, certain principles of under-standing, which cannot themselves be derived from empirical observation but which must be applied as it were *ab extra* to the psychological process that is being observed. This is an inescapable condition of individuation. Its implications are considerable. They lead directly into the sphere of what in this context can only be called religious ideas.

Jung already recognized this, though perhaps not clearly, at quite an early stage in his career. His interest in mythology started before his own personal confrontation with the unconscious. It started, he writes (p. 158), in 1909, when he "read . . . through a mountain of mythological material, then through Gnostic writers . . ."; and it is evident that already the basic principles according to which he began to interpret the significance of the fantasies he experienced during his long personal confrontation with the unconscious were derived from his reading at this time. But after his personal confrontation, the need to find an objective standard of reference, a structure of *a priori* ideas allowing him to interpret the significance of the myths and images thrown up by the unconscious, became far more pressing. To under-stand the fantasies arising from this confrontation, he had, he writes (p. 192), "to find evidence for the historical prefiguration of my inner experiences". He had to discover where the premises underlying his experiences had already occurred in history. Unless he could do this, he writes (p. 192), he would never have been able to substantiate his ideas, since a psychologist depends in the highest degree upon historical and literary parallels if he wishes to exclude at least the crudest errors in judgment. In this crucial quest, Jung once more turned to the Gnostics. Between 1918 and 1926 he again "seriously studied the Gnostic writers, for they too had been confronted with the primal world of the unconscious" (p. 192). Whether it was because they provided a confirmation and elucidation of Jung's own personal experiences and intuitions, or whether it was because they consciously or unconsciously began increasingly to condition those experiences and intuitions themselves, there is no doubt that it was in the central religious ideas of the Gnostic writers that he found that objective pattern of meaning, that framework of *a priori* principles of under-standing and interpretation, according to which he evaluated the significance of the myths and images not only of his own and his patients' collective unconscious but also of the various religious systems in which they had in the past been enshrined. They were the historical configuration for which he sought; and having discovered them and accepted them, he from then on applied them with faithful conformity in his interpretation both of the dreams and fantasies he encountered in the course of his professional work and of such Christian and Biblical themes as the dogma of the Trinity or the story of Job. He also applied them in his interpretation of alchemical symbolism.

Jung's interest in alchemical symbolism seems to have arisen directly out of his reading of the Gnostics. Though the Gnostics provided him with his basic theological notions, he felt they were too remote in time to link up immediately with the psychological questions of today (p. 192). Accepting as he did the Darwinian hypothesis of evolution and applying it to the life of the

psyche through pre-historical and historical times, he had to find a corresponding evolutionary progress in the symbolic patterns in which the various stages of the emerging subterranean life of the unconscious had been reflected during the last two thousand years or so—between, that is, the time when the Gnostics had "confronted the unconscious" and the years in which he had confronted it. At first he failed to discern this progress; and it seemed that the tradition which might have connected the Gnostics with the present had been severed. Finally however he thought he discovered it, in the works of the alchemists. Alchemy, he claimed (though his claim is based on little other than his desire to establish the connection) represented the historical link with Gnosticism. "Grounded in the natural philosophy of the Middle Ages, alchemy formed the bridge on the one hand into the past, to Gnosticism, and on the other into the future, to the modern psychology of the unconscious" (p. 193). In alchemy, Jung writes (p. 196), "I had stumbled upon the historical counterpart of my psychology of the unconscious. The possibility of a comparison with alchemy, and the Uninterrupted intellectual chain back to Gnosticism, gave substance to my psychology"; and it was through the understanding of alchemical symbolism that he arrived at the central concept of his psychology: the process of individuation (p. 200). The chain was—or appeared to be—complete; and to demonstrate it Jung wrote his *Psychology and Alchemy* and his monumental *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. But this seemingly unbroken chain and its demonstration in Jung's works should not blind one to the fact that if it was the understanding of alchemical symbolism that led Jung to the central concept of his psychology, and so appeared to give it an objective authenticity, it was on the religious theories of the Gnostics that he based his understanding of alchemical symbolism itself. It was these theories that gave him his doctrinal premises. They are the ultimate key to his psychology and to the significance which he attributed not only to alchemy but also to human life in general.

We have already glanced briefly at certain of these theories, though without referring to their Gnostic antecedents. Their point of departure in Jung's case would seem to lie in his often repeated conviction that God is the author of evil and suffering as well as of good. Put in Biblical terms, God in His omniscience created everything so that the original parents of mankind—Adam and Eve—would have to sin. It was God's intention that they should sin (p. 49). This leads inescapably to the conclusion that in the final analysis God is responsible for the sins of the world (p. 206). The conventional Christian idea of God, therefore, as essentially and exclusively good, and as the author only of what is good, must be modified. God not only includes goodness in His nature; He also includes evil. He is *a complexio boni et mali*. In fact, not only good and evil are bound together in God; all opposites are bound together in Him. He is female as well as male. This Gnostic idea of a God who is the union of all opposites in a total complex form is at the basis of Jung's religious thought. In its light he refashioned the traditional Jewish and Christian idea of God. The God of the Old Testament is now shown to be a half-Satanic demiurge. The Christian Trinity is enlarged to a Quaternity, with the Devil as a holy fourth. In the account of Job's sufferings "we have a picture of God's tragic contradictoriness" (p. 206). Job is a prefiguration of Christ. He, like Christ, though to a lesser degree, is the suffering servant of God. Both had to suffer because of the sins of the world. It is God who is responsible for these sins. Because of His "guilt" in creating a world full of evil, God must perform an act of total expiation. This He does in subjecting Himself to ritual killing in the Crucifixion of Christ. It is this act of Christ that individual Christians seek to imitate in their lives. In this manner they help God atone.

From what has been said it is clear that in spite of his protests to the contrary, Jung oversteps

the boundaries between psychology and theology all along the line. His claim to reject the metaphysical and to restrain himself to the psychological is merely a device for attempting to make the psychical the only legitimate metaphysic. His psychology is virtually a new religion. It is true that this religion, unlike the frankly metaphysical religions, is not concerned with the relationship between the human soul and the supra-psychic transcendent Reality that nevertheless acts intimately upon and within the human soul. It is concerned with the relationship between the consciousness and those psychic events which do not depend upon consciousness but take place on the other side of it in the darkness of the psychical hinterland. It is a religion of pure psychic immanence. It is in confronting the soul's own immanent contents that man encounters the Divine. And this soul is simply the soul as it is, the "materialized" soul, not the soul detached and purified from "earthly" influences and contradictions. There is no question of any birth of the supra-psychical Spirit in the soul. There is only the realization of the self. Again it is true that Jung called this self the *imago Dei* in man. But in its realization man calls back the projection of his self on to a God outside or beyond him. It is not that this God is explicity denied. It is simply that He is not any longer regarded, as He is by the metaphysical religions, as the initiator and perfecter through His deifying power of that process of psychic transformation which is completed only when God has *taken the place of the self*. For the practical purposes of the realization of the Jungian self, God is unnecessary. One need neither pray nor have faith nor require the assistance of grace. It is the self alone that is regarded as the unifying, "deifying" power, the regulator and balancer and harmonizer of the conflicting forces in man. The self, in other words, assumes in man the status and function of the Gnostic God. It is the incarnation of this God—a god who unites male and female, good and evil, in a wholeness in which all opposites are integrated. In this way man becomes his own deity. He is the final form of the Gnostic *complexio*—Christ and Satan in one—now destined to appear on the earth as the identity of God and man.

Set in its historical context, Jung's psychology can be seen as a much-needed protest against the simplifications of scientific rationalism. It is a plea for man to face the realities of his own inner world, to take his own path in the fulfilment of his personal created destiny, and not to barricade himself, as is so often the case, behind an abstract structure of religious or metaphysical principles whose only real function is to prevent him from ever realizing who or what he is, to prevent him from ever developing the potentialities of his own unique being. "Anyone who takes the sure road is as good as dead", he writes (p. 277), and against this death he proclaimed "the risk of inner experience, the ad-venture of the spirit" (p. 140). He sought to affirm what the mechanistic attitude of the modern western mind ignored or denied—man's deep affinities with the natural world, the world of animals and plants, the beauty of earth and sky. He wished to see the spirit of life recognized in everything, not only in man but also in inorganic matter, in metal and stone; and he held that the phenomena of the natural world were expressions of the same energy—psychic energy, as he called it—as that which underlay the various phenomena of the human soul (p. 201). In his study of myths and symbols, he asserted against those who saw in these nothing but futile speculation or childish fantasies their prime significance as the spontaneous irreplaceable language of the human soul. "No science will ever replace myth", he wrote (p. 313), "For it is not that `God' is a myth, but that myth is the revelation of a divine life in man". But together with, or in spite of, all this, he accepted that hypothesis of scientific rationalism which perhaps more than any other is inimical and stultifying to man's inner growth—namely, the Darwinian hypothesis of evolution. And he also accepted a "metaphysic" which by affirming the idea of a purely immanent deity led inescapably to an idea far more

dangerous to human life than atheism itself—the idea of man as a naturally deified or divine creature. Man cannot take the place of God, since man's being can never attain to the essence of God. When nevertheless man tries to take the place of God, he steps over into the sphere not of God, but of the infernal powers of his own soul.

In his autobiography, Jung recounts (pp. 207-208) a dream he had quite late on in his life. In this dream, Jung and his father enter a house. They come into a large hall which was the exact replica of the council hall of Sultan Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri. Only from its centre a steep flight of stairs ascended to a spot high up on the wall. At the top of the stairs was a small door, and Jung's father said to Jung: "Now I will lead you into the highest presence". Then he knelt down and touched his forehead to the floor. Jung imitated him, likewise kneeling, but he could not bring his forehead quite down to the floor. Meditating on this dream afterwards, Jung declares that this failure to put his forehead to the floor in the dream "discloses a thought and a premonition that have long been present in humanity: the idea of the creature that surpasses its creator by a small but decisive factor".

In ancient Iranian literature there is a story of a primeval king, Yima, whom the highest god, Ahura Mazdah, sets over the world he has made, to protect it and nourish it. This Yima does. In response to his sacrifices the gods free man and cattle from death, and water and trees from drought. They give Yima command over all lands, and also over all the demons, so he can free Ahura Mazdah's creatures from evil. But in the course of time the world falls into materiality and Ahura Mazdah says he will send a great winter over the earth so that no creature can live on it. Yima is told to make a fold, a kind of fortress, and there to gather the seed of all living things. This Yima does as well. Then, however, he begins to extol himself. He begins to think that all that has happened, all the great benefits that have come to the world and its creatures, has happened and have come as a result of what he is and what he has done. He begins to see himself as the real lord of creation, and to ascribe his mastery over all the powers of nature and his own being to himself, and to boast that he is the author of life and immortality. At precisely this moment his royal glory leaves him and he falls into the grip of the demons who drive him out over the face of the earth and eventually destroy him. When Yima regards himself, and what he is in his own created existence, as self-sufficient, and so feels that he is relieved of all need to look for true being beyond himself, he relegates his god and creator, Ahura Mazdah, to the realm of the unnecessary. He virtually proclaims himself his own creator. It is at this point of self-assertion that he falls into the power of the demons that eventually destroy him.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Jung's own thought, culminating in the idea of the creature that surpasses its creator by a small but decisive factor, attains an identical point of self-assertion, with all the disastrous consequences this has for the integrity of human life.

Man, Creation and the Fossil Record

by
Michael Negus

THE Theory of Evolution is a production of contra-traditional, western civilization. It is impossible that such an idea could have arisen in a civilization guarded by Tradition, in which essentials always take first place to accidentals. Evidence for the theory is derived from fossil remains, the accumulation of which is an extremely laborious process, involving considerable excavation of subterranean regions, bringing to light things which have, in the natural course of events, been buried. The difficulty of obtaining such information should be counted a blessing since it is not only concerned with what is purely accidental but also with "solidification" and death.

However, this does not mean that the fossils do not have their first principle in God, far from it. In fact the function of this paper is to present an interpretation of the fossil record within the framework of cycles and principles rather from a viewpoint of accidentals and "progress" which characterize the profane mentality.

Before trying to interpret the characteristics of previous cycles it is necessary to understand the cycle in which we live and the relationships within it. Because of the analogy between microcosm and macrocosm, there is a direct relationship between the human psyche and the collectivity of all other beings on earth. Human consciousness is linked up with the individual spirit (*jivatma*), the mental faculties (reason, memory, imagination) and the interior continuities of the senses and organs of action. Consciousness (*ahankâra*) is the uniting principle of these three divisions of the psyche. Likewise among non-human beings the vertebrate form is the uniting principle of the three vertebrate types, birds, mammals and fish, which correspond to the three psychic domains mentioned above. Birds have a spiritual or elevated nature, mammals an expansive one, whereas fish are "trapped" within an aquatic domain which corresponds to sensory experience. The invertebrate animals and plants correspond to the lower part of the psyche, closely linked to the body. The invertebrates represent the emotive aspects while the plants, the physiology of which is inseparably linked with the sun as well as the atmosphere, represent the vital part of the psyche which maintains the life of the body.

Sufficient has been said to indicate the harmony which exists between the external and internal worlds. But it should be remembered that the principle of harmony also operates within each world; the principle in fact being identical to the Hindu concept of *Dharma*. This Cosmic Harmony is the principle which accounts for the coordination of all the beings in the cosmos and which maintains, on the terrestrial plane, "ecological" integration. One of the consequences of harmony is the process of "natural selection", so cherished by transformists. In fact natural selection is only one, accidental manifestation of the principle of harmony. Natural selection operates in two ways; firstly it maintains the norm of the species by eliminating deviations or mutations which result from the imperfections of formal, space-time existence; secondly it acts to coordinate the relationship between the various species by bringing about genetical change of form. This is allowed by a certain degree of flexibility of the psychic and corporeal aspects of the being; however there are well defined limits beyond which harmonious flexibility is impossible and beyond which only deformation or mutation exists. The amount of harmonious adaptation which any one species is capable of undergoing will depend upon the nature of the primitive, created species, but undoubtedly in some cases the change is considerable. Thus the

ass, the horse and the zebra probably comprise one species, all being derived from the primitive form which contained, within itself the possibilities manifested by the modern sub-species. The primitive form was a plastic creature whereas the modern forms are isolated and specialized, corresponding to certain restricted combinations of possibilities inherent in the primitive form. Thus we see that whereas adaptability enhances the harmony between species and environment it also means specialization and finally disharmony and elimination. This is in close relationship to the life of an individual which includes birth, growth and change, and finally death.

These cyclical events lead us to a consideration of the much greater cycles involving large numbers of beings and species which are illustrated by the so-called fossil record. Evolutionists have great difficulty in applying an evolutionary pattern to the invertebrate animals and the plants except for the adaptive sequences which we have described above.[1] They are mainly concerned with vertebrate animals and these will also be our chief concern.

The world appears to be a very solid and permanent place, but there is no reason to suppose that this has always been the case. The process of creation or formation may be regarded as a movement from "fluidity" to "solidity" or from "potentiality" to "actuality".[2] One can imagine that such a process is extremely plastic and has great potential for integration and harmony, each being "unrolling" and "solidifying" at precisely the appropriate moment. Even after formation each being is not fully solidified (as we mentioned above), but only becomes so after a period of genetical specialization. Thus creation may be seen to include two dimensions: one a "descent" from potentiality to actuality, the other a "horizontal" movement from primitive plasticity to specialization. Only the later movement takes place in time and space and consequently it is only this dimension which is represented in the fossil record.

The account of creation in the Book of Genesis provides a suitable guide for the interpretation of the fossil record.[3] Genesis describes six cycles beginning with the creation of the Intellectual Light (*Buddhi*) and ending with the creation of man. The relation between the two does not have to be stressed. In the second cycle we see the separation of supra-formal and formal possibilities ("upper and lower waters"), and in the third cycle the first solidification of the formal possibilities in the creation of "earth", that is, the whole of mineral creation. This process signifies an actualization of certain possibilities of the lower psychic domain. The procession of plants, which terminates the third cycle and inaugurates the fourth, coincides with the creation of the luminaries[4], which are, so to speak, signs of actualization of the upper psychic domain, in relation to the archetypes present in the supra-formal world.[5] The relation between light

[1] This is because of the extremely horizontal nature of these peripheral beings. It is extremely difficult to define the limits of the species in the invertebrates and almost impossible in the plants where even the concept of individuality breaks down. The change which the fossil record shows for peripheral beings must be regarded as passive due to their proximity to the substantial pole of existence. The vertebrates on the other hand play a far more essential role to which the peripheral beings "respond". This is particularly clear in the fossil record of the plants which are the most passive of the peripheral, living beings, and to which we shall refer later.

[2] Compare the article "Cosmology and modern science" by Titus Burckhardt in *Tomorrow,* volume 12, number 4, (Autumn, 1964).

[3] The symbolism of Genesis is complex and synthetic. The commands are not given in time, no more than each *cycle* is actually one day. The fossil record is merely a temporal, sequential reflection of the commands which are in themselves supra-temporal.

[4] The heavenly bodies are traditionally regarded as "supports" for the faculties of the universal soul which is the cause of all change in the sub-lunar world.

[5] The slow rotation of the heavenly sphere is the first sign of the descent of harmonizing, spiritual influences into

and vegetation has been noted above and one should also remember the role of astrology in psychology as well as plants in medicine, and the traditional use of both with regard to the harmony of psyche and body.

The cycles are developments of the possibilities contained synthetically in the Intellectual Light. The harmony of each cycle is due to the integrity of the Intellect and, so far as the formal world is concerned, to the Law which regulates each cycle, giving each its particular characteristics.

The fifth and sixth cycles are of particular interest so far as this paper is concerned since they correspond to the formation of the greater part of the fossil record. The fifth cycle is begun by the creation of the fish and ended by the creation of the birds, while the sixth cycle is begun by the creation of land beasts (i.e. mammals) and terminated by the creation of man. The term creation does not imply that the being in question was not "present" before its creation but rather that during the course of the cycles certain beings "clothed" themselves according to their characteristic possibilities and "emerged" into the formal domain.

The duration of the fifth cycle corresponds to the vast geological period between the middle of the Old Palaeozoic and the end of the Mesozoic. The first fossils to be found are fish, then during the New Palaeozoic and Mesozoic there are amphibians and reptiles. Finally at the end of the Mesozoic fossil birds appear. Here we see a linear and successive emergence of possibilities between two poles, the lower corresponding to the Paleozoic fish and the upper to the cretaceous birds. We would expect to find a continuous series of possibilities between these two extremes; thus in addition to amphibians and reptiles we find fish/amphibians, amphibian/reptiles and reptile/birds. However, because of phyletic considerations (which are determined by cosmic laws) we would expect to find few intermediary creatures since each merely acts as an "isthmus" between adjacent domains, to fulfill certain metaphysical requirements, such as the "equispatial" development of individuals. The creative movement of the fifth cycle involves a passage from aquatic, through terrestrial forms to birds which rise above the earth's surface. The medial creation of the cycle is represented by the amphibian/reptile *Seymouria*. A study of the fossils which are found above *Seymouria* is of interest in illustrating the complexity of the creative process, when several secondary cycles may be operating lateral to and in conjunction with the main cycle. During the Permian, Triassic and lower Jurassic periods, in addition to the Cotylosaur/ Thecodont reptiles which are "central" in relation to a line from fish to birds, we see the creation of lateral reptilian creatures including tortoises and the so-called mammal-like reptiles. The latter beings are of considerable interest since they are creations of a secondary cycle which includes the non-eutherian mammals (e.g. monotremes and marsupials) which still exist today. This secondary cycle forms a link between the major fifth and sixth cycles and may be regarded as a lateral extension of both cycles maintaining a continuous link of possibilities between them.[6]

The sixth cycle is of particular interest because it includes the formation of mammals and man. Man occupies a central position in the creation since "made in the image of God" he is the only being which has direct and free access to the supra-formal world. It is significant that subsequent to the creation of man the Creator is said to "rest", that is to say that he "retreats" to his original Centre of "actionless activity", which constitutes the inner reality of which man

the lower world.

[6] The "lateral" nature of the non-eutherian mammals is also seen in their geographical position.

is the exterior aspect.

Man is not only the image of God, he is also a eutherian mammal, and these two parts of his nature are inseparably linked. Within the *Eutheria* two divisions may be seen: those which bear a close physical resemblance to man, namely the *Primates* and those which are diverse in structure and unlike man. The latter group includes all the non-primate *Eutheria*. It is true to say that not only is man supreme, but also primate structure is supreme. The former truth is seen in the separateness of man from the other mammals, while the latter truth is seen by the "dominance" of the primate characteristics over the earliest eutherian mammals. In fact the first eutherians of the Cretaceous were intermediate between primates and insectivores, the insectivores being the most "peripheral" of the mammalian beings. The events of the sixth cycle have two characteristics: a) the successive approximation from "diffuseness" (earliest eutherians) to "centrality" (man); b) the creation of beings "intermediate" between the "periphery" (insectivores) and the "centre" (man). The "intermediate" beings which include the rodents, carnivores, horse and cow types etc., need not concern us but the primates are of considerable interest because of their formal resemblance to man. In relation to the insectivores, tree shrews and monkeys the apes are more central, but in relation to man the apes are extremely decentralized. The fossil record indicates the presence of numbers of beings which in structure were intermediate between apes and man. There is some evidence to suggest that these creatures were also psychically intermediate between apes and men; however with regard to spiritual possibility they were certainly not men and consequently had a zombie-like character. They form part of the sixth cycle macrocosm whereas man is the seventh cycle microcosm.

The first fossilized human skeletons are found in the Reindeer Age or Upper Paleolithic (Upper Pleistocene). These men appear to have been responsible for the beautiful cave paintings found in western Europe. It is clear that they represent a developed culture with a Tradition dependent upon nature for its symbolism, in some respects similar to the North American Indians. The Upper Paleolithic men can in no way be said to be primordial. The first formalization of man probably occurred in the Miocene period, during which the Himalayas and Tibetan plateau were formed.[7] This region is symbolically related to the *axis mundi*[8], and consequently to man.

So far we have only considered the creative aspects of the cycles but in addition to these "positive" effects there are also "negative" or destructive effects. We shall consider two cases of destruction both of which indicate "anticipation" of future events. The greatest example of destruction is that which terminated the fifth cycle when all the archosaurian reptiles disappeared, never to be seen again. This catastrophic event coincided with the creation of the first birds and mammals. Earlier in the fifth cycle, when the first reptiles were being created, an aquatic destructive phase took place when almost all the Paleozoic marine vertebrates were eliminated. The seas were re-populated with the modern type of teleostean fish later in the fifth cycle, just before the creation of the birds. The creation of the teleostean fish was the first sign of the approaching sixth cycle which would bring about the elimination of the reptiles and their replacement by mammals. Such events indicate the complex and overlapping nature of

[7] There is every reason to suppose that primordial man was not at all solidified and this accounts for the absence of fossils.

[8] Mount Kailas and the four rivers which radiate from it (Indus, Brahmaputra, Ganges and Sutlej) correspond to the Paradise of Genesis.

the cycles and illustrate the fluidity of the creation process.

The seventh cycle begins with the creation of man, who is the microcosm corresponding to the macrocosm of the sixth cycle. There is no further creation after man. The sixth cycle as we have said is characterized by birds, mammals and teleostean fish, and so we return to the psychological considerations presented at the beginning of this paper.

The invertebrate animals and the plants constitute the lowest part of the macrocosm and consequently "conform" to the higher changes which are taking place, in the same way as vertebrate creations "con-form" to astrological movements. The passive nature of the lower part of the macrocosm is best seen in the fossil record of the plants. Thus the *Pteridophyta* belong to the fifth cycle and the *Angiospermae* to the sixth. It is worth noting that the interval between the emergence of the "lower" pteridophytes and the "upper" pteridophytes corresponds to the time of existence of *Seymouria,* the amphibian/reptile which occupied the medial isthmus of the fifth cycle.

At the beginning of this paper it was said that there is an analogy between the unifying nature of human consciousness and the phyletic unity of the vertebrate form. Man is thus not only the central and principal mammal, but he is also the principle of the vertebrate body and psyche. This is clearly seen in embryology and has given rise to the erroneous Theory of Recapitulation. It is a well known fact that the young stages of different vertebrates resemble one another more than they resemble the adult stages, and more than the adult stages resemble one another. When the embryology of man is compared with that of other vertebrates it is seen that the early stages are very similar. In later development, however, the non-human vertebrates "deviate" and become specialized in particular respects. For example the visceral pouches which occur in the pharyngeal region of all vertebrate embryos are arrested in development in fish to give rise to the gills, whereas in man their development continues until eventually they are converted into glandular organs and parts of the ear. The amount of change in form with regard to the original embryonic structure is least in man and most in non-human vertebrates. Using the analogy of a tree we can say that whereas the embryology of man proceeds along the central axis or trunk, that of other vertebrates deviates in various places giving rise to side branches, each of which may be regarded as a particularized specialization of the trunk. Therefore the form of man is the vertebrate "norm" and the other vertebrate forms are aspects of the "norm". This is another way of saying that Man is an expression of the Intellect and animals are particularizations of the Intellect.

This paper is in no way intended to be "dogmatic", but rather is written in the spirit of traditional science, in which the study of nature is not pursued for its own sake but for the purpose of allowing the student to discover himself. It is also intended to show that traditional texts are not at all naïve but are exact and true. This is because of their spiritual origin which is also the origin of the whole creation.

Book Review

SACRED ART IN EAST AND WEST:
Its Principles and Methods
by Titus Burckhardt (Perennial Books, 35s.)

Review by Gai Eaton

It is peculiarly difficult in an age which regards art and, indeed, beauty itself as a luxury (icing on the cake of "real life") to bring home to people the nature of sacred art and the role it has played in societies less profane than our own. Among the truths considered self-evident is the ready assumption that men's essential needs are, almost by definition, physical, men being "essentially" no different to battery hens and the like; all else is, in the last resort, "inessential" and, in an increasingly overcrowded world, there is less and less room for inessentials.

Mr. Burckhardt's book, the most outstanding study of sacred art that has appeared since the death of Ananda Coomaraswamy, offers a powerful corrective to the errors and illusions upon which this attitude is based. In spite of the author's considerable erudition, this is not an academic work, but a study of what real art has been in the past and of what it still is in those few regions of the world that have not yet been completely overrun by modernism.

Sacred art, in these terms, is not merely art which happens to have as its theme a sacred subject, but art inherently sacred (whatever its theme may be) both in its nature and in the manner of its execution, a making on earth of things that are rooted in Heaven, the shadowing forth here of things that truly reside there and the creation, so far as the human environment is concerned, of something which carries with it the perfume of a Paradise seemingly lost and almost forgotten, yet still slumbering within us. Sacred art is an art which makes us remember what we are. It is as though the smoke from a great fire had gradually blackened everything around us (except for virgin nature), and these works alone remain clean and clear, fresh with the freshness of the first creation.

It is significant that Mr. Burckhardt's book opens with a chapter on the "Genesis of the Hindu Temple", for temple building consists in placing one solid stone upon another, stones heavy to carry, scarring the hands; and this is as far as possible from those aery fantasies and that unrealistic idealism which pass for "spiritual" in our time. Just because religion, relegated to a little private corner of life, has been emasculated and etiolated, we need most desperately to see it related once more to the concrete. The sacred art with which this book deals is at once concrete and precise. It is an art which, by its very nature, offers to physical sight and touch that which is real with a harder, more compelling reality than the everyday world with which we are familiar; and it is, at the same time, supremely *useful*. "One of the fundamental conditions of happiness", says Mr. Burckhardt, "is to know that every-thing that one does has a meaning in eternity; but who in these days can still conceive of a civilization within which all vital manifestations would be developed 'in the likeness of Heaven'? In a theocentric society the humblest activity participates in this heavenly benediction".

This book deals with the sacred art of five great traditions: Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Taoism; and, in the context of the first of these, the author has chosen to deal primarily with temple construction since "among settled peoples the sacred art *par excellence* is the building of a sanctuary in which the Divine Spirit, invisibly present in the Universe, will

'dwell' in a direct and, as it were, personal sense". Here it is a question of establishing in one place a Centre which, although everywhere present, is not apprehended so far as human beings are concerned until it is localized—one might almost say, pinned down. And since that which is central in relation to all that is extended in the Universe is itself single and indivisible, each such localization is unique, not merely "a centre" but "the Centre". Mr. Burckhardt shows (with the aid of a number of useful diagrams) how the directions of space are coordinated in the plan of the temple, so that the immeasurable is given measurable, rectangular form, a small and entirely sacred cosmos created in the image of the great one, so that men who are too easily lost in the boundless space outside find here a sanctuary within which the journey to their own divine centre is a journey of manageable proportions; and he shows also that the actual construction of the temple (in common with the true "making" of any sacred work) has an "alchemical" significance "in so far as it is the support of an inward realization in the artist himself".

The transition from Hindu to Christian art involves less of a journey than many readers might expect, for traditional art, however varied its manifestations and how-ever different its flavour as between one sacred world and another, always grows from a root that is indivisible, and it is always a single truth that is being expressed in its inexhaustible richness. For the medieval craftsman in Europe, as for his Hindu counterpart, the great work upon which he was engaged involved the formation of a cosmos out of chaos. For him there was analogy between the Church or Cathedral and the body of Christ, while at the same time the cosmos itself was the "body" of the revealed Divinity. And, while outwardly at work with hammer and chisel, he was simultaneously at work on his own soul, changing it "from a crude stone, irregular and opaque, into a precious stone penetrated by the Divine Light".

In a chapter entitled "I Am The Door" the author gives particular consideration to the iconography of the Romanesque church portal, which itself recapitulates the nature of the sanctuary as a whole, for "a sanctuary is like a door opening on the beyond, on the Kingdom of God"; and he demonstrates how the theme of Christian charity is inherent in the iconography: "Charity, then, is the recognition of the untreated Word in creatures; for creatures do not show their real nature except in so far as they are poor and needy, that is to say, cleansed of pretensions and of all powers attributed to themselves. He who recognizes the presence of God in his neighbor, realizes it in himself; thus it is that spiritual virtue leads towards union with the Christ, Who is the Way and the Divine Door".

In his chapter on Islamic art Mr. Burckhardt stresses that the Unity upon which Islam is centered can only be expressed outwardly in abstract terms, but he warns against any attempt to equate this kind of abstraction, which "manifests as directly as possible Unity in multiplicity", and the private "abstractions" of modern European art which express in uneasy fashion the obscure impulses that come from the unconscious. In Islamic art all is clarity and light, the artist releasing and making apparent the beauty that inheres in all things that come from God (in accordance with the saying of the Prophet that "God is beautiful and He loves beauty"), conferring on stone or stucco the quality of precious jewels.

After brief sections on "The Image of the Buddha" and on "Landscape in Far Eastern Art", the author considers in a final chapter the decadence and renewal of Christian art. Particularly interesting—and particularly important as a corrective to the ideas so mercilessly pumped into school-children in the West—is his comparison of the "flowering of genius" at the time of the Renaissance to what happens, on the individual level, when a man abandons a spiritual discipline and gives himself free rein: "Psychic tendencies that have been kept in the background suddenly come to the fore, accompanied by a glittering riot of new sensations having all the

attractiveness of possibilities not yet fully explored; but they lose their fascination as soon as the initial pressure on the soul is relaxed". Yet there is an urge to maintain the momentum, and this can only be maintained by descending to ever lower levels of experiment and experience, just as water is kept moving only if it is channeled downwards. The first exuberance exhausted, man ends by seeking to renew that "glittering riot" in regions where only ugliness and pain can provide a comparable intensity of sensation. In art as in life, once the centre is lost, the teeming, uncoordinated flood of possibilities—expressed in new styles, new fashions, which succeed each other ever more swiftly—leads directly to exhaustion and to chaos.

A renewal of Christian art, says Mr. Burckhardt, is not conceivable without an awakening of the contemplative spirit at the heart of Christianity; and indeed, if it is not to be carried away in the chaos of the modern world, the Church must retire within itself. The seductions of that fatally descending movement which has the profane world in its grip can be resisted only by a Church which returns to its origins, not in time but beyond time. In the absence of this foundation, every attempt to restore the sacred art of Christendom must fail.

But the richness of this book cannot be summarized, for it springs from the essential unity of the author's outlook, a unity which transcends and dominates the breadth and variety of his themes. Behind all sacred art (and also within it) lies the Sacred itself, single and indivisible in the midst of its manifestations. And what we learn from this study, if we are prepared to learn, has a bearing not only upon the human environment in which we live, but also upon the nature of that inner reality by which we live.

New Books

Reviewed by J. C. Cooper

Crisis in Consciousness, by Robert Powell (James Clarke, 25s.), may be regarded as a development of the author's *Zen and Reality* the main theme of which was the importance of self-knowledge; now he continues with the need not only of self-knowledge but also for self-changing. He rightly maintains that the confusion and turmoil in which the world finds itself today is only a reflection of the same conditions in the minds of individuals and that it is useless to try to change external conditions without first changing the inner man since "eventually the inner will always overcome the outer", and that from confused minds only confusion can emerge. The book includes lectures given to the London and Cambridge Buddhist Societies and articles published in *France-Asie* and *Darshana International.*

Two books have appeared recently having the same Ramakrishna Order, non-dualistic Vedanta background. The larger work is *Religion in Practice,* by Swami Prabhavananda (Allen and Unwin, 40s,), and is a series of twenty-five lectures, given to the Vedanta Society of South California, on the practical application of religion, and there is also a section of questions and answers appended. The teaching is that man is fundamentally spirit, the Self, and that only in this realm will he solve his personal and intellectual problems and find the Kingdom of God within. Body and Mind must be used in so far as they serve to help the realization of the spirit. Religion must be practical since "you cannot appease your own hunger if somebody else eats for you". Nor, as history has demonstrated, can any world Utopia be established by material progress. "The ideal, the end of life, is the unitive knowledge *of* Godhead". The second book, *Man in Search of Immortality,* by Swami Nikhilananda (Allen and Unwin, 25s.) is a smaller volume and consists of five articles on the subject of the immortality of the soul. The nature of the soul, "The Unborn, eternal, permanent and primeval", and its immortality, is established from the authority of the Upanishads and the experiences of the sages and mystics. This immortality is no mere continued existence in time, but complete liberation from desire and illusion.

As Archie J. Bahm says in *The World's Living Religions* (Dell, paper-back, 75e.) there is a steady stream of books on Comparative Religion and he rightly refers to the "uneven quality in the fairness with which religious proponents deal with this problem of comparing religions". He is, therefore, careful to avoid sectarian bias in his own work and, while admitting the Christian and Western influences of his background, is successful in approaching other religions with sympathetic under-standing. While realizing the weakness of any attempt to develop a "world religion", the book emphasizes the inter-relatedness and the unifying elements in all the great traditions. One would, however, query the validity of including Humanism as a world religion.

Another paper-back on the same subject is *The Meaning and End of Religion,* by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (Mentor, 75e.). Dr. Smith, a well-known Professor of Comparative Religion, approaches the world religions from a different point of view, examining the meaning that each religion has for the individual committed to that particular faith in the present situation. He maintains that no founder of a great religion ever intended to found a religion, except in "the special case of Islam", to which he devotes a long section. His final conclusion is that the term "religion" should be abandoned and what is now called religion should be "conceived in terms of two factors, different in kind, both dynamic: an historical "cumulative tradition", and the

personal faith of men and women". Written from a non-traditional Christian viewpoint there is little understanding of the non-theistic religions.

In *Movement and Emptiness* (Stuart and Watkins, 15s.), L. C. Beckett, having an avowedly scientific turn of mind, wanders in the fields of astrophysics and finds that the path leads away from material concepts to arrive at the point of view of the Lankavatara Sutra: "Analyzed down to atoms there is indeed no form to be discriminated as such; what can be established is the truth of Mind-only". The title of the book is based on the Yin-Yang duality of the manifest world, here defining the Yin and the Yang as "movement and emptiness".

Mouni Sadhu (a Westerner) has written a book called *Meditation* (Allen and Unwin, 40s.). Possibly C*lichés* would be a better title, as the word seems to occupy the central position. The first definition of "clichés" makes them differ little from archetypes, or Plato's Ideas, but later one finds that "a genuine occultist" creates "desirable and evolutionary clichés". It seems a pity that the wisdom of Ramana Marharshi should be quoted and confused with such aberrations. And how slipshod to have collections of words. That do not form a sentence!

Two books of limited appeal, the one to Presbyterians, the other to O. T. students, are *The English Presbyterians,* by C. G. Bolam, J. Goring, H. L. Short and R. Thomas (Allen and Unwin, 50s.) and *The Church Unbound* (J. B. Lippincott, $4.95) by Norman K. Gottwald. The former traces the history of English Presbyterianism from its beginnings in Reformation Puritanism to its present day merging into Unitarianism with its anti-Trinitarianism, its mistrust of evangelical revivalism and its attempt to reconcile the new scientific outlook with religious faith. For his book Professor Gottwald uses as a subtitle "A Human Church in a Human World" and makes a study of the relationship between the church (Israel) and culture (the nation) in ancient Israel, and expands this to include modern secular and economic problems, urging the Jewish and Christian Churches to play a vital part in influencing secular culture.

Originally privately printed, in 1925, C. G. Jung's *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* has now been published by Stuart and Watkins at 30s. It is stated that these seven sermons to the dead were written at a time when Jung was subject to hauntings and visions and, in his own words, the sermons "began to flow out" of him and were written in three evenings, after which the phenomena ceased. In the thirty-four pages of the book the style is strange, archaic, Gnostic and aphoristic. The "sermons" deal with the Pleroma, the deity Abraxas, Eros and the Tree of Life, the duality of the Mater Coelestis and Phallos and, finally, of man as creator and destroyer of his own world.

Being-in-the-World is a paper-back edition (Harper Torchbooks, $2.95) running to some 360 pages of selected papers from the works of Ludwig Binswanger on existential psychoanalysis with a Freudian background, and proceeding to, and expanding on, the existentialism of Heidegger. The second half of the book deals with schizophrenia and the case of Lola Voss. Two pocket paper-back editions have been published by Routledge and Kegan Paul: an abridged *Bible of the World,* at 6s., and *The Song Celestial,* the Bhagavad-Gita, at 5s., the latter a translation from the Sanskrit, by Edwin Arnold. These are both within, and should be in, the pocket of everyone.

Correspondence

CHANGES IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sir,

Both the letters on this subject in the Summer issue of *Studies* quote Christ's promise about the Church, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" for the purpose of lulling Catholic readers once more into a sense of security—false security, as I believe—after the stirring alarm so well sounded by Lois Lang-Sims in an earlier issue. Suppose that your two correspondents had been living in England in the year 1500 and had been told, by some Cassandra of the times, that in 1600 there would not be a single Roman Catholic church left in England. Would they not then have confidently put forward Christ's promise as an irrefutable proof that the prophecy could not be true? Nor does the fact that the situation has now changed from what it was in 1600 wipe out the fact that for two hundred years or more the English people, all but a very few privileged exceptions, were deprived both of Mass and, as far as this is possible, of the Blessed Virgin. In other words, *the gates of hell did prevail,* in a certain sense. This clearly cannot be the sense of Christ's promise; but it certainly seems, *mutatis mutandis,* to be the sense in which these writers interpret that promise.

There can be no doubt that the Church will remain until the end of time. But this does not mean that she will not become increasingly inaccessible to vast tracts of the so-called Christian world. Nor does it mean, unless some strong action is taken, that there will not be an increasing number of Masses which are invalidated by the heretical views, concerning the Sacraments, of the officiating priests. If the Church can never become rotten to the core, certain parts are already as rotten as can be—witness the Pope's continual protests—and it is the duty of the layman to be more and more discriminating, and more and more on his guard. Little could be more pleasing to the progressists than the kind of attitude which is betrayed by the remark "the Christian who is eager to grow in the love of God will go even to a 'guitar Mass' if nothing else is available", but it may well be doubted whether such an attitude is pleasing to God. In any case, it cannot be in accordance with the Will of Heaven that a man should deliberately attend, and therefore condone, the desecration of a sanctuary. If he cannot follow Christ's precedent and drive out the desecrators, then let him stay at home and pray for himself and for the Church. But let him raise his voice in protest afterwards and encourage others to do so.

At the end of the letter in question, despite the earlier quotation about the "gates of hell", the "rock" appears to be, not the Church, but the "modern technological civilization", to which the Church is to adapt herself. But is there not too much "writing on the wall" as regards the modern civilization, is it not far too precarious a thing to be made the centre of a "programme", even supposing that this were not the exact opposite of the true function of the Church? As your correspondent seems to admit, we are living in an extremity of decadence. Decadent also, in their own particular way, were the times of Christ. If Christ is an example to be followed, let the Church judge and condemn our times as he did his; let her be uncompromising, relentless, adamantine, terrible. Such language could not fail to have at least some effect, whereas the unctuous platitudes of "co-existence" and "accommodation" and "keeping in touch" merely serve as promoters of worldliness and soporifics for guilty consciences.

The Church has absolutely no precedent, in Christ and in his Saints, to do anything other than address herself to what is best in man; and this "best" is something which does not change. Not being "modern", it does not require any new language. On the contrary, to be evoked and sustained, it needs something in conformity with its own nature, something which is, precisely, like a "rock".[1] Particularly unfortunate therefore is the sentence "the message of salvation must be preached, and in a language which is comprehensible to the men of our time" for that is almost word for word the official pretext so often given for all those abuses that are listed by Lois Lang-Sims. The "men of our time" are not supposed to have any "better selves"; and their intelligence, which may not be on an average very great, is none the less grossly underestimated. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that the Bishops are tearing the fabric of the Church to shreds ostensibly on the grounds that "modern man" can no longer understand that "two and two make four". The real grounds no doubt lie in the obscure progressist and evolutionist persuasions to which so many dignitaries of the Church have succumbed, and in "unity at any price".

I do not wish to give the impression that I am unappreciative of the good things in John Sanderson's letter. What he says about the Eucharist itself, for example, is excellent; but the main point of both letters was to blunt the edge of an admirably sharp sword, and I find that hard to understand. The more such swords are raised, the easier it will be for the Pope and the conservative Bishops to take whatever action may be necessary in order to safeguard the heritage of the Church before it is too late.

London, 13.1.69
PETRAE DEFENSOR.

Dear Sir,

John Sanderson in his letter raises questions which go to the very root of today's problems, touching on the aimlessness and sense of loss that seem such an essential component of modern society at all levels. He suggests that the destructive effects of western civilization in its contacts with the ancient traditions arise from the deliberately anti-traditional intention with which modern science, technology and industry are promoted, but also from the fact that they are not compatible with these traditions. "Christianity, on the other hand, is compatible with whatever is positive in them (Western science and technology) . . . it is possible to conceive of a Christian technological society in which human activities are sanctified by the intention with which they are performed rather than by any explicit ritual".

First, I am not sure whether Mr. Sanderson is suggesting that Christianity is in some way essentially different, *and so superior to,* other traditional societies. Such an idea would not be, in the strictly etymological sense of the word, traditional. Secondly, in the society he conceives the sacred symbolism that permeates manual activities in all truly traditional societies is completely lost. Professor Jean Servier (*L'Homme et L'Invisible,* p. 66, 1964) gives a very vivid example of this: Among the most humble homes in North Africa, the mistress of the house has a loom constructed of two rollers held together by two upright supports. The higher roller is called the

[1] Until Vatican II no one seemed to doubt this. Even Pope John, who was himself scarcely a conservative, forbade the Bishops "to dream of altering the liturgy," and was continually affirming, in favour of Latin, the unfitness of the ever-changing modern languages to be the vehicles of Eternal Truths.

roller "of the sky", the lower, "of the earth". These four components between them represent the universe. When the loom is set up the same offerings to friends and passers by are made as on a wedding, since weaving is a marriage of heaven and earth. The threads of the weft form two layers crossing each other at six points where reeds hold them in place. The points at which they cross are the spirits of the cloth and the reeds make the spirits corporeal. When the cloth is finished the threads are cut with the same prayer given when the umbilical cord is cut. Weaving is a work of creation, of begetting, and everything occurs as if weaving translated into simple language some deep mysteries of man's nature.

All this will be surprising only to those who regard weaving as nothing more than the construction of a piece of cloth, and who would regard Plato's analogy of cloth and bodies in the Phaedo as a merely dialectical device.

The traditional use of symbolism is a constant reminder of the ideal forms whose existence is quite independent of man, forms of which we on earth have only rather vague memories. It is this constant echoing of the good and the beautiful in every-day life that distinguishes the traditional society from today's. In all traditional activities sacred symbolism is omnipresent: every step is pregnant with metaphysical meaning at the same time as it is a step towards the fulfillment of a material achievement. Modern technology is not only completely devoid of higher content, but by its very nature suggests the opposite. Could anyone by any stretch of the imagination regard the construction of an internal combustion engine as a work of begetting, as expressing some deep mystery about man's nature? Or does it even suggest something impersonal, inhuman, and above all, quite undivine? A man who fills his work with machinery is more likely to think and live mechanically in his leisure hours, just as one whose each and every act contains hidden meaning sooner or later stumbles across it. Even if he never realises this meaning fully it will affect his whole life at every level.

Of course it is possible to come closer to God if your work is done in His name, and a mechanic whose work is done out of love will undoubtedly sanctify his whole life through his intention and his labour in realising it. But how much more direct his path to sanctification had his profession continually reinforced his intuition instead of reminding him constantly of the meaningless repetitiveness of it all. At best his work would be irrelevant to his life, instead of being an intimate part of it, since any other work done in God's name would serve as well. Most people's work today must be of this nature: a hindrance to the growth of the spirit which can only be overcome with a deliberate and conscious effort of will that only a few can make, since only a few know it must be made.

The question then arises, can a traditional society be built where most of its members must make a considerable spiritual effort to overcome the actively negative aspects of their work? If a traditional society is one "in which every aspect and action of human life has a ritual character opening possibilities of spiritual development to members of the tradition", and if, in a mechanical and technological society most people's principal activity, their work, does not help them to find or even positively inhibits them from finding these possibilities, it would seem that modern technology itself is in some way essentially false, and so evil. At any rate, technology, science and industry as we know them in the West would clearly be meaningless from a spiritual point of view, and so are incompatible with a truly traditional society.

It is a truism to say that objects constructed with modern machinery, while more numerous, are of lower quality. It is not so widely understood that the construction of objects produced in this way is determined entirely by the need to be as cheap as possible. For instance, the desire to make as many tables as possible leads to the choice of a particular shape for the table tops,

so that the greatest number of these for a given surface area may be cut from a piece of wood. Instead of constructing the table in a symbolic shape, it is cut in a convenient one, which, instead of reminding us of the good and the beautiful reminds us of the slick and the sleazy. This, with the help of skilful advertising becomes an established style which is incidentally, or perhaps even deliberately, anti-traditional. Such products could not be used in any truly traditional society, since their construction and use, however much dedicated to God, are not symbolic.

This in turn suggests that what Mr. Sanderson meant by "a Christian technological society in which human activities are sanctified by the intention with which they are performed", is one in which evil or false works, or at the very best works of completely neutral colouring, are dedicated to God. Of course work done in this spirit will bring us nearer to God (witness the legend of St. Christopher). Still, such a society is certainly not a traditional society, nor perhaps a very stable one. It is precisely because the Church has been content with aspiring towards a "Christian technological society" that there are grounds for grave concern: a truly Christian society must be a truly traditional one, and therefore it cannot be a technological one. And perhaps the truly traditional societies destroyed by contact with Western technology were destroyed, not because they could not, but because they would not, compromise as Christianity has. It is in such compromises that the path to destruction lies, as is shown by the increasingly de-Christianised, de-Mythologised un-Godly society which has grown in direct measure with our increasing interest in purely material prosperity.

Tidmarsh, Berks., 9.2.69.
C. P. MATHEWS.

IN DEFENCE OF TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

Sir,

It is a safe rule that so long as a writer on religious subjects is affirming beliefs (whether his own or other peoples') he is expressing the truth; but when depreciating other peoples' beliefs, his word is not to be trusted. An alien point of view can never be understood without love or empathy, which, in practice, forbid disparagement of any religious belief honestly held. Conversely, under appropriate influences, religious differences practically cease to exist, as readers of S.C.R. are gratefully aware. But, regrettably, no one of your learned contributors, it would seem, has any love or empathy for Teilhard de Chardin. If he is mentioned by any of them, whether in or outside your columns, it is only to be sniped at. Thus, one whom it would be disrespectful to name in such a context has referred to "the Darwinism of Teilhard de Chardin", which is surely a grave misrepresentation, the truth being that Teilhard is hated by Darwinians precisely for his exposition of a non-Darwinism evolutionary process directed by Divine Providence. Would you allow an unlearned but appreciative reader of your journal to submit a few reasons why Teilhard and his ideas should be accorded more tolerant treatment in a periodical dedicated to promoting harmonious relations between worshippers of the Godhead.

1. The Sanctity of his life—a life to meditate upon; an allegory of fulfillment in frustration. A giant among scientists, a gentle priest, faithful, without resentment, to the vow of obedience which forbad him to teach or publish during his lifetime the message he believed he was

destined to deliver. The facts are given, unsentimentally, in Robert Speaight's biography, for anyone interested.

2. Christianity was originally a religion of hope, and has been swinging between optimism and pessimism since its foundation. Christian truth in abundance is to be found in the writings of all your regular contributors, but not much emphasis on hope. Teilhard is essentially among the optimists. In spite of the state of the world, he persists in applying to life of all kinds, on every level, a doctrine of hope which, so far as human life is concerned, could hardly be more succinctly summarized than in two of Shakespeare's most familiar lines :

   Hamlet: There's a divinity that shapes our ends
   Rough-hew them how we will.
   Horatio: That is most certain.

   Teilhard designates the cosmic aspect of this principle Orthogenesis, and the long-term hope in it—echoing and revivifying the cosmic hope St. Paul confided in his letter to the Romans (Ch. 8, 19-23)—could be said to balance the gloom at the opposite pole of Christianity. There is, of course, a middle way between polar opposites. One can share (while realizing the truth in) both gloom and hope.
3. Students of comparative religion who may complain that *The Phenomenon of Man* has little to say to a man seeking God in solitude, have perhaps yet to discover Teilhard's devotional works—*Le Milieu Divin* and *Hymn of the Universe*—which already have brought to thousands, in all parts of the world, a warming consolation and help corresponding to that which Thomas A Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* provided for former generations.
4. The impact on Traditionalists of Teilhard's emergence as a Christian Evolutionist may be compared to the sensation produced by Galileo on the announcement of his adherence to the Copernican theory, threatening to undermine a geocentrically-orientated Orthodoxy. Galileo's theology may or may not have been as shaky as Teilhard's (if, as alleged, his in fact is shaky); but it certainly did not satisfy the ecclesiastical authorities of the day, although, after some re-thinking, the Church was enabled to accommodate itself to Galileo's notions about the movements of heavenly bodies. Without forcing the analogy, may I suggest that any deficiencies in Teilhard's theology are likely to be repaired, sooner or later, by neo-Teilhardians of the Catholic Faith, without damage or prejudice (whether sooner or later) to the case for Evolution under Providence.
5. The chief weakness of Teilhard de Chardin is in the dimension of esotericism. It is not a weakness that in any way impairs the validity of his beliefs or his prophetic vision. It is rather, I suggest, a challenge. Let it be admitted that God the Creator is not conspicuously present in *The Phenomenon of Man*. A Darwinian, refusing in his blindness, to take Teilhard any more seriously than he takes the first chapter of Genesis, may not be so far out. Both accounts of the Creation are true. A marriage between Teilhard and the author of Genesis, under the authority of someone knowledgeable in the traditions of esoteric interpretation embodied in the Old Testament would, I will dare to say, at least neutralize the religious "case" against Orthogenesis. (The hint is offered to students of the Zohar who can pray and fast).
6. Finally, Sir, you and your associates are undoubtedly going along with Teilhard, all the way, whether you like him or not. You are in the vanguard of a movement advancing

in the noosphere towards Point Omega (under whatever language one may choose to describe the operation). The common signs are increasing and deepening consciousness with expanding compassionate sensitivity, as exemplified in the inspired researches of Frithjof Schuon with which could be bracketed many articles appearing in recent issues of your Journal.

Hinc illae lacrimae—and hence this letter.

London, 31.1.69.
H. F. RUBINSTEIN.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

"Fashion" itself, an essentially modern invention, is in its real significance something not entirely devoid of importance: it represents unceasing and aimless change, in contrast to the stability and order that reign in traditional civilizations.

René Guénon

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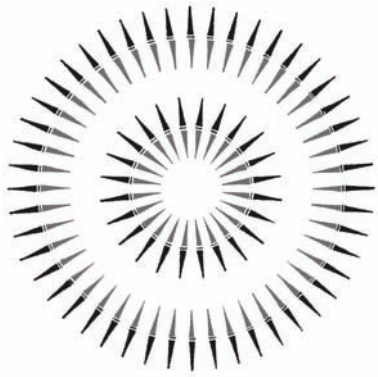

Dilemmas within Moslem Scholasticism

by
Frithjof Schuon

THEOLOGY is a mental activity which, being founded on the inevitably antinomic and elliptical—but by no means contradictory or insoluble—elements of the sacred Scriptures, interprets these elements by means of the reason and in terms of a piety that is often more fervent than enlightened. All too often this results in theories which are doubtless opportune and effective in a given psychological or moral context, but which are nevertheless restrictive or even aberrant from the point of view of pure and simple truth, and in any case unacceptable on the plane of metaphysics.

Muslim theology provides an immediate example of this in the antagonism between "comparison" (*tashbîh*) and "abstraction" (*tanzîh*): some protagonists of the latter have gone so far as to maintain that God is unknowable in an almost absolute sense and that, if the Koran attributes to Him certain beneficent Names, this tells us nothing about the divine Nature, because this is "absolutely other" and God has merely "given Himself" these names in Revelation, without our being able to grasp His motive for so doing.[1] Obviously there is, between God and the world, both resemblance and incomparability; this may be expressed by saying that God does not resemble the world, but that the positive qualities of the world resemble God and are only intelligible through Him; God is in no sense a terrestrial light, but it would be absurd to maintain that physical light does not tell us anything about the divine Nature, otherwise there would then be no point in revealing to us that God is Light.

Asharite theology in particular offers more than one example of a reasoning inspired more by zeal than by discernment. God cannot be unjust—reasons Ashari[2]—because injustice consists in invading someone else's domain, and there is no domain that does not belong to God; consequently even if God were to act like the most unjust of men, he would not for that reason be unjust; anything coming from Him is necessarily justice, precisely because everything belongs to Him. There is here a strange forgetfulness of intrinsic values: in presenting God, one seems to lose sight—out of fear and in spite of the Koran—of His infinite Goodness (*Rahmah*, whence the names *Rahmân* and *Rahîm*); a sort of "moral vacuum" is presented, whose only characteristic is an unintelligible and unpredictable willfulness. If this were the truth, no name signifying a quality would be applicable to God; human intelligence would be pointless, since there would be nothing to understand; it would not exist, any more than would the virtues, which by definition reflect something of God. A sort of obedient animality, completely proportioned to a blind Law, would be all that could be asked of man.

[1] The Shaykh al-'Alawi remarked, on the contrary, that "the men most removed from their Lord are those who most exaggerate His unknowability", that is, His *tanzîh* ("incomparability"), by reason of which nothing is like him. "What is important," the Shaykh also said, "is not to exaggerate 'incomparability' (*tanzîh*), but to know God by means of 'analogy' (*tashbîh*)." And also: "comparison linked to the certitude of Unity is worth more than abstraction, joined to the veiling of Unity."

[2] Ali al-Ashari, celebrated Arab theologian of the 10th century, founder of Muslim scholasticism (*kalâm*). It must be said here and now that dogmatic theology in Christianity is identical with the message of the religion itself, but that it is not so in Islam, where theology is in principle something open to question and therefore has a more or less optional character; however, it is always difficult to establish lines of demarcation in such matters, all the more so as Sufism feels quite free with regard to theology.

When Ashari depicts the unlimitedness of Omnipotence, he strangely loses sight of what a quality is in itself, as well as what the Divine Nature is; he seems only to discern extrinsic qualities or situations—such as the fact that a monarch has to take orders from no one—and seems only to see God through situations of this kind. Yet, the love of God is incumbent on every man, which presupposes—and proves—that God is supremely lovable, and furthermore that this love is thereby in man's profoundest nature, so much so that to love God is to be entirely true to oneself; now the arbitrary and willful God of Ashari and Ibn Hanbal[3] is not lovable, because the only motive for His actions is "what He wills" and "because He wills". Certainly, the Koran teaches that God "does what He wills"; but it does not say that this constitutes the very definition of God and the sufficient reason for worshipping and loving Him. In totalitarian obedientialism there are two flagrant contradictions: one concerning God, whose sublimity is defended through a blind hyperbolism about freedom, and the other concerning man who is reduced to nothingness out of a no less blind abdication of common sense. All told, the error here is the subordination of Being to Power, of God-*Âtmâ* to God-*Mâyâ*, or of Essence (*Dhât*) to Qualities (*Sifât*); now Power is a reality that is already relative—although still in a divine way—since it presupposes a level which is not God and over which it can hold sway. Power, being relative to this level, has no effect on the Divine Nature which is absolute. Power can neither limit nor extend itself, because its substance derives from the Divine Nature, and not from the will of a given Hypostasis; God cannot cause His Omnipotence either to be less than it is or to modify the Divine Nature and so trespass on the Essence, which is the Absolute.

If it is impossible for God to lie, this is because lying is an imperfection. This being so, Omnipotence does not imply that God might possibly decide—as Ashari maintains—that lying is a perfection; if lying is not intrinsically an imperfection, there is no reason to suppose—as does Ashari—that God cannot lie. And if it is impossible for God to pray—to quote something Ashari wrongly takes as a proof of his opinion on lying—this is because prayer, as an act of subordination, implies the imperfection of separation and duality; but it equally implies the perfection of love and union, and in this connection its prototype is in God. Moreover, when Ashari affirms that God cannot lie, one wonders in virtue of what he affirms this; he even specifies that God, while creating lying "for others", cannot Himself lie, just as God, in ordering prayer for others, cannot pray Himself since there is no one above Him; this reasoning is fallacious, for prayer, in its positive and essential content, necessarily has its origin in God, as we have just seen. Moreover the same holds good for lying: the purely negative side of lying is certainly foreign and opposed to the Divine Nature, but God can hide truths, as is proved on the one hand by the diversity of the Revelations and on the other by the existence of esoterisms; this is not lying, but lying nevertheless derives, by perversion and privation, from God's capacity to veil Himself; if God veiled nothing, the whole world would be instantly consumed by His blinding Truth.

Monotheistic theologies affirm that creation has a beginning but not an end, which is metaphysically absurd; however, since it is more pressing for the average man to save his soul than to be a metaphysician, and since it is better to progress without metaphysics than to stay behind with a poorly assimilated metaphysics, God accepts the limitations of men and expresses Himself accordingly. It is in their interest that He veils some truths, given the requirements of

[3] The founder of the fourth orthodox ritual school. The Asharites are in certain respects the heirs of the Hanbalites, most paradoxically, moreover, since Hanbalism is the declared adversary of all interpretative speculation (*ta'wîl*); but Ashari took care not to oppose any orthodox theses, including those of Ibn Hanbal.

a specific and average mentality, while it is the duty of the sages to interpret symbolisms and to recover total truth, as Ibn Arabi pertinently observed. Paradoxically, it is moral or passional limitations rather than intellectual limitations that make it inopportune to reveal some truths, which is to say that the risk of incomprehension lies more readily in the will than in the intelligence; the capacities of intelligence become inoperative when the will and affectivity surrender to the passions. Clearly, it is better to approach God while not being sharp-minded than to pull away from Him by being sharp-minded, which is as much as to say that it is better to go naively to Heaven than to go lucidly to hell; intelligence has no value without truth.

To return to the inconsistencies of a certain type of theology, these are worth noting, for the sake of truth as such and without prejudice to the religious perspectives, since we live in a world where it is better not to leave them unmentioned: in affirming that lying is an evil because God has declared it so, and for no other reason, one completely forgets to ask why God declared it to be an evil; and one forgets even more to tell oneself that this "why", or this motive, is in God Himself. An evil is what is opposed to the Divine Nature, and not what God— because He is "omnipotent"!—has decreed to be evil; it is the very content of the divine declaration that confirms the evident fact that lying is an evil; it is not the fact of the declaration that makes lying evil. The Ten Commandments, in teaching—or reminding—us what we must do or not do, teach us at the same time what God is and what He is not.

* * *

For Ibn Hanbal and Ashari it would seem than God owes nothing to man and can owe nothing to him; the truth is that God, having created man "in His own image" and having consequently given him intelligence, owes His intelligent and theomorphic creature an intelligent and consequential attitude, because He owes this to Himself;[4] it is because God is homogeneous and because His homogeneity penetrates creation—or because the Divine Nature is essentially good and true—that man cannot be excluded from the logic of the Divine Nature, if one may thus express oneself.[5] The reciprocity between the Creator and the creature comes from the nature of the Creator, and God cannot change His nature; "can" and "will" are here synonymous.

If we know that God rewards the good and punishes the wicked, this is because, Ashari supposes, He has told us so; it is not because He is obliged to act in this way. The theologian, in his passionate desire to instill into turbulent souls a pious abnegation before God, loses sight of the fact that God has likewise told us that He is the Good, the Merciful, the Just, the Generous; if we must believe this—assuming that we had no means of knowing this other than through information—then by the same token we must necessarily conclude that God acts in accordance with goodness, mercy, justice, generosity. It is true that in certain cases we may not know how these Divine Qualities must or will manifest themselves; but in the case mentioned by Ashari, precisely, we do indeed know, and it is the express will of God that we should know.

[4] It in this sense that the Koran declares that "God prescribed Mercy for Himself", in other words, that Mercy is part of the Divine Nature, which by definition is intangible; according to a *hadîth qudsî*, God said: "In truth My Mercy precedeth My Wrath", which indicates the essentiality of the first and the quasi-accidentality of the second.

[5] It goes without saying that the word "logic" is used here in a transposed, and not a rational, sense. Logic, as a positive discipline, necessarily reflects a quality of the Divine Intelligence.

God does not owe us any explanations, thinks Ashari, dazzled as he is by his awareness of our nothingness; but he forgets that God "wishes to owe" explanations, and that if God creates an apple tree, it is to produce apples and not figs. God "wishes to owe" human intelligence all the clarifications for which it was made, just as He "wishes to owe" a given womb the species of creature for which it was made, and not another. And if God thus keeps His word, ontologically and humanly, it is certainly not from lack of freedom, but because He is Truth and Goodness and because ontologically His Freedom wills the good.

* * *

We may recapitulate all these considerations in the following way: the point of departure of theological voluntarism is the affirmation that in the world are both good and evil, and both are created by God; if these things exist in space or happen in time, it is because God "wills" them; to reduce God thereby to voluntarism there is but one step, and Ashari takes this step by declaring that it would not be a bad way of acting on the part of God to punish believers and to reward unbelievers, our only reason for saying He will not do so being that He has told us He will not. And all this—still according to Ashari—is because no one can prescribe anything to God, since He is the supreme Monarch; that being the case, He is free to do what He will and nothing can be evil on His part.

Mention has already been made of the strange opinion that lying is bad "because God has declared it bad", and "it would be good if God had declared it good"; if God Himself does not lie it is "not because lying is bad, but because it is impossible for God to lie"! The entire error in this reasoning comes from the equation of "God" and "Will" and from the fact that All-Possibility is envisaged—in keeping with exoteric anthropomorphism—as a freedom to will anything whatsoever; the error here—we want to stress—lies in subordinating even the true and the good to the arbitrariness of an unrestricted Divine Will, and in forgetting that man is made in the image of God and that as a result his intellections depend not on divine "declarations", but on the nature of things as derived from God's perfection and as revealed to the primordial understanding which is, in principle, man's normal understanding. Doubtless nothing exists or happens without a desire on God's part or rather without an ontological causation; but this Koranic doctrine would be unintelligible without the essential affirmation, placed at the head of each *sûrah*, that God is "the Infinitely Good, the Ever Merciful"; from this it results that evil "created" or "wished for" by God can only be a provisional element in a greater good, and that this evil is consequently integrated and dissolved in the final and decisive good; it is this—and not the notion of a gratuitous "Omnipotence"—which explains that nothing can be an evil on the part of the Sovereign Good.

It has been said, in Islam as in Christianity, that evil derives from substances which do not accept the omnipresent Goodness; it remains to be seen why these substances do not accept it. The reason is that these substances, although deriving ontologically from the Divine Good, are required—in virtue of cosmic equilibrium and the rhythms it implies—to manifest remoteness from the Principle and thus a sort of nothingness; bad in their privative particularity, these substances are nevertheless good through their cosmic function, which is necessary in view of a total good, namely Universal Manifestation. "If someone were to ask me," remarks Ghazali, "why God does not wish all men to be believers, I would reply that we have no right to ask questions about what God wishes or does. He is perfectly free to wish and to do whatever He pleases." Now this is a lame response and it is besides the point; but what is strange, and

significant as regards the "twofold thinking" of many esoterists—is that Ghazali himself gives the correct answer later on: "In creating unbelievers and wishing them to remain in this state, in creating snakes, scorpions and pigs, in short in willing everything that is evil, God has wise motives in view which it is not necessary for us to understand." He should have said so from the start! For this answer completely contradicts the one he suggested earlier; what should have been said is that divine production can have motives which, in principle or in fact, may well escape man's understanding, or that of a given man; to ask questions is normal for a human being, and to admit that his understanding has fundamental or accidental limits is likewise normal. To take intelligence to task in the name of a divine "whim" is convenient, but this has nothing to do with the imprescriptible rights of our nature; nor, needless to say, does it have anything to do with the problems of Universal Manifestation and of All-Possibility.

If we look at a scorpion—to keep to Ghazali's example—and if we consider it from the point of view of pure existence, we see a good and not an evil, to wit, precisely, existence, the divine word "Be!" which is like a victory over nothingness; the same is true if we consider it from the aspect of its existential, vital, sensorial qualities, for a faculty is everywhere and always a faculty; the same applies if we consider it from the aspect of its function in the economy of nature; and if we looked at everything in this way—and if we had a motive for making the effort or if it were possible for us to do so always—we could say with Ibn Arabi and with certain Indian *bhaktas* that in the world there is only good. Nevertheless, this is conditional on our clearly discerning the relationships that authorize us to do so and of never denying that an evil is an evil in the particularity which characterizes it! It is all very well to object that this particularity is only privative, that it is "pure inexistence", as Ibn Arabi would say; this does not however prevent the particularity from being what it is for our experience, that is to say the concrete reality of imperfect or maleficent things will still not be abolished, for the very reason that this privation or "inexistence" exists, failing which it would be impossible to speak of an evil; if pain were but a nothingness, it would not be felt. But this reality, let it be said once more, is necessary and becomes a good through its function in the universal economy—quite apart from the good that is existentially immanent in all things—without which no creation would be possible.

To manifest Divine Perfection is to make it different from God, or something "other than Him"; without this difference or this "otherness" (alterity), there would be no manifestation; now to be different from pure Perfection involves imperfection, and thus also involves—on certain existential levels—what we call evil. And the manifestation of Divine Perfection results from the infinity of this Perfection itself; this dimension, which is both expansive and restrictive, is none other than *Mâyâ* or *al-Hijâb*; the Veil that both manifests and separates.

It is curious that a man like Ghazali, who was aware of the dangers of *kalâm* since he considered that this science was liable to trouble faith, should have had the inadvertence to bow before the *fait accompli* of theological opinions which had come to be established as dogmas; like Ashari, he piously considers that God can cause suffering, and can punish, without the creature having deserved it and without there being any ulterior compensation, whereas it would have been neither difficult nor indeed superfluous to specify that a destiny always results from the nature of the being who undergoes it—which is independent of the question of individual sin—and, furthermore, that the creature is always free to turn his destiny into an occasional cause for a spiritual victory, otherwise the Koran could not speak either of merits or demerits. Ghazali thinks that it is blameworthy (*makrûh*) to apply ourselves to a science that goes beyond our capacity, and that only Prophets and saints—not theologians and philosophers—have the

capacity and the right to scrutinize the mysteries of God; whether Ghazali was a saint or not—and we are of the opinion that he was—it must be admitted that we sometimes prefer to his own opinions those of the philosophers he attacks.[6] The real, and consequently adequate, intuition of a perspicacious intelligence is worth more than the hasty and inept speculation of a contemplative, even an outstanding one, and the fact that a given error may, subjectively speaking, only have a quite provisional and accidental character, obviously adds no value to it whatsoever.

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The opportunity presents itself now to call attention to the following point: wisdom consists not only in knowing truths and being able to communicate them, but also in the sage's capacity to recognize the most subtle limitations or hazards of human nature. Since, for various reasons, this condition is not always fulfilled—and extenuating circumstances for this are not lacking—we encounter certain types of errors even on the part of traditional authorities; this deserves mention despite those who see such authorities in far too superhuman a light; it is a fact that the doctors of the Law and of the Spirit contradict one another even apart from any heresy, and this is from motives which are not always a simple question of point of view, unless one calls lack of intellectual intuition or a false piece of reasoning a "point of view". Moreover, the orthodox doctors do not accuse one another of "ways of seeing things", they accuse one another of errors. All the same, there is here an essential distinction: there are errors which lie within the framework of comprehensive truth, and there are errors which break this framework, and herein lies the whole difference between sacred and profane thought. It is sometimes said that no doctrine is completely wrong and that everything contains an element of truth, which is completely false, because fundamental—and thus decisive—truths can neutralize any minor errors in a doctrine, whereas minor truths are valueless within the framework of a major error; this is why one must never glorify an error for having taught us some truth or other, nor look for truth in errors on the pretext that truth is everywhere the same—for here there are critical nuances—and above all one must not reject a fundamental and comprehensive truth because of a minor error that may happen to accompany it.

Be that as it may, the human soul is capable, paradoxically and up to a certain point, of combining spiritual knowledge with a singular incapacity to express it in the way that the total context requires and according to the logic of things; there is basically no common measure between the inward man seized by the radiations of the Infinite and the outward man living on preconceived notions and habits and moving his thought, incidentally, on a level proportionately far below his intelligence. It is of course desirable for man to match his thought to his real knowledge without letting any purely formal doubts persist, but this is a particular grace which may not be realized, and which, in the case of certain Sufis influenced by Asharism, is only partially realized.

[6] Let us note in passing that the epithet "philosopher"—in a limitative or pejorative sense—may not be applied without reservation to such minds as Farabi and Avicenna, as they were largely Neoplatonists, in spite of some Aristotelian influence. And let us note too in this connection that the role of the sage is not—as in the radically mistaken view of Europeans—to explain things from zero and to construct a system, but firstly to "see" and secondly to "cause to see", that is, to provide a key; so it is absurd to accuse Platonists of "constructing" a theory of knowledge on the basis of a world picture which already presupposes such a theory.

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In the logic of the omnipotentialists, our possible ignorance of divine motives comes to imply the possible absence of motives in divine activity; this is a characteristically subjective judgment which must never be lost sight of if one wishes to extract a plausible meaning from certain verbal utterances that have become more or less traditional, but not obligatory. In the same realm of ideas, the following example is perhaps worth mentioning: the opinion—repeated by Ghazali—that God can ask man for something that he is unable to accomplish, is completely in keeping with the anti-metaphysical and finally immoral omnipotentialist-obedientialist outlook of the Asharites; the Koranic prayer: "Do not impose on us what we have not the strength to bear" (*Sûrat al-Baqarah* [The Cow], II, 286) in no wise authorizes it, all the more as the same verse tells us that "God imposes on the soul only what it can bear". The meaning of the prayer just mentioned is that God—in this case *karma*, as the Hindus and Buddhists would say—may punish a sin and that the punishment is greater than the actual strength of the sinner; but in this case the human weakness is an aspect of the sin and reveals its importance, and this amounts to saying that we may, through our own fault, be accidentally incapable of bearing what we normally could bear and with sufficient faith. What the prayer means is: "Remove from us a *karma* which in fact would crush us", that is to say: "dissolve this knot, or alleviate its effects, since we put our trust in Thy Mercy". But it could never imply that God can ask us to perform things which cannot be objectively realized.

We have already mentioned, in passing, the strange opinion according to which God could chastise the good and reward the bad "if He so wished": to want to draw this blindly totalitarian consequence from the Koran is to forget that the Koran itself excludes it. When God says that He will punish sinners "according to their deserts"—while specifying that He will reward the good far more than they deserve—He expresses a causal connection and not an arbitrary and unintelligible decision; there is absolutely no reason for God, because He is all-powerful, to be less logical and less just than virtuous men, not to mention the fact that, according to the Koran, the essence of God is Generosity and Mercy. This last point has been amply developed by the Sufis, notably by Ibn Arabi, who refers everything to the Divine *Rahmah*.[7]

The idea of the unlimited rights of God, which in itself constitutes a strange juridical incursion into the realm of All-Possibility, gave rise, in the climate of Sufism, to the following paradox: when man, on the order of God, asks God for a certain gift, God rewards him for having obeyed this order, even if the request is not granted; but when man makes a request on his own initiative, it may be that it is granted but it may also be that the man concerned will be deprived of a grace in Paradise in proportion to the gift received on earth. As if God could

[7] Ashari, Ghazali, and Ibn Arabi are, broadly speaking, the three landmarks of Sunni Islam, leaving out of account the founders of the four orthodox ritual schools: Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafii, and Ibn Hanbal. Ashari, previously a Mutazilite, presented orthodoxy in a philosophical and scholastic form; Ghazali rendered this scholasticism more supple and profound and assured Sufism an unquestioned and henceforth unquestionable place within general orthodoxy; Ibn Arabi dedicated himself to making explicit the doctrine—essentially inherent in Koranic monism—of the non-duality of the integral Real and of the essence of Merciful Love (*Rahmah*) of this Real—this essence also being proclaimed by the Koran—and he thus demonstrated the absoluteness and universality of Muhammad's message. And it is precisely this near definition of Unity as *Rahmah* which the protagonists of omnipotentialism are so ready to forget, hypnotized as they are by a piety where piety and scruple predominate, and where an emphasis on Mercy appears like a temptation of facility.

order a petition without granting it, and as if He could grant a request and cause it to be paid for in the hereafter—He who never promises more than He gives and never gives less than He promises, and who not merely permits, but commands that one make Him requests![8] The Koranic phrase: "God does what He wills" means that we may be unaware of His motives and His ways, but not that He can be intrinsically inconsistent, as certain types of reasoning do not hesitate to insinuate, by taking their support on the contradictory and tautological idea that nothing can be inconsistent on the part of God; this is contradictory because divine perfection excludes any intrinsic inconsistency—and if it is not intrinsic then it is pointless to speak of inconsistency—and tautological because God being perfect could never be considered to be inconsistent. Be that as it may: God is ever ready to grant humble, charitable, reasonable, and fervent prayers, but sometimes He grants them later, and sometimes He grants them in a form different from what the supplicant had in mind, so much so that a refusal on the part of God amounts to a granting in that it foretells a better gift, to the extent that the prayer had the qualities required.

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The correctness of an argument—that is, its adequacy and not merely its formal correctness—depends upon the truth of the elements it uses, as well as on the presence of sufficient information; this is what philosophers and theologians too often forget; hence reasoning of the following type, metaphorically speaking: "a bird is an animal, and it has wings; a cat does not have wings, therefore it is not an animal. . . ."[9] A fallacious reasoning of this sort, taken from the catechism of Fuduli, is the following: "Let us suppose that a temporal thing resembles God, that is to say that God is such that one could attribute to Him qualities that one also observes in temporal creatures; in this case, He too would have to have a temporal origin and consequently would need to have a Creator. . . ." This conclusion is false, because the temporal character of things has no connection with their qualities but simply pertains to their level of manifestation. It is as if one said: there is no resemblance between the moon and its reflection in water, because if there were a resemblance, the moon would have to be liquid like water! And let no one say that this kind of reasoning is the prerogative of theologians; modern science reasons no differently when it ventures into realms that are by definition beyond its scope, given its initial prejudice against everything that transcends the senses; it was this kind of logic that created evolutionism, psychology, textual criticism, history, and the science of religions.

The great problem, for Ashari, was to substitute for Mutazilite rationalism something which, without being rationalism, would canalize the need that gives it birth; at the same time it was a question of making contentious men feel that God owes them no explanations and that it does not behove the creature to dispute with his Creator. Moreover the long opposition in Islam to any rationalization of the faith is well known; this is the opposition between the partisans of *naql*, the Koranic and Muhammadan tradition, and those of *'aql*, or rational interpretation.

[8] However, it can be supposed that reasonings like the one just commented have more of a didactic than a literal import, unless they are simply poorly formulated, but this would only be a very relative excuse since correct formulation is part of charity.

[9] This type of argument is used in part to deny the validity of other religions: one attributes an absolute significance to one's own axioms without realizing that, while they are intrinsically true, they belong only to a "point of view" or "aspect".

There is wisdom in the restraint of the partisans of tradition alone; their principle: "Without asking how and without comparison (*bilâ kayfa wa lâ tashbîh*)", while being a two-edged sword given that it violates a right resulting from human nature, nevertheless acts as a protection against the cerebral exaggerations of a singularly totalitarian piety, without thereby sacrificing any of the possibilities of inward enlightenment.[10]

The ancient partisans of tradition had, moreover, a positive and overriding reason for mistrusting rational speculations: this was that the Testimony of Faith, the *Shahâdah*, constitutes a sufficient metaphysical key, and many pitfalls would subsequently have been avoided if people had always known how to apply this fundamental formula to theological problems. For instance, it would have been understood instead of being only half grasped—that every human quality is prefigured in the Divine Nature and is possible only as a result of it, so much so that no manner of acting that would be base for men would be possible for God, notwithstanding the blind argument of the unlimited rights of All-Possibility; and it is precisely the fact that it would be base for men which proves by analogy that it cannot be part of Divine Freedom, the Infinite Source of all earthly qualities. We must not allow our ignorance of God's motives to lead us into concluding that there could be imperfect attitudes in God, hence incompatible with the Divine Nature: if an act of God is apparently unjust, this is not because God has the right to be unjust or because injustice on His part would not be unjust, but because the appearance of injustice comes from the fact that we do not perceive a divine act in its entirety, rather as a child who receives a bitter medicine may not be aware that one is not doing him any harm. To say that God "does not have the right" to be unjust means that He "does not want" to have this right, and to say that an injustice would remain unjust even on His part means, precisely, that it is incompatible with His nature; if it were not so, God would not possess the quality of justice nor, consequently, the name "the Just" (*al-'Adl*), and all the Divine Names would be there for the purpose of telling us precisely nothing; *quod absit*.

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Intellectually speaking, the mental weakness of Ashari consists in humanizing the Absolute, in speaking of Omnipotence when it is a question of All-Possibility, and in attributing to Omnipotence an individual and almost juristic character and forgetting the fundamental Goodness of Being. What, in God, is an overflowing of Infinity, becomes for the Asharites and their like an unfathomable tyranny, at least in certain sectors of their thought; God keeps His word, they say, because He cannot lie; but they do not tell us, firstly, why God cannot lie, and secondly why, when He tells us that lying is wicked, God would act out of authority and not simply out of truth. To approach the problem from the viewpoint of God's all-ordaining authority can of course mean that God is the source of every quality and every measure; but in that case, the matter is very badly expressed, as always happens when one forces metaphysical truths into the mould of a perspective that is narrowly human and therefore centered on will and sentiment.

Be that as it may, the Asharite doctrine of causality throws light on an aspect of exoterism as such, for we find analogous theories—as regards inadequacy of form—in the most diverse

[10] The early Muslims did not hesitate to declare theological speculation "illicit" (*harâm*). "If men knew to what extent theology comprises evil passions, they would flee it like a lion," declared Shafii, and this was also the sentiment of the three other founders of ritual schools (*madhhab*).

religious climates. The function of this doctrine—or this atomism or occasionalism—is, in sum, constantly to remind us that God is present and active in all things, and to suggest to us that this world here below would only be a discontinuous chaos but for the Divine Presence; regarded in this way, Asharite atomism is a reminder of this Divine Presence, an introduction of the transcendent—of the marvelous, one might say—into everyday life. Man must feel that faith is something other than rationality and that it sees things with respect to God and not the world; the believer, by this fact, is not himself entirely of this world, his faith is not a "natural" thought, but a "supernatural" assent; what is divinely true seems absurd to unbelievers, who follow only a down-to-earth process of thought. According to this perspective, the unbeliever thinks in a horizontal sense; the believer thinks in a vertical and ascending sense, according to the "straight path"; and this divine transparency of earthly things—since the Divine Cause is everywhere and since it alone is really present—confers on faith a sort of concrete and sacramental mystery, in short, a miraculous element which makes of the believer a being marked by the supernatural. From the metaphysical point of view this is an unnecessary luxury, since the intellect has other resources than pious absurdity; but from the theological point of view it doubtless marks a victory. In a word, if unbelief in the form of atheistic scientism only admits physical causes and denies the transcendent causality operating in them, Asharism has replied in advance, and has done so radically, by denying physical causes; it is like a surgical operation or a preventive war. Certainly neither the scientism of the Ancients nor the Renaissance could not have hatched out in an Asharite climate.

Similarly omnipotentialism—which in practice denies the human mind all capacity of understanding divine motives and refers our intelligence to Revelation alone— has the function of suggesting that it is "God alone who knows", but it does this arbitrarily *ab extra* and forgets that, if it is indeed God who is always the thinker, He is also the thinker in us and in pure intellection or inspiration; for one cannot utter a truth about God "if it be not by the Holy Spirit". But Asharism thinks only of one thing, which is to make the immensity of God concretely present in the world; and it is perfectly realistic in its presentiment that in the case of the average man the acceptance of higher truths passes through the will and not through the Intellect and that consequently it is the will that must receive the shock; this shock, both crushing and sacramental, is provided precisely by a quasi blind omnipotentialism. Just as the negation of secondary causes has transformed the world into a discontinuous chaos of spatial and temporal monads which only the miracle of a Divine Will, renewed at each instant, can hold together,[11] so also the negation of intellectual and moral logic regarding what concerns God transforms our intelligence into a vacuum which only Revelation can fill; it is an application, plausible or not, of the principle according to which one must die in order to be reborn. For Ashari, theology, to be concrete and efficacious, has to be "folly in the eyes of the world"; and Sunnism, sensitive to this moral and sentimental value of Asharite theology, has accepted it—*de facto* rather than *de jure*—as the best possible solution to the ever-threatening antagonism between reason and faith.

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[11] In basing themselves on the Koranic idea that God never ceases from creating and that He has no associates, Hanbalites and Asharites believe that the world returns each instant into the void to emerge from it in the next instant, and that the continuity of phenomena from one *creatio ex nihilo* to the next depends uniquely on an unpredictable divine decision and not on the nature of the phenomenon.

Muslim theology, like Christian theology, believes it has to insist on the gratuitousness of creation: God creates things in order to manifest His Power or His Will—always this question of will!—and without needing to create them, thus without any necessity; He has the right to do no matter what in His creation; this could not be an evil on His part, and so on. Here we have the almost classic confusion between necessity and constraint on the one hand, and between liberty and arbitrariness on the other: the point is overlooked that necessity can be a perfection and is by no means opposed to liberty, and at the same time it is forgotten that arbitrariness—or "gratuitousness"—is an imperfection and thus cannot be an attribute of the Divine Nature. One also loses sight seemingly of the fact that if God can "owe" certain things to man—something that totalitarian voluntarism will not allow—it is not because He can be subjected to constraint, but because His truthfulness, faithfulness and goodness involve consequences whose roots are not in human "rights", but in Divine Perfection itself: in fulfilling what He promised, God submits to His own Will, and this submission is no more contrary to Divine Freedom than the honest or noble action of an honorable man is contrary to .human liberty. Theological voluntarism appears to forget that it is contrary to the Divine Nature to will the absurd; it will be said that the absurd willed by God is no longer absurd since God wills it, but this precisely is the height of absurdity and of sentimentalist perversion of intelligence. If God "owes" us the truth, it is because being perfect, noble, good and truthful, He cannot but wish to be what He is and act in consequence; He does not have the "power" not to be perfect, hence not to be God. It is important to understand that God, from the moment that He created the lion, "owes" it to him that zebras should look like zebras and nothing else; the apparent divine "debt" is nothing other than the immanent logic of the cosmos; or in other words, this "debt" results, not from a lack of freedom or power, but simply from the necessary homogeneity of the world.[12]

In order to express that man is mere nothingness in regard to the Absolute, one could say that he is but a dog, which would be false, for a dog is not nothingness, nor conversely; but this is what, metaphorically speaking, certain theologians seem to say. Viewed from the stratosphere, man disappears in fact, as he likewise disappears in the abyss of time; there are thus points of view which reveal the nothingness of man, but there is no point of view which can reduce him purely and simply to an animal; nor is there any point of view which allows one to think that the human mind is worthy of no logic on the part of its Creator; otherwise religious teachings would be in vain.

It is by reducing the nature of the Universe to the exclusive relationship "Creator and creature", and so confining it in an inescapable alternative, that one is prevented from being able to recognize that creation is necessary, or rather that it has an aspect of necessity. Intellectually, however, this restrictive opinion is not inevitable: indeed we fail to see why it would be an imperfection for God to manifest Himself by necessity, when everyone admits that it is neither restrictive nor humiliating for Him to have qualities which He necessarily possesses; this we have already said, and do not hesitate to insist on it once more. Universal Manifestation—creation—is nothing other than the outflowing of a Divine Quality, and if its necessity is by no means imperfect but on the contrary signifies a perfection, this is precisely because Manifestation, inasmuch as it is a Divine Quality, goes beyond the alternative "Creator-creature"; from this point of view, the world is "none other" than an aspect of *Âtmâ. Mâyâ*

[12] For "all things are *Âtmâ*"; it is this homogeneity that is expressed by the Hindu myth of the "sacrifice of *Purusha*".

is a divine aspect mysteriously projected towards a nothingness which by definition is non-existent and is therefore never attained but which is always intimated; *Mâyâ* is this intimation itself, extending from Being down to the most infinitesimal privations and the spatial void. The duality "Creator and creature" is situated in *Mâyâ; Âtmâ* alone transcends it.

In reply to the argument that creation must be "gratuitous" on pain of imputing "constraint" to God—as if gratuitousness did not have an aspect of infirmity and as if necessity did not have an aspect of perfection deriving from absoluteness—we might express ourselves thus: God is unlimited, therefore He will express His Unlimitedness; He is good, therefore He will manifest His Goodness; He is powerful, therefore He will manifest His Power; and this is why He creates the world.[13] Manifestation is not a constraint from outside—from a non-existent outside—but, as it were, a dimension of the Divine Nature, and it has as much right to be so considered as any other quality of God; and if we affirm that God is One, we do not inquire if He is obliged to be so. Divine Necessity is free, and Divine Freedom is necessary; God is not limited by His Nature, and His Freedom cannot not be.

Like all Semitic theologians, Ashari conceives only the opposition between the created and the Creator, and not the participation—none the less necessary—of the first in the second; hence the negation, characteristic of Asharism, of secondary causes and natural laws. It is as if, in a textile, one could see only the warp and not the woof; a curiously fragmentary image of the cosmos which overlooks a whole dimension of existence—that of cosmic or natural causality—and replaces it arbitrarily by God. We say "arbitrarily" because one could put God in the place of any other cosmic reality, and deny for instance the role of the Prophet on the pretext that God alone speaks, and not an intermediary. We could equally well maintain that only fruits are real, and that trees are nonexistent, because God alone provides the fruits.[14]

To reply to the criticism of Averroes, Ghazali thinks it possible to defend the Asharite negation of secondary causes by putting in their place angels, by means of whom—or in whom—God causes physical burning; but this is wasted effort, for if God can or must use angelic powers, or subtle substances, to bring about burning, then equally He can or must use physical substances or powers. "Must" means here, not "being forced" *ab extra*, but remaining within the logic of His own nature; for if we say that God cannot but be God, this in no wise means that He is "forced to be God", and so determined *ab extra; quod absit.*

If on the one hand there is opposition between Creator and creature, there is also, on the other, unity of Essence; this is what the exoteric point of view cannot grasp, incapable as it is both of admitting more than one relationship and of understanding the simultaneity of antinomic relationships. Consequently it admits only one, the most apparent and opportune relationship from the human point of view, and as this alone is not enough to satisfy all the presentiments of our understanding, the gaps are filled with emotional sublimations, in which the very excessiveness of the image takes the place of profundity and mystery.

[13] According to St Thomas Aquinas, "every power manifests itself by its effect, for otherwise it would be vain". He likewise says that "whatever implies contradiction is not comprised in Divine All-Possibility, because that is outside the notion of the possible" (*Summa Theologica,* Part I, Question 25, Art. 2 and 3). This answers abusive speculation on the limitlessness of Divine Possibility; such speculations tend to attribute incoherence to God for the sake of gratuitous glorification.

[14] This theory of causality was dealt with in our book *The Stations of Wisdom*, in the chapter entitled "Nature and Arguments of Faith"

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One of the characteristic features of the Semitic mind—all the glory of which is to be found in its prophetism and not elsewhere—is the tendency to reduce things to simplifying alternatives and all too readily moralizing ones; this tendency has its symbolic value and its efficacy, but it gives rise to many abuses. Theologians know—metaphorically speaking—that a given object is not white, and consequently conclude that it is black as if this were the only choice; and if perfection be roundness, and they conceive of this exclusively in the form of a circle, they will declare that a sphere is not round because it is not a plane, and so on. We have here what is beyond doubt a general characteristic of the human mind inasmuch as it easily becomes the dupe of "points of view" and "aspects"—this is even necessary to one degree or another at the level of doctrinal formulation—but there is one essential difference between a limited starting-point which opens up horizons and a limiting concept which closes them in advance; this has no bearing on mystical intuitions, which retain all of their freedom as well as all of their secret.

Alternativism, that is, the prejudice of seeing in every relative and therefore reconcilable opposition a fundamental and irreconcilable one that would force us spiritually and morally to a violent choice, induced the early rationalists of Islam, the Mutazilites, to see an incompatibility between the Qualities of God and His Unity; from this there resulted a tendency either to deny the diversity of these Qualities or even to deny them altogether. There was the same alternative, for the Mutazilites, between Justice and Predestination, and the same incapacity for seeing that here are two faces of a single reality, or two different relationships. The inability to reconcile the pure spirituality of God—or His "non-materiality"—with the possibility of a beatific vision stems from the same intellectual limitation.

Asharism reacted against the rationalism of the Mutazilites but was unable to overcome the tendency towards alternativism or, in general terms, towards a certain lack of the sense for the relativity of things, and this meant that it did not get beyond the passional logic so typical of exoterism or, again, beyond anthropomorphist voluntarism which, with its over-simplifications, is equally typical. This is clear from the inability of the Asharites, and before them of the Hanbalites, of whom they are in some respects the heirs,[15] to reconcile relative or cosmic causality with absolute or divine causality and in their violent and stubborn option for the second at the expense of the first by claiming that it is "hypocrisy" (*nifâq*) to admit ordinary causality—the laws of nature, for example—because this would be to "associate" (*ashraka*) an "aid" (*walî*) with God, of whom He has no need and whose existence is impossible since God is One; as if earthly causality, which merely reflects divine causality, could prevent it from being what it is and from acting simultaneously with the appearance of physical causation! Such over-simplifications are the price paid for a doctrine intended to teach us about God but containing no more than can be grasped by the most elementary and uninspired reason; hence the paradox of a wisdom that has to force metaphysical truths into the mould of a mentality that cannot encompass them.

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[15] But rather paradoxically since Hanbalism is the open foe of all interpretative speculation (*ta'wil*); however, Ashari took care not to oppose any of its orthodox theses, including that of Ibn Hanbal.

There is unquestionably a certain spiritual beauty in accepting, when one sees the effect of a fire, that God alone accomplishes the marvel or miracle of burning, or in admitting, when one grasps an object, that this strength of movement can only come from God who alone is powerful—in remembering, that is, in this way and on every occasion that "there is no god but God"; but one would prefer these to be spontaneous acts of awareness, limited to the particular relationship which they perceive, and not the applications of a scholasticism which violates the natural evidence of things and consequently violates common sense.

The inability to understand the notion of *Mâyâ*—which is basically that of relativity and of the infinitely varied play of relationships between relative and Absolute—may be either fundamental or accidental; if accidental, it may result either from the milieu or else from a spiritual vocation which preceded the doctrinal reflection and which determines it in the direction of an emotional mysticism or, let us say, a systematic *bhakti*. But it may also be the result of a simple difficulty of expression or of a concern for religious psychology, and in these two cases it is merely apparent; it enters none the less into the destiny of those concerned, doubtless not as an "incapacity", but as an "absence" of complete or fully conscious understanding. One finds in fact in theologians ideas which prove that they are capable of understanding a particular truth which they deny, or that they understand it indirectly or virtually, or that they could accept it if it were given to them to approach it in a completely different way; in a word, the rejection of a notion may be the result of milieu, vocation, or destiny; the accent is then not on intellectual intuition, but on fervor directed towards realization. It must not be forgotten that for some individuals a particular truth might have the effect of neutralizing this fervor, while for others it would stimulate it; there are eruptions of the spirit which need constriction and which instinctively refuse certain openings that are too large for that very reason. It is thus by no means simply a question of a more or less simple or profound truth, but also of spiritual economy, and of an equilibrium between energies.

What we have just said allows us to specify further that there is a common link between religious exoterism and the systematic way of love, that is, a bhaktism which is both limiting and explosive: salvational certainties engaging the whole man, act on the sensibility and provoke enthusiasm; the latter concentrates itself on a single point, neglecting or rejecting all the rest, and it is for this reason that the elephant, to borrow an Eastern metaphor, is identified by some blind men with the trunk and by others with the tusks, and so on; such simplifying concentration is all the stronger in that from the point of view in question, man is will, and truth is what is capable of determining the will in a spiritual direction. Certainly, every truth determines the will in one fashion or another, but it is the emphasis that counts here; a will integrated in the contemplation of the truth is one thing, and a notion of the truth narrowed to suit the needs of a volitive nature is another. There are souls which present a curious mixture of contemplativity and impulsiveness: profound intuitions unleash violent and one-sided exteriorizations by reason of their very violence; such souls find a compensation in a quasi-rationalism which tends to codify both the contemplation and the impulsions.

* * *

Only the idea of *Mâyâ* would permit the combination of the two causalities—physical causality, which is "horizontal", and metaphysical causality, which is "vertical"; in the absence of this idea, one "take short cuts", that is, one must sacrifice any dimension that is disturbing. This is the meaning of the Buddhist *upâya*, the "saving means" which is itself illusory: a

spiritually effective "absurdity" is a mercy, and it is its very efficacy that here takes the place of truth; in fact, a notion which for any reason leads to the truth is virtually true, which amounts to saying, reversing now the equation, that truths that are too elevated may actually become errors in the consciousness of a man who is too earthly or too passionate. Let us note here that the idea of *upâya* essentially implies the ideas of "aspect" and "standpoint"; it means that every formulation derives objectively from "aspect" and subjectively from "standpoint"; this is also stated in the introductory sentence of the *Tao Te Ching*: "The Name that can be named is not the True Name."

In order to correctly situate the Asharite mentality, we must therefore take account of the fact—paradoxical in some respects—that it largely coincides with the viewpoint of love, not in the sense of *bhakti* itself, but of its doctrinal systematization. The protagonists of Vishnuism, whose sanctity is obviously no more in dispute than that of the great spokesmen of *kalâm*, see fit to assert against the *Mâyâ* of Shankara that souls, like the physical world, are real—something that Shankara never denied, for the notion of *Mâyâ* does not contradict relative reality, but simply annuls it at the level of Absolute Reality; now it is precisely this spirit of alternatives, this inability to reconcile apparent antinomies on a higher plane and then the failure to understand both relativity and absoluteness, which are common to Semitic exoterism and Hindu *bhaktism*. The great Vaishnavas—especially Madhva with his abrupt dualism (*dvaitavâda*)—only conceive of Being as Creator and not of the unqualified Essence, because their ontological "positivism" cannot reconcile two levels of reality, one of which annuls or in a way absorbs the other, precisely without preventing the other from remaining fully real at its own level. This "positivism" cannot admit a reality woven of relativities and, as it were, transparent and fluid because, being above all operative and emotional, it has need of solid bases—according to its way of looking at things—hence simple and definitive distinctions; and this simplicity, given the complexity of Reality, becomes crudeness wherever it does not really apply.

Every religious exoterism is will-centered, and thus moralistic, and in its fashion depreciates intelligence; bhaktism does the same: for Ramanuja, gnosis—*jnâna*—cannot be more than mere mental meditation on the divine perfections, which has obviously nothing to do directly with Deliverance. It is moreover significant that bhaktism feels itself obliged to reduce the divinities—the personified "divine aspects" of the Hindu pantheon—to mere creatures; its spirit of alternatives prevents it from reconciling these aspects with the One and Personal God of which it has need.

If we look for a prime mover in Asharism, it is the wish to relate everything, absolutely everything, to the Divine Cause alone: it is the negation of all cosmic or "horizontal" relationships in favor of "vertical" or ontological relationships alone, as if the first were incompatible with the second and as if the "horizontal" relationships were not, on the contrary, the necessary images of the "vertical" relationships and invested with the same right to existence as the things to which they relate.

* * *

The Near-Easterner of earlier times is unquestionably a man of impulse: on the spur of some certainty, whether real or illusory, he will leap at it, while embellishing it with superlatives and pin it down; these three responses come easily to the combative temperament, for the warrior must charge: without exaggerating he would not conquer, and without pinning things down

he would let himself be distracted. When we come across an apparently absurd theological idea—one that is in fact absurd in its expression—we must strive to disentangle these three factors: leaping, pinning down and exaggeration, and reach the cause of the phenomenon, namely an intellectual or mystical bedazzlement in response to some aspect of the Real. A classical example that the price of profundity or of sincerity is extravagance of expression is the following argument: a man who loves God must not wish to go to Paradise since God would perhaps prefer to put him in hell—as if God did not wish Paradise for those who love Him, and as if, for this very reason, He did not want man to wish the same! Certainly man may abstain from every eschatological desire by reason of his contemplating the Immutable, but then he remains humanly neutral; he does not confuse his individual sentiments with the matters of the Absolute, nor does he express his metaphysical neutrality by human absurdities; no man ever dreamt of committing suicide simply because in the eyes of the Absolute he is nothing.

To much the same category belongs the well-known Sufi saying: "Paradise is the prison of the sage (*'ârif*)"; the meaning is not hard to divine: no created thing could possibly constitute the bliss of those who have seized the Uncreated, or been seized by it; but in reality Paradise is so constituted that it is a prison for no one; the over-simplification of such a formulation has absolutely no connection with the complex and multi-dimensional nature of the celestial states. We might note, while we are on this subject, that the sentimentalist cult of suffering in Catholicism gives rise to entirely analogous excesses:[16] a mystic has said that the angels envy earthly men for being able to suffer for the love of God, which would justify our inquiring whether Christian saints regret being in heaven and unable to suffer any longer; if so, in what does the bliss promised to the elect consist? As in analogous Islamic formulations, there are two aspects to consider: firstly, the objective aspect of absurdity which pure and simple truth does not allow us to overlook, and secondly, the subjective aspect of "zeal for the house of the Lord", which the love of God obliges us to discern unhesitatingly.

Arab thought, in certain sectors at least, is above all an act; it seems that the more spiritual it is, and in consequence the more prone to inspiration, the more it tends to erupt and to segregate things; for this reason it readily proceeds on the basis of inspirations; thus it easily takes on an appearance of impulsiveness and discontinuity, and to understand it we have to interpret its expressions in depth, not necessarily according to the long-winded logical sequence, but more often than not according to underlying intentions that are more or less isolated from one another. Moreover, the aim of the exaggeration which segregates things—that is, which violates the logic of a context that in fact has been lost sight of—is to make sure, on the one hand, that the image will stand out clearly and, on the other, that the discourse will be effective; the European is rather insensitive to this dialectic, and the result is an immense gap between the two mentalities which is both regrettable and providential.[17]

At the heart of Muslim obedientialism there is the profound truth—already indicated by the term *islâm* ("surrender")—that man is fundamentally happy only in obedience, by reason of the fact that he is a fragment, or rather a "fragmentary totality", and consequently does not have his final end within him. But in order to produce its full effect, that is, in order that obedience

[16] We do not criticize this cult which is the subjective means of a certain type of mysticism, but we reject any doctrine that presents it as the sole truth and as the sole means of attaining to God.

[17] To these difficulties may be added another, namely that the Arabs, with their linguistic narcissism, if one may say, are sometimes more preoccupied with semantics than logic, in the sense that a verbal connotation, even indirect or conjectural, can take the place of reasoned argument, sometimes counter to the nature of the facts.

may be compounded of certainly and peace, it is necessary for its motive to be intelligible, for whoever says "faith" says "trust", and man cannot submit in truth and with happiness to the unintelligible and the absurd; it is precisely this that is forgotten by the theologians who tend to reduce metaphysics to a sort of system of morals, thereby running the risk of robbing their moral concern of its whole basis. But it is necessary to reserve for human nature a certain right to error within the framework of truth, and it is because of this—since man rarely has the gift of being complete in every dimension of the spirit—that "divergence among the doctors of the Law is a blessing" (*hadîth*).

Logical "isolationism" or "fragmentarism", to which we referred above, has the grave disadvantage of not bringing out the whole thought when it ought to be brought out: one-sided affirmations are made, the limitations of which are nevertheless known, and proof that they are known is that directly opposite affirmations are made elsewhere. For example, when Ghazali estimates that "to listen to the voice of a bird and to look at the greenness of a landscape means a greater privation in the next life", it is impossible to allow that he was ignorant of the root of the question, which is that everything depends on our attitude, that is, whether it be one of passionate attachment or contemplative non-attachment, and indeed he suggests this crucial truth in his considerations on gnosis, which is to see God everywhere or to see everything in God, and on equilibrium, which consists in avoiding extremes;[18] or again, if in one passage the same author expresses himself like the most limited Asharite, by declaring outright that God is the cause of both good and evil, he explains in another passage, most judiciously this time, that God "wills the good inasmuch as it is good, but He wills evil, not inasmuch as it is evil, but in view of the good that it comprises, the evil being accidental and the good essential." In spite of his all too ostentatious solidarity with Asharite *kalâm*, Ghazali does not forget to point out that "God does not disappoint the hopes of whoever loves Him"; this should have been said alongside the troubling paradoxes of conventional omnipotentialism. Finally, Ghazali has the merit of emphasizing, against the opinion of the most dryly obedientialist theologians, that man cannot "love by obedience, as this is rather the consequence and the fruit of love, love itself coming first"; this is what one would like to have heard *a priori* in keeping with the Koranic verse on the pre-excellence of Mercy.

One might perhaps find fault with this chapter for the same fragmentarism by pointing out passages by the authors we have criticized which we have not taken into account, but this has no connection with our purpose; for it is one thing to criticize authors whilst being unacquainted with certain passages in their works—and they deserve such criticism precisely because of the defect of fragmentarism—and it is another to present weighty truths in a fragmentary manner which inevitably leads to confusion. Ashari, no less, defended himself by demanding that, in order to judge him, it was necessary to have read him completely; but this is no excuse, for one cannot logically demand the acceptance of an absurd idea because of what one will write the next day, *Deo volente*, or because of what one has written in another volume; *hic Rhodus,*

[18] It is to say the least curious that a man who admits metaphysical transparency in the case of sexuality forgets this transparency in the case of other phenomena no less symbolic; but it is possible that Ghazali simply omitted to indicate a particular relationship—in keeping with the habit of Muslim writers—and that he was referring to the fact of "shutting oneself" inside a sensation rather than "moving through" it. In other words, sensual pleasure is either an "association" (of something else with God, *shirk*), or an indirect experience of "unification" (between the soul and God, *tawhîd*), without this second possibility, there would be no sacred art, not even Koranic calligraphy.

hic salta. A partial proposition must always include the tenor of the whole message, at least negatively by avoiding absurdities.

* * *

The great weakness of the protagonists of *kalâm* is to apply anthropomorphism to what in God most completely eludes being made anthropomorphic, namely, Beyond-Being or the supra-ontological Essence, and to confuse Beyond-Being with its ontological self-determination, namely, Being which creates, reveals and saves.[19] This is to confuse—in the absence of the notion of *Mâyâ*[20]—two totally different divine subjectivities, the first corresponding to *Paramâtmâ* —in Vedantic terms—and the second to *Ishwara* or even to *Buddhi*,[21] according to the degrees envisaged; and it is this confusion that constitutes the characteristic infirmity of Asharism in particular and of *kalâm* in general, or even of all doctrinal exoterism, to one degree or other.

According to Ibn Arabi, the meaning of sin is that God orders a legal or a virtuous act, but may not wish its realization, or that he wishes a forbidden act to happen, but forbids *a priori* his servant from accomplishing it;[22] this is a typically Asharite formulation, for the divine Subject is here double, the "God" who orders an act being in no wise the selfsame Subject as the "God" who does not "wish" the realization of this act. There is something monstrous about the image of an anthropomorphic *Paramâtmâ*, and all speculations based on it are bad metaphysics, for example, speculations such as those that seek to show that Iblîs, by violating the command of God, nevertheless obeyed the "Divine Will", which comprises realities that are in some respects antinomic, confuses the ontological and the moral, the Absolute and the human; in a word, it amounts to putting a Divine Quality in the place of God. Moreover, the error in question cannot simply be reduced to the anthropomorphist confusion of Beyond-Being and Being; it implies equally, and by the same token, the confusion of Pure Being with the determinative and existence-generating Qualities, which here too amounts to a mixing of two universal Subjectivities which are in fact different, always without prejudice to the unity of essence.[23] This whole problem—like the corresponding problems in Christianity that result from the trinitarian dogma—shows that it is impossible to practice integral metaphysics on the basis of axioms treated apart from the key-notion of *Mâyâ*.

The early Muslims necessarily had at their disposal an intrinsically sufficient doctrine, although in fact insufficient with regard to heresies that were to arise later on; witness this

[19] Let us note here that Meister Eckhart clearly defined this distinguo by calling Beyond-Being *die Gottheit*, "the Divinity", and reserving the word *Gott*, "God", for Being, which is the divine auto-personification.

[20] Or rather its application, for *Mâyâ* in Islam is *Hijâb*, the "Veil".

[21] The macrocosmic Intellect, the manifested "Spirit" of God.

[22] Ibn Arabi distinguishes between an "existential commandment" (*amr takwînî*) and a "circumstantial commandment" (*amr taklîfî*), which necessitates taking an internal distinction within the Divinity into consideration, to the extent the respective objects of the two commandments are ontologically different, and therefore are not likely to come together in the selfsame domain.

[23] This principle of the pluralization of the Divine Subject, or of a given hypostasis of this Subject, finds an application in the plurality of the law-giving Logos, and hence of religions: when Heaven speaks to man, it personifies itself in terms of a human receptacle or of a particular possibility of formal expression; from this arise the apparent contradictions, not only between one religion and another, but sometimes also within the fold of one single religion, depending on its historical span. On the one hand, Beyond-Being could never speak; on the other hand, Being speaks, but since it adapts itself to the particular interlocutor, either singular or collective, the language may vary from one interlocutor to another thus giving the impression of different subjectivities.

saying of Hasan ibn Ali: "Ones does not obey God by compulsion, and one does not disobey Him under the sway of an irresistible force; He has not left His servant completely without initiative in His Kingdom"; witness also this perfect formulation of Kalabadhi: "By free will we mean that God has created in us a free will, and this is why there is no question of compulsion in our conforming (*tafwîd*) to God." This the theologians would not deny, but they annul it all the same, in fact if not in intention, by a heavy and simplifying determinism.

The "Supreme Subject", Beyond-Being, *Âtmâ* or *Paramâtmâ*, cannot "will" cosmic manifestation; being able to will only Himself, His absence of creative will must manifest itself in some fashion even within creation—the latter being willed by the creative Hypostasis of *Âtmâ*—and this is a distant, paradoxical, and mysterious cause of what we call evil; the creative and conservative "will" of Being vehicles in a subtle and mysterious manner the negative "indifference" of Beyond-Being.[24] The other causes of evil are those which we have indicated on more than one occasion, namely the remoteness of the world with regard to Being—and this remotion too results from Beyond-Being—and then the equilibrium-restoring function of evil, or let us say simply its "unreal" and limitative reality, whatever its mode or degree.

There are two fundamental errors in the formulations of the voluntaristic theologians and philosophers: firstly, the attribution to a single Divine Subject—in fact humanized—of cosmic effects which in reality derive from different universal Sources, since the Divine Functions are not Substance or Being, and since Being is not Beyond-Being; secondly the use of the word "will" for causes only some of which merit this anthropomorphic analogy.. It is true that the Koran uses symbols that seem to justify all these simplifications, but theology is supposed to be a commentary, precisely, and the function of a commentary is to explain and clarify things, not to complicate them or make them intellectually unintelligible and morally unacceptable.

Even the most narrowly unitarian Muslim is obliged to admit that the Divine Quality called "the Merciful" is not the same as the one called "the Avenger"; he must also admit that the Qualities are not identical with the Essence. God "wills" the virtuous act, since he commands it, while at the same time "willing" sin, since sins are committed and nothing happens without the "Will" of God; but the metaphysical cause of sin is different from that of the Divine Command. On the one hand there is for everyone a Divine Will which commands the good; on the other there is, for the world, a Divine Will connected with a certain cosmologically inevitable or necessary quantity of evil; and there is for everyone the freedom to appropriate to himself this or that Universal Will by choosing either good or evil;[25] finally, there is divine foreknowledge of the choice that man will make, thanks to the freedom that God has bestowed on him in the manner of relative participation—but real on its own level—in absolute Freedom. And it is only through this and in this that man makes himself completely free: the choice of the good is the choice of Freedom.

[24] Jili opposed Ibn Arabi—but with moderation—on the subject of All-Possibility: whereas for Ibn Arabi, God created things, not by taking them out of inexistence, but by transferring them from Being-Intellect to Being-Existence, Jili maintains quite rightly that there is no antinomy here and that the transfer from one mode of Being to another takes place together with *creatio ex nihilo;* in fact, if existentiation is the projection—into the realm of contingency—of the archetypes contained in Being-Creator or Being-Prescience, Being in its turn is *Mâyâ* in regard to the Supra-ontological Essence. Consequently Prescience too arises *ex nihilo*, only the Pure Absolute—Beyond-Being—being Reality as such and Pure All-Possibility. Being—the ontological Principle—is a "divine self-revelation" (*tajallî*) arising *ex nihilo* in regard to the Supra-ontological Essence (*Dhât*).

[25] This is what Ashari had the merit of teaching; he opposed the massive determinism of the Jabriyyah with the doctrine of "appropriation" (*kasb* or *iktisâb*) of divine causations by man.

* * *

As for our reservations toward Asharism and similar theses that either predate Asharism or come after, the crux of the problem is finally the whole issue of the evil "willed" by God; may we be allowed to summarize, once more and for the sake of clarity, what the problem is. From the point of view of the Divine Subjectivity, the Will that wishes evil is not the same as the one that wishes the good; from the point of view of the cosmic object, God does not wish evil qua evil, He wishes it as a constituent element of a good, hence He wishes it as a good. On the other hand, evil is never evil by its existential substance, which by definition is willed by God; evil is evil only through the cosmic accident of a privation of good, willed by God as an indirect element of a greater good. If we are reproached for introducing in God a duality, we admit this without hesitation—but not as a reproach—just as we accept all the differentiations in Divinity, whether these are hypostatic degrees or qualities or energies; the very existence of polytheism proves our point, notwithstanding the possible aspect of deviation and paganization.[26] Be that as it may, it is important to distinguish between the Divine Will with regard to existence, and the Divine Will with regard to man, who is intelligence and will: in the first aspect, all that exists or happens is willed by God; in the second aspect, only truth and the good are divinely willed.

There is a truth which philosophers are prone to ignore, either through unawareness, or else by prejudice and on principle: a formulation does not exist to exhaust the reality it expresses, but in order to provide a key towards the realization of that reality; the spiritual passage from the formulation to the reality is always discontinuous—it is like a leap into the void—just as there is no common measure between the most perfect geometrical figure and the reality—which cannot be grasped graphically—of total space.

* * *

We have already referred to the fact that theology does not have and cannot have the same function or the same dignity in Islam as in Christianity; the best proof of this is the absence of Councils in Islam. In Christianity it has majestic prototypes in the Gospel of St John and in the Epistles, followed by venerable models in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, including Denys the Areopagite, and on this foundation it gave rise to the great scholastics and, in the East, to the Palamitic doctrine; but theology in Islam has no sacred prototype. Neither the Koran nor the Sunnah contain any such thing, and the first theological attempts, as we have seen, met with a categorical rejection on the part of the traditionalists, so that in fact the legitimacy of *kalâm* remains open or at least not entirely settled; it would consequently be unjust to wish to compare the two theologies—the Christian and the Muslim—given that their respective roles are by no means equivalent except in a completely extrinsic respect. What in Islam corresponds best to Christian theology are the four orthodox ritual schools; but while one cannot be a Catholic without being a Thomist,[27] at least under normal conditions, one can easily be a Malikite or other Muslim without having to accept all of the Asharite theses, except

[26] Polytheism at the origin envisages the Divinity both as *Âtmâ* and with respect to *Mâyâ*; it becomes pagan only once it forgets *Âtmâ* and grants absoluteness to diversity, namely to relativity.

[27] Apart from the few Thomistic theses that the Church has not retained.

of course those which clearly coincide with the unanimously recognized sense of the tradition.

In other words, theology in Islam is in some way what Aristotelianism is in Christianity, to speak very approximately; Islam however is more theological than Christianity is Aristotelian. Theology is a vital element in Christianity, which it scarcely is in Islam—although it cannot do without it—where it even has an appearance of "innovation" (*bid'ah*), therefore something either blameworthy (*makrûh*), or illicit (*harâm*). This last position is that of Hanbalism; and yet it is from Hanbalism that Asharism inherited its most questionable theses.

We must mention here certain merits which greatly contributed to the success of Ashari in the Sunnite world. Firstly, he safeguarded, against the extremists of the literal tradition (*naql*), the rights of interpretative intelligence, but without minimizing those of Revelation, whereas before him the religion seemed to know only extremes—which does not, however, imply any shortcomings on the part of anti-rationalist traditionalism in so far as it might coincide with Sufism. Further, Ashari successfully established the right definition of the Koran: according to him it was both created and uncreated. Likewise, as regards human liberty, he defined it in a way which was acceptable from the theological point of view, safeguarding both divine determination and human responsibility. All this, along with that hymn of exaltation, his omnipotentialist doctrine, will suffice to explain why Ashari's thought became the bulwark, not of Islam, but of Sunnite exoterism; it is important to insist on this reservation, for Islam as such is to be found only in Revelation and the Divine Institutions on the one hand and in the Gnosis of the Sufis on the other.

* * *

A point that we should like to stress further in this context is the following: in questions of religion and spirituality, the reasoning of the Semites appears to be determined—not exclusively but much more readily than that of the Greeks and Hindus—by the wish to communicate an illuminating shock or a moral emotion: the reasoning may be based on a dogmatic, intellectual or mystical certitude, but the function of the logical operation is only to communicate and reinforce the evidence; compared with a dialectic bent on doing justice to the nature of things, it is not impartial; logic has ceased to be anything more than an extrinsic factor—hence the weakness of certain reasonings of the Sufis themselves. The nature of things is perceived in the fundamental idea, whether this be explicit or implicit, but it is not necessarily followed up in the "landmarks" which the reason sees fit to supply in saying this, we are aware of entering an extremely subtle sphere in which definitions are always hazardous, but the nature of the problem leaves us no choice; there are things one can only express imperfectly but which nevertheless cannot be passed over in silence, without leaving unsatisfied an imperious necessity of logic.

It is perhaps fitting to distinguish between a static thought, nearer to the Aryan genius, and a dynamic thought, nearer to the Semitic genius; and in order to understand the most paradoxical of the Semitic expressions, it is necessary to understand clearly the nature of this dynamism. By "Semitic" is also meant, by extension, Aryans Semiticized by their respective religions, such as the Europeans and the Irano-Indians, although in these groups the Aryan mentality can coexist with the Semitic mentality, this being most unquestionably so in the case of the Christianized Westerners, in whom there is sometimes, in this connection, a veritable schism, pagan antiquity never having been completely eliminated by Christianity. Humanity being one, these two modes of thought—the static and the dynamic—may be found everywhere, but they

are none the less characteristic, respectively, of the two great groups of white humanity, albeit only relatively so, inasmuch as the Semites themselves were partially Hellenized.

Aryan thought is—or seeks to be—a recording of the nature of things. Semitic thought presents itself rather as an act, a process of transmission and persuasion, it seeks to be effective and saving, and it is right in the sense that the truth is well transmitted only when it takes hold of the man who receives it. In the origin— in the "Golden Age"—the truth pure and simple was saving by itself, and this to a certain extent is the point of view of Platonism;[28] later it was necessary to reveal the aspect most appropriate to its saving effect, and it was thus necessary to clothe it in an argument efficacious for certain mentalities, and this is what the Semitic religions have done. All the same, the fundamental enunciations of the religions remain outside these categories: the Christ-given idea that "God descended so that man might rise", or the Islamic idea that "there is no god but God", while being Semitic in certain of their aspects, have at the same time a universal character that is open to every possibility of the spirit.

An example of what we mean by the Semitic spirit is provided— at the level of Revelation itself—by the characteristic notions of a heaven and a hell that are both eternal: certainly, this is objective information in the sense that the elect are once and for all in the Divine Grace—since the apocatastasis abolishes nothing that is positive, while transmuting the accidental—and the damned will never return to the human state, a definitive exclusion which, like the definitive inclusion, may be expressed by means of the notion of eternity.[29] But what is important above all is the moral and spiritual effect of the dogma: man is confronted with definitive realities, and it is precisely the definitive character that reveals the cosmic and divine reality that awaits us, whatever may be its modalities in the shorter or longer term. It is this innate point of view—this pre-eminence of effective eschatology over what is objectively exact in the immediate sense—that explains, and excuses if necessary, the excesses of a theology more concerned with saving efficacy than with intellectual adequation.[30] In dogmatic formulations, whether at the level of Revelation or that of theology, it is always necessary to sacrifice the interest of those whose spiritual dissatisfaction offers the least inconvenience: thus, the idea of Divine Mercy attracts the naturally contemplative man towards God, but it runs the risk of leaving the passional man in his sin if presented in too unilateral a way; doctrine will choose to avoid this risk rather than meet the contemplative who in any event is detached from the world by his very nature; in

[28] Christian polemics against Platonism are characteristic in this respect; it is a dialogue between two different languages, one Semitic and the other Aryan. While Platonism itself is obviously not a "wisdom according to the flesh", it can in fact become one in purely philosophic minds, for whom the truth carries with it no obligations—apart from superficial and social ones—and it may so appear to religious mentalities of the Semitic kind, for which the truth must be clothed in forms that are aimed ultimately at man's will and are intended not only to inform, but to capture.

[29] That is to say, the damned are excluded from the Grace that concerns human creatures, but not from Universal Grace which may manifest itself in innumerable ways outside the cosmic sector of mankind; this is quite apart from the final and apocatastatic reintegration which also embraces negative existences by fundamentally transmuting them.

[30] In this realm of ideas one could mention the Mahâyânic wish to "save all living beings down to the last blade of grass", and the notion, therefore, that everything must "become Buddha"; this formulation, absurd as it is in human terms, has still a seed of truth—as have all exoteric formulations—namely, the truth of the apocatastasis, the final reintegration of which Origen spoke. We might also mention the ellipses of trinitarian theology, in which the one Divine Essence and the diversity of Persons give rise to a self-contradictory—but nevertheless symbolically revealing—plurality, the intention clearly being to safeguard both Unity and Trinity, which are both presented as real at the same level of reality, which is that of the Absolute.

other words, the spirit of the contemplative sees through phenomena, and he is such that the world withdraws itself from him.

* * *

In the face of such an ambiguous intellectual phenomenon as Asharite theology one cannot continue indefinitely weighing the *pro* and the *contra;* one must resign oneself to a conclusion which is at least approximate. We come back here to an argument which we used earlier, namely, that every opinion intended to proclaim the absoluteness of the One or to serve in any way the cause of God while fitting within a context of traditional orthodoxy, compensates by this very fact for its possible imperfections, on condition however that it does not have a contrary effect in a given milieu; but even in this case, such an opinion would be morally excusable. The same is true for men: we must excuse their limitations and their weaknesses not according to our love for them, but according to their love for God.

The Language of Birds

by

René Guénon

Was-saffati saffan
Faz-zajirati zajran
Fat-taliyati dhikran
(By those who are ranged in ranks,
Who repel and rout,
And who recite the invocation)

THERE is often mention, in different traditions, of a mysterious language called the "language of the birds". The expression is clearly a symbolic one since the very importance which is attached to the knowledge of the language—it is considered to be the prerogative of a high initiation—precludes a literal interpretation. The Quran for example says (XXVII, 15) "And Solomon was David's heir and he said, 'O men, we have been taught the language of the birds (*'ullimnā mantiq at-tayr*) and all favours have been showered upon us'." Elsewhere we read of heroes, like Siegfried in the Nordic legend, who understand this language of the birds as soon as they have overcome the dragon, and the symbolism in question may be easily understood from this. Victory over the dragon has, as its immediate consequence, the conquest of immortality which is represented by some object, the approach to which is barred by the dragon, and the conquest of immortality implies, essentially, reintegration at the centre of the human state, that is, at the point where communication is established with the higher states of being. It is this communication which is represented by the understanding of the language of the birds and, in fact, birds are often taken to symbolise the angels which are precisely the higher states of being. That is the significance, in the Gospel parable of the grain of mustard seed, of "the birds of the air" which came to lodge in the branches of the tree[1]—the tree which represents the axis that passes through the centre of each state of being and connects all the states with each other.[2]

In the Quranic text given above the term *as-sāffāt* literally designates the birds but symbolically refers to the angels (*al-malā'ikah*), and thus the first line signifies the constitution of the celestial and spiritual hierarchies.[3] The second line denotes the struggle of the angels against the demons, the celestial powers against the internal ones, that is, the opposition between the

[1] See *Man and His Becoming according to the Vedānta,* p. 41, note 1.

[2] In the medieval symbol of the *Peridexion* (a corruption of *Paradision*) one sees birds on the branches of a tree and a dragon at its foot (see *The Symbolism of the Cross,* Ch. IX). In a study of the symbolism of "the birds of Paradise", Charbonneau-Lassay has reproduced an illustration of a piece of sculpture in which the bird is shown with only a head and wings, a form in which angels are often represented.

[3] The word *saff,* "rank", is one of the many which have been suggested as the origin of the word *sufi* and *tasawwuf* (Sufism). Whilst this derivation does not seem to be acceptable from the purely linguistic point of view, it is none the less true that, like many other derivations of the same kind, it does represent one of the ideas actually contained in these two terms, for the "spiritual hierarchies" are essentially identical with the degrees of initiation.

higher and the lower states.[4] In the Hindu tradition this is the struggle of the *Dēvas* against the *Asuras* and also, according to a symbolism which comes very close to the symbolism of our theme, the fight of *Garuda* against the *Naga* which is, moreover, none other than the above mentioned serpent or dragon. *Garuda* is the eagle and elsewhere his place is taken by other birds such as the ibis, the stork or the heron,[5] all enemies and destroyers of reptiles. Finally, in the third verse, the angels recite the *dhikr* which normally means the recitation of the Quran—not, needless to say, the Quran expressed in human language but its eternal prototype inscribed on the Guarded Tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfūz*) which stretches from heaven to earth like Jacob's Ladder throughout all the degrees of Universal Existence.[6] Similarly, in the Hindu tradition, it is said that the *Dēvas* in their struggle against the *Asuras* protected themselves (*acchandayan*) by reciting Vedic hymns which, for this reason, were given the name of *chandas,* a word which denotes rhythm. The same idea is contained in the word *dhikr* which, in Islamic esoterism, is used of the rhythmic formulae that correspond exactly to Hindu *mantras*. The repetition of these formulae is intended to bring about the harmonization of the different elements of the being and to cause vibrations which, by their repercussions throughout the whole hierarchy of the states, are capable of opening up a communication, with the higher states. This is, moreover, generally speaking, the essential and primordial purpose of all rites.

This brings us back directly to what was said at the outset about "the language of the birds", which can also be called "angelic language", and which is symbolized in the human world by rhythmic language, for the science of rhythm, which has many applications, is in fact ultimately the basis of all the means which can be brought into action in order to enter into communication with the higher states of being. This is why it is said in an Islamic tradition that Adam, whilst in the Earthly Paradise, spoke in verse, that is, in rhythmic language. It is also why the Sacred Books are written in rhythmic language, which clearly makes them something altogether different from the mere "poems" (in the purely profane sense) which the antitraditional prejudice of the "critics" would have them to be; nor was poetry itself, in its origins, the vain literature it has now become as a result of the degeneration which is part of the downward march of the human cycle.[7] It had on the contrary a truly sacred character. Examples can be found as far back as classical Western antiquity, of poetry being called the "language of the Gods", an expression equivalent to that we have already used since the "Gods", that is, the *Dēvas*,[8] represent, like

[4] This opposition exists in all beings in the form of the two tendencies, one upward and the other downward, called respectively *sattva* and *tames* in the Hindu tradition. It is also what is symbolized in Mazdeism by the antagonism between light and darkness, personified respectively by Ormuzd and Ahriman.

[5] See, in this connection, the remarkable works of Charbonneau-Lassay on the animal symbols of Christ (in *Le Bestiaire du Christ*). It is necessary to point out that the symbolic opposition between the bird and the serpent exists only as long as the serpent is seen in its malefic aspect. In its benefic aspect it is sometimes united with the bird as in the figure of Quetzalcohuatl in the ancient American tradition. On the other hand the combat between the eagle and the serpent is also mentioned in Mexican myths. In connection with the benefic aspect we may recall the Biblical text "Be ye therefore as wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (St. Matthew, X, 16).

[6] As regards the symbolism of the book, with which this is directly connected, see *The Symbolism of the Cross,* ch. XIV.

[7] One can say, in a general way, that art and science have become profane by a similar degeneration which has stripped them of their traditional character and consequently of everything that has a higher meaning. This subject has been discussed at length in *L'Esotérisme de Dante,* ch. II, *The Crisis of the Modern World,* ch. IV, and *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times,* ch. VIII.

[8] The Sanskrit *Dēva* and the Latin *Deus* are one and the same word.

the angels, the higher states of being. In Latin, verses were called *carmina,* a name connected with their use in the accomplishment of rites, for the word *carmen is* identical with the Sanskrit *Karma* which must be understood here in its special sense of "ritual action".[9] The poet himself, the interpreter of the "sacred language", which is as a transparent veil over the Divine Word, was *vates,* a word which implies a certain degree of the prophetic inspiration. Later, by a further degeneration,[10] the *vates* became no more than a common "diviner"[11] and *carmen* (whence the word "charm") no more than a "spell", that is something brought about by low magic. We have here yet another illustration of the fact that magic—we might even say sorcery—is the last thing to be left behind when traditions disappear.

These few indications should be enough to show how inept it is to make fun of stories which speak of the "language of the birds". It is all too easy and too simple to disdain as "superstitions" everything one cannot understand; but the ancients themselves knew very well what they meant when they used symbolic language. The true superstition in the strictly etymological sense (*quod superstat*) is what outlives itself, that is, the "dead letter"; but this very survival, however lacking in interest it may seem, is none the less not so totally insignificant, for the Spirit which "bloweth where it listeth" (and when it listeth) can always come to breathe fresh life into the symbols and the rites, and give them back their lost meaning and the fullness of their original virtue.

[9] The word "poetry" is derived from the Greek word *poiein* which has the same meaning as the Sanskrit root *Kri* from which *Karma* stems, and which is to be found in the Latin verb *creare* understood according to its primal significance. The idea in question was thus originally quite different from the mere production of artistic or literary works in the profane sense which Aristotle seems to have had exclusively in mind when speaking of what he called "poetic sciences".

[10] The first degeneration was the isolation of the *vates* from the generality, that is, his becoming an exception rather than a norm. (Translator's note).

[11] The word"diviner" itself has deviated just as much in meaning, for etymologically it is no less than *divinus,* that is "the interpreter of the Gods". The "auspices" (from *ayes spicere,* meaning to "observe the birds"), omens drawn from the flight and song of birds, are more particularly related to the "language of the birds" understood here in the literal sense but none the less identified with the "language of the Gods" since the Gods were held to make known their will through these omens. The birds thus played the part of messengers analogous (but on a very much lower plane) to the part that is generally attributed to the angels (hence their name, since "messenger" is precisely the meaning of the Greek *angelos*).

Tibetan Music: Sacred and Secular

by
Lobsang Ph. Lhalungpa

The present article was first offered as a paper to a conference held in the United States in 1968 and to which the author was invited. Its interest for our readers largely consists in the fact that it illustrates a normal characteristic of all traditional civilizations, namely the dependence of their arts (and sciences) on the religious principle. Thus those who practice an art and those who use its products participate thereby in the religious influence and are constantly being reminded of the message the religion in question is intended too communicate. In this respect the civilizations of Tibet and the Christian civilization of medieval Europe are alike.

The Editor.

GEOGRAPHY and history have moulded Tibet's destiny in many ways, a destiny unfortunately now fading into mere memory as a result of recent events. One of the most important of these factors was Tibet's position at the intersection of the great civilizations of India and China and the Great Steppe Complex. Tibet, in fact, served as a "preserving center", a cultural repository, for the adjacent traditions. She showed great fervour in borrowing beliefs and practices from her neighbours and blending them into a total spiritual tradition. She adapted them to suit her own conditions and genius while at the same time incorporating much of her own more ancient tradition as an integral part of her new culture. Thus, the new religion was not only a way of life; it was music, art and science as well.

Tibet lies at the highest point of the world, surrounded by the majestic Himalaya and Kunlun Mountains, the source of the mighty rivers that flow down into the plains of India and China. For centuries, Tibetans lived close to the grandeur of nature in self-imposed isolation. Gay in spirit, they devoted themselves to a splendidly quiet life in which music, both sacred and secular, was vital for their sustenance and inspiration.

Since a scientific assessment and analysis of Tibetan music has yet to be organized, this paper is limited to presenting an elementary description of Tibetan music. Just as sacred music was for the Tibetans an essential part of their spiritual endeavour, so also secular music gave solace to individuals in their struggle for life and social coherence.

With the banning of Bön, the native religion prior to the 8th Century, the first attempts at transplanting a non-theistic and exoteric Buddhism met with a good deal of popular resentment. The result was that the ritualistic and esoteric Buddhism of the Vajrayana was brought in to strengthen the position. The tradition of native music in its formal aspect found ready acceptance in the hands of the nascent Tibetan mystic circles and their followers. Music, like other arts, was given a richer meaning and endowed with a higher content. The beginning of this new phase was at Samye where the first Buddhist monastic university was inaugurated with a display of sacred dance by the Indian teacher now popularly known as the Guru Padma Sambhava. This was followed by secular dances in which even royal personages took part. Historical accounts written by Buddhists, however, largely ignored the adaptation of the indigenous music to the new cultural changes.

Bön music was used as an accompaniment to ritual chanting, a means to communicate with

supernatural forces. The rituals were techniques of invoking good spirits and exorcising evil ones.

Buddhists further developed music in its conception and scope; they diversified instrumentation and incorporated foreign elements from India, China and Central Asia. All these borrowings were made in harmony with tradition resulting in a sacred music which possesses a character that is quite distinctive. Secular music, too, shows a native genius with its varying forms and structures.

Although a number of commentaries on various aspects of music were written by Buddhists, only a few are available to us and these give scanty historical references. None of them is comprehensive enough to throw light on all the various aspects of music.

One such work, attributed to Padma Sambhava himself, was a part of the transmission of his mystic teachings to a select few and was re-corded by his Tibetan consort, Khadro Yeshe Tshogyal. Subsequent teachers, both Tibetan and Indian, communicated various mystical traditions which were gradually transformed into the various sects of Tibetan Buddhism that we see today. Each sect adapted music and dance to suit its own temperamental and formal distinctions. Since the unifying factors of metaphysics and the liturgical purpose of music were shared by all of the sects, formal aspects do not differ very much from sect to sect.

I find it necessary here to deal a little more extensively with the function of music in the Tibetan religious tradition. The role of sacred music lies primarily in the process of inner transformation towards an ever higher and purer state technically known as "Enlightenment". Music means different things at different times even to the same initiate. It means one thing when he is at the beginning stage and another when he is at a more advanced stage of practice and experience. He is trained to see in and through the quintessence of all things, that is, the unity of absolute reality and the supreme bliss, of wisdom and compassion. Truth can be discovered through traversing many paths; music definitely is one such avenue in the life of Tibetan initiates. But it is always a means to an end, not an end in itself.

The esoteric metaphysics defines all sounds as music and all music as *mantras,* sacred formulae, as far as the awakening mind is concerned. The sacred formulae denote the condensation of infinite truth as non-substantive purity. *Mantra* ultimately is the eternal state which dissolves the subject-object distinction rendering empirical assertions and intellectual definitions meaningless. It is the highest form of beauty, not merely in appearance but in actuality, an actuality that is pure, perfect and infinite, wherein all concepts of good and bad disappear.

There is also a rational and intellectual approach to music. All sounds and music are the effects of cause and conditions, that is, the principle of interdependence, inter-relationship and interaction functions throughout the art. All events are compound, nothing is independent, everything is subject to the dynamic law of causation and effect. Dynamism implies an ever-unending change, the process of evolution and devolution. Here music becomes a symbol of the true state of nature. The ever changing sound in its subtle form signifies this transitoriness which, despite appearances, is indivisible from the underlying reality, the Absolute, the Unmanifesting.

Sacred music, insofar as its symbolic and functional aspects are concerned, plays a vital role in the life of initiates as a process of subjective transformation which brings peace, harmony and awareness of truth in its totality. The truly beneficial approach, we believe, is the subjective assessment of music in its true nature. It must be admitted that all these profound concepts make no mention of encouraging "creative endeavour" as a means of exercising individual ingenuity and imagination. This absence of emphasis on individual innovation and creativity

also characterizes our whole approach to art, pictorial and plastic as well as musical. Here too what is all-important is the refer-rent, the metaphysical message which is symbolized by the art, through the canonical forms.

The nature of sacred music can be considered under two aspects; namely, the devotional aspect and the symbolic aspect. Devotional music is functional insofar as it features actually in any performance of temple liturgy or mystical dance. These two aspects are, however, complementary to each other and in fact inseparable.

The symbolic aspect embraces the widest possible range of musical concept because its scope goes beyond empirical views and definitions. Every conceivable sound, whether originating from animate or inanimate things, is source material for music and is at the same time symbolic. For there is no difference whatsoever in the nature of the message each conveys to a spiritual aspirant or to one who is awakening to reality. Even the essence of functional music lies in its symbolic value. The symbolism, it must be clearly stated, will be utterly meaningless and useless unless there is intense understanding of its true meaning coupled with a deeply felt urge to follow the path.

Generally speaking functional sacred music is constituted by temple liturgy, including devotional songs and ritual music both vocal and instrumental. All these enter into the training of monks and nuns, and each will specialize according to the particular traditions to which he or she is attached. There are a few simple chants and recitations common to all. Besides the common temple liturgy, certain types of ritual are performed jointly by monks, nuns and initiated laymen. In some cases non-initiates join in as well.

It is no exaggeration to say that as a spiritual exercise the purpose here is to seek elimination of suffering and the cause of suffering through contemplation and transcendental awareness. If the true purpose of music is considered in its proper perspective, any misconception about Tibetan sacred music and dance will naturally be dispelled.

If the true significance of sacred music is to be found, it must be viewed, not so much as an expression of aesthetic perception or creative ingenuity and achievement, as in its true nature, which is related to the Absolute. This does not mean, however, that sacred music has no contribution to make in the field of appreciation of beauty, as I shall now try to explain.

We Tibetans believe, as stated earlier, that beauty as form or sound, physical or spiritual, must needs contain some higher content and purpose, a transcendental overtone. This assumption is the basic of all aesthetic judgment. With total attention and awakening, one observes the object of beauty and first analyses it as it appears to oneself, according to one's own perception of beauty. After that one reflects more deeply on this perception and discovers its relationship to beauty itself. Having thus penetrated into the actuality by identifying beauty as imagination or idealistic creation, one is bound to face a situation where-in all subject-object distinctions disappear and the unity of things as infinite awareness and awakening is achieved. Such a state of mind is full of joy, harmony and peace. It has often been pointed out by spiritual teachers that merely psychological or sensual appreciation is only too likely to create attachment which in its turn will breed lust and other passions.

It should be pointed out that Tibet claims to have inherited both the orthodox forms of the Buddhist tradition, respectively known as Theravada and Mahayana. Monasteries following the older monastic pattern do not employ any music except chanting in their congregational service; the only instruments admitted there are the conch shell and the gong for calling the monks to assemble. Since all Tibetan monasteries, however, practise some forms derived from Mahayana, individual monks are always allowed to use a small hand-bell in association with the

vajra or symbolic sceptre, as well as a little drum, in their private devotions provided no one around is disturbed thereby.

Those monasteries that follow Mahayana esotericism perform various rituals requiring music. In fact each such monastery has a well-trained orchestra comprised of monks and also a dance troupe including both senior and junior members, with the chief abbot often acting as master dancer.

Each monastic band requires a pair of long, straight brass instruments to provide a foundation tone in the form of sustained bass drones, while cymbals of two sizes together with drums give rhythmic variety. The melodic element is provided by a kind of shawm called *gyaling, a* powerful double-reed instrument not unlike a bagpipe chanter. To this collection may be added on occasion a type of flute hollowed out of a human thigh-bone which contributes a note of indeterminate pitch to the general symphony. This instrument carries important mystical properties as a sonorous symbol of mortality and impermanence.

The size of the instruments, their range, as well as their symbolic nature, determine their employment for specific purposes. For instance, big brasses are used for open air performances because of their very powerful tone. As a means to communicate with higher forces, four monk-musicians play them on the eve of festivals from the roof of their temple overlooking the village below the mountain on which the monastery is usually situated. This is precisely an invitation to the deities and guardian spirits to attend and partake of the ritual performance and feast. At the same time, the people living below or around, far or near, also consider this as an invitation to attend the festival. The combination of brasses and shawms with their differing tonal range and pitch fills the air with music and produces on the mind an almost magical effect.

The Liturgy

Something needs to be said about the strictly vocal portions of the temple liturgy which hover, as it were, on the frontier between plain speech and what would nowadays be regarded as music: both a strongly marked rhythmical element and a stylised voice-production confers on the choral office even at its plainest an unmistakably musical character. Normally the temple services will include recitation of Scriptures as well as poetical eulogies in honour of the Buddha and his chief disciples; to which must be added appeals to the guardian divinities who watch over the Doctrine and hymns of various kinds. Every monastery has its own syllabus of chantings and readings which are regularly performed at congregational services held in the assembly hall. All these chantings are carried out from memory; young novices receive a most rigorous training in this respect during their first few years at the monastery. In certain special cases, scriptural readings are carried out at a very fast tempo which to outsiders might seem rather disconcerting. This happens when some pious layman commissions a reading of a whole sacred book which might run into several volumes for the purpose of gathering merit, which can then be shared with other beings "even down to the smallest blade of grass"; such a reading can even last for several weeks at a stretch.

Whatever the nature of a liturgical reading or chanting, this is the responsibility of the Lama-preceptor whose office it is to supervise both its efficiency and quality.

Monasteries that follow an esoteric tradition have special forms of ritual other than those just mentioned. In the latter case instrumental symphonies are associated with the temple chanting, as also with the sacred dances. Ritual, as known to the Lamas, has assumed multiple meanings. As a preliminary to meditative practice by an initiate, it serves to heighten his consciousness. Musical sounds, canonically ordered, affect a man's psychic condition in such a way as to render

him more receptive to the truth. The same applies in the visual arts; a painted icon, in which every detail corresponds to some aspect of enlightenment, is a powerful instrument in promoting the contemplative spirit and so is a *sonorous icon*—the nature of all truly sacred music is such; it pertains to method, its aim being to awaken a corresponding wisdom in the soul.

At a more emotional level, ritual becomes an exercise in devotion as also a means of communion with supernatural influences. At a psychological level, the same ritual will help to foster analytical insight. At a transcendental level, it becomes a meditative trance by means of which a total spiritual transformation can be brought about. Sacred music is relevant to all these aims.

In Tibet rituals are classified under three types : firstly, meditation, itself consisting of two stages; secondly, worship and inward transformation; thirdly, specialised types of ritual such as those aiming at the elimination of evil influences, the stimulation of intellectual power and so on. The nature and purpose of each ritual will determine the corresponding music and chanting, the composition, the tonal range and the ensemble of instruments to be called into play.

The Sacred Dance

Throughout the world music and dance have been closely associated as elements in worship and as spiritual stimulants. In Tibet specially initiated monks and Lamas take the principal parts in the danced mystery-plays, but minor parts such as those of the spirit-retinues in attendance on the chief divinities can be taken by laymen. Sacred dancing forms the concluding part of a long period of training incumbent on initiates. The great dances have been a regular annual feature in various parts of the Tibetan world and these were always performed publicly in an atmosphere of extreme reverence and attention with the primary aim that all phenomenal things, both animate and inanimate, might be blessed by the presiding deities in the course of their illustration and invocation by the meditating dancers.

The earliest form of the Buddhist dance was perhaps that of *Trak-tung Heruka,* the Supremely Wrathful One, with his Consort and retinue. This was later adapted to form another dance called *Dorfe Phurpa* or Eternal Dagger; this forms part of a very early esoteric practice collectively known as "the Eight Sections of Meditation Tradition". This dance still survives in Sikkim where Lamas of the Nyingmapa or Order of the Ancients give an annual public performance at the conclusion of their period of intense meditative practice.

Another form of the dance called *Ts'hechu-Chham* was the creation of an ancient Tibetan teacher as a result of a vision in which Guru Padma Sambhava, the Apostle of Tibet, appeared to him with his saintly attendants. Variants of this dance gradually spread throughout Tibet and were adopted by monasteries belonging to different traditions and teachers. To mention only a few examples, a whole series of such dances are dedicated to guardian deities such as Mahakala "the Great Dark One", Kali, Yama the King of Death etc. Both solo and group performances are associated with each presiding deity, and similarly each class of retinue is represented by dancers clad in special colours and holding different implements in their hands. Sometimes the dancers will recite sacred formule while performing their various figures to the accompaniment of a whole orchestra of instruments. The mask that each dancer wears symbolises a supernatural force which it represents both "formally" and inwardly; in an ultimate sense, however, all these forms also signify the illusory nature of phenomena which mask (though they also reveal) the true Reality.

Solo dances are often performed by eminent esoteric teachers in connection with certain rituals. Oracles also engage in such dances immediately after passing into the oracular trance;

some carry out quite elaborate dance movements in spite of the weight of a metal helmet and other heavy accoutrements. It is noteworthy that the men themselves claim entire ignorance of the steps they dance; they are never trained to do them, the knowledge just comes to them in the course of possession by the oracular influence itself. One such oracle used to give a spine-chilling display of physical agility during an annual festival. Draped in ample ceremonial robes and wearing iron-bound shoes with spiked soles the Oracle during his trance first danced and blessed the people around and then, as a climax, mounted to the top-most storey of the Temple and then ran round the edge of the parapet at top speed, high above the heads of the people!

The highest meditative and ritual dances, however, are not performed in public. These dances generally start at a slow pace and gradually gain momentum as figure succeeds figure. Every movement, both hand gesture and step, symbolises some divine aspect or attribute or the same moral or spiritual perfection which the dancing initiate is seeking to develop.

As regards the symbolism of musical instruments used during meditation or worship, only the small bell associated with the thunderbolt-sceptre or *dorje* (*vajra* in Sanskrit) and one small species of drum carry an all-encompassing meaning: other instruments have an accessory character, as aids to concentration through their sound.

Finally, something must be said about Tibetan musical notation: this is of two types, the one for vocal and the other for instrumental music. It does not provide a complete and standardised means of reading any piece of music, as with Western notation. Rather is it a means of giving precision to the interpretation of music that is already known as regards its basic elements. For instance, it will indicate how words and music are to fit, and where and how the melodic line is to be ornamented. Each different tradition of ritual music has evolved its own notation, within the general pattern of a "musical graph". This subject deserves to be studied more systematically by someone competent to do so.

Secular Music

The secular music of Tibet falls under two headings, namely, "folk music" and "minstrel music". There is a vast variety of folk songs be-longing to different sections of the population and different regions and dialects; some of these songs have a ceremonial purpose, for use at weddings and for other social occasions, while other songs have an occupational purpose, being associated with such and such a kind of work; others again are simply emotive in character. In a stably traditional society like that of Tibet prior to the Chinese Communist invasion life did not vary much from day to day, though in another sense it was full of variety ; under these circumstances folk-songs provided self-entertainment for everyone who knew them. They provided a feeling of company for those engaged in lonely journeys across the great plateau; they also brought consolation to those in sorrow and helped to lighten the burdens of a working life. Apart from songs, two types of stringed instruments, flute, drums and small cymbals were used to accompany certain types of singing.

Occupational songs, which are very striking, are never accompanied with instruments. Their tone and rhythm is determined by the nature of the job in hand, its speed and the tools used, as well as the physical movements associated with it. At harvest time, for instance, one particular song was to be heard echoing joyfully from all directions at once, with the tune overlapping as different groups took it up each in their own time. Even women washing clothes in the same tub had their characteristic song, in time with which they all moved. Work was never a sad affair, with these tunes to liven it!

Marriage songs belong to the secular category because in Tibet a wedding is treated as a

social event, rather than as a religious one. Nevertheless these songs contain religious allusions in the form of invocation of various Divinities. Each stage of a wedding has its own songs and certain singers were experts in this kind of singing. This applies especially to the people at large; in the upper strata of society verses were often specially composed by poets for reciting at weddings.

There was yet another type of music, exclusively for a Court dance, performed by the Royal Troupe called *Gartukpa*. The dancers were all young men and boys who were trained from their childhood for various dances requiring a high degree of gymnastic skill. The instruments are drums—more akin to Indian *tabla,* reed instruments, flutes and metal balls fixed in a wooden frame.

The street songs of Lhasa fall into a class of their own, both from the standpoint of musical style, and also as regards their content. They are the anonymous creations of lay men and women and often reflect public opinion concerning prominent politicians or officials: in fact the Lhasa lampoon, in Tibet, was an accepted (and very effective) means of popular criticism aimed at persons considered to have abused their official position ; these songs are full of pungent humour and as soon as one of them had been composed, it would be taken up by all and sundry in a way that did not leave the offending official in any doubt as to what people thought of him: a truly "democratic" weapon this was!

"Minstrel Music" belongs to the profession of wandering musician and is closely allied to various forms of popular dance, though solo players also have their place, performing on the flute or else on a lute-like plucked instrument with a soft but most eloquent sound. Time does not allow of describing all the many types of popular music separately. One example will have to suffice on this occasion: the one I have chosen is that of the *Relpa* dancers from Kham, which is the name given to the most easterly part of the Tibetan lands.

A Relpa troupe includes both men and women. In plying its art, the party will be constantly on the move, living in tents and doing a petty trade on the side rather like the gypsies of Europe. Often the men and women in the party start off by dancing separately, joining later after the performance has gone on for some time. A light drum struck with a semi-circular stick and a small fiddle strung with twisted horse-hair are the principal instruments used in accompanying this dance.

The dance itself is a mixture of vigorous movements of the "cartwheel" type and gymnastic display supplemented by all kinds of amazing tricks. I can recall one truly astonishing conjuring-trick that involved a per-former sticking a sword through his own stomach from which blood was seen to ooze out!

In conclusion, the music of the classical dramas calls for mention: as in the *Relpa* music and dancing both men and women take part together. These plays employ a small orchestra of instruments, in which a large drum is especially prominent. Most remarkable is the style of the choruses occurring in these dramas, in which different voices join together suddenly in a manner that produces an acute and soul-stirring clash that is quite indescribable to anyone who has not heard it. Tibetan drama has both a sacred and a popular aspect, with its characteristic alternation of serious scenes in verse and comic ones in prose which are largely improvised on the spur of the moment, with satyrical allusions of a topical kind such as taking off some official person in his own presence. The entire population is familiar with these dramas and follows every move with keen appreciation, weeping at some of the most pathetic episodes and laughing at the all-too-transparent "gags". Such a drama can last all day, ending at sundown with a ritual that confirms its basically sacred character, despite all the light-hearted features

I have just described.

Sharing in all these things, the whole population derived at one and the same time entertainment and instruction.

Such is the art of a traditional society: its music, its literature, its painting and its various crafts reflect, directly or indirectly, a basically religious message. Nothing is so slight but it can serve as a reminder of Enlightenment in some way or other. All is reducible to this one purpose: the ultimate harmony lies there.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

If any one in seeing God conceives something in his mind, this is not God, but one of God's effects.

St. Thomas Aquinas

The Symbolism of Chess

by
Titus Burckhardt

IT is known that the game of chess originated in India. It was passed on to the medieval West through the intermediary of the Persians and the Arabs, a fact to which we owe, for example, the expression "check-mate", (German: *Schachmatt*) which is derived from the Persian *shah*: "king" and the Arabic *mat*: "he is dead". At the time of the Renaissance some of the rules of the game were changed: the "queen"[1] and the two "bishops"[2] were given a greater mobility, and thenceforth the game acquired a more abstract and mathematical character; it departed from its concrete model strategy, without however losing the essential features of its symbolism. In the original position of the chessmen, the ancient strategic model remains obvious; one can recognize the two armies ranged according to the battle order which was customary in the ancient East: the light troops, represented by the pawns, form the first line ; the bulk of the army consists of the heavy troops, the war chariots ("castles"), the knights ("cavalry") and the war elephants ("bishops"); the "king" with his "lady" or "counsellor" is positioned at the centre of his troops.

The form of the chess-board corresponds to the "classical" type of *Vāstu-mandala,* the diagram which also constitutes the basic layout of a temple or a city. It has been pointed out[3] that this diagram symbolizes existence conceived as a "field of action" of the divine powers. The combat which takes place in the game of chess thus represents, in its most universal meaning, the combat of the *devas* with the *asuras,* of the "gods" with the "titans", or of the "angels"[4] with the "demons", all other meanings of the game deriving from this one.

The most ancient description of the game of chess which we possess appears in "The Golden Prairies" by the Arab historian al-Mas'ūdī, who lived in Bagdad in the 9th century. Al-Mas'ūdī attributes the invention—or codification—of the game to a Hindu king "Balhit", a descendant of "Barahman". There is an obvious confusion here between a caste, that of the Brahmins, and a dynasty; but that the game of chess has a brahmanic origin is proved by the eminently sacerdotal character of the diagram of 8 x 8 squares (*ashtāpada*). Further, the warlike symbolism of the game relates it to the *Kshatriyas,* the caste of princes and nobles, as al-Mas'ūdī indicates when he writes that the Hindus considered the game of chess (*shatranj,*

[1] In Oriental chess this piece is not a "queen" but a "counsellor" or "minister" to the king (in Arabic *mudaffir or wazir,* in Persian *fersan* or *fars*). The designation "queen" in the Western game is doubtless due to a confusion of the Persian term *fersan,* which became *alferga* in Castillian, and the old French *fierce* or *fierge* for "virgin". Be that as it may, the attribution of such a dominant rôle to the king's "lady" corresponds well with the mentality of chivalry. It is significant also that the game of chess was passed on to the West by that Arab-Persian current which also brought with it heraldic art and the principal rules of chivalry.

[2] This piece was originally an elephant (Arabic: *al-fil*) which bore a fortified tower. The schematic representation of an elephant's head in some medieval manuscripts could be taken either for a "fool's cap" or a bishop's mitre: in French the piece is called *fou,* "fool"; in German it is called, *Läufer* "runner".

[3] See the author's *Sacred Art in East and West* (Perennial Books, London, 1967), Chapter I, "The Genesis of the Hindu Temple".

[4] The *devas* of Hindu mythology are analogous to the angels of the monotheistic traditions; it is known that each angel corresponds to a divine function.

from the Sanscrit C*haturanga*)[5] as a "school of government and defence". King Balhit is said to have composed a book on the game of which "he made a sort of allegory of the heavenly bodies, such as the planets and the twelve signs of the Zodiac, consecrating each piece to a star . . ." It may be recalled that the Hindus recognize eight planets: the sun, the moon, the five planets visible to the naked eye, and *Rāhu,* the "dark star" of the eclipses[6]; each of these "planets" rules one of the eight directions of space. "The Indians", continues al- Mas'ūdī, "give a mysterious meaning to the redoubling, that is to say to the geometrical progression, effected on the squares of the chess-board; they establish a relationship between the first cause, which dominates all the spheres and in which everything finds its end, and the sum of the squares of the chess-board . . ." Here the author is probably confusing the cyclical symbolism implied in the *ashteipada* and the famous legend according to which the inventor of the game asked the monarch to fill the squares of his chess-board with grains of corn, by placing one grain on the first, two on the following, four on the third, and so on up to the sixty-fourth square, which gives the sum of 18,446,744,073,709,551,661 grains. The cyclical symbolism of the chess-board resides in the fact that it expresses the unfolding of space according to the quaternary and octonary of the principal directions (4 x 4 x 4 = 8 x 8), and that it synthesizes, in crystalline form, the two great complementary cycles of sun and moon: the duodenary of the zodiac and the 28 lunar mansions ; furthermore, the number 64, the sum of the squares on the chess-board, is a submultiple of the fundamental cyclic number 25920, which measures the precession of the equinoxes. We have seen that each phase of a cycle, "fixed" in the scheme of 8 x 8 squares, is ruled by a heavenly body and at the same time symbolizes a divine aspect, personified by a *deva.*[7] It is thus that this *mandala* symbolizes at one and the same time the visible cosmos, the world of the Spirit and the Divinity in its multiple aspects. Al Mas'ūdī is therefore right to say that the Indians explain, "by calculations based on the chess-board, the march of time and the cycles, the superior influences which are exerted on this world, and the bonds which attach them to the human soul ..."

The cyclical symbolism of the chess-board was known to King Alphonsus the Wise, the famous troubadour of Castille, who in 1283 composed his *Libros de Acedrex,* a work which draws largely from Oriental sources.[8] Alphonsus the Wise also describes a very ancient variant of the game of chess, the "game of the four seasons", which takes place between four partners, so that the pieces, placed in the four corners of the chess-board, move in a rotatory direction, analogous to the movement of the sun. The 4 x 8 pieces must have the colours green, red, black, and white; they correspond to the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter; to the four

[5] The word *chaturanga* signifies the traditional Hindu army, composed of four *angas* = elephants, horses, chariots and soldiers.

[6] Hindu cosmology always takes account of the principle of inversion and exception, which results from the "ambiguous" character of manifestation: the nature of stars is luminosity, but as the stars are not Light itself, there must also be a dark one.

[7] Certain Buddhist texts describe the universe as a board of 8 x 8 squares, fixed by golden cords; these squares correspond to the 64 *kalpas* of Buddhism (C*f. Saddharma Pundarika,* Burnouf, *Lotus de la bonne Loi,* p. 148). In the *Ramayana,* the impregnable of the gods, *Ayodhya,* is described as a square with eight compartments on each side. We also recall, in the Chinese tradition, the 64 signs which derive from the 8 trigrams commented on in the I—King. These 64 signs are generally arranged so as to correspond to the eight regions of space. Thus we again encounter the idea of a quaternary and octonary division of space, which resumes all the aspects of the universe.

[8] In 1254 St. Louis had forbidden chess to his subjects. The saint had in mind the passions which the game could unleash, especially as it was frequently combined with the use of dice.

elements: air, fire, earth, and water, and to the four organic "humours". The movement of the four camps symbolizes cyclical transformation.[9] This game, which strangely resembles certain "solar" rites and dances of the Indians of North America, brings into relief the fundamental principle of the chess-board.

The chess-board can be considered as the extension of a diagram formed by four squares, alternatively black and white, and constitutes in itself a *mandala* of Shiva, God in his aspect of transformer: the quaternary rhythm, of which this *mandala* is, as it were, the spatial "coagulation", expresses the principle of time. The four squares, placed around an unmanifested centre, symbolize the cardinal phases of every cycle. The alternation of the black and white squares in this elementary diagram of the chess-board[10] brings out its cyclical significance[11] and makes of it the rectangular equivalent of the Far-Eastern symbol of *yin yang*. It is an image of the world in its fundamental dualism.[12]

If the world of the senses in its integral development results to some extent from the multiplication of qualities inherent in space and time, the *Vāstu-mandala* for its part derives from the division of time by space: one may recall the genesis of the *Vāstu-mandala* from the never-ending celestial cycle, this cycle being divided by the cardinal axes, then "crystallized" in a rectangular form.[13] The *mandala is* thus the inverted reflection of the principial synthesis of space and time, and it is in this that its ontological significance resides.

From another point of view, the world is "woven" from the three fundamental qualities or *gunas*[14] and the *mandala* represents this weaving in a schematic manner, in conformity with the cardinal directions of space. The analogy between the *Vāstu-mandala* and weaving is brought out by the alternation of colours which recalls a woven fabric of which the warp and the woof are alternately apparent or hidden.

Moreover, the alternation of black and white corresponds to the two aspects of the *mandala,* which are complementary in principle but opposed in practice: the *mandala is* on the one hand *a Purusha-mandala,* that is to say a symbol of the Universal Spirit (*Purusha*) inasmuch as it is an immutable and transcendent synthesis of the cosmos; on the other hand it is a symbol of existence (*Vāstu*) considered as the passive support of divine manifestations. The geometric quality of the symbol expresses the Spirit, while its purely quantitative extension expresses existence. Likewise its ideal immutability is "spirit" and its limiting coagulation is "existence" or *materia;* here it is not *materia prima,* virgin and generous, which is being referred to, but *materia secunda,* "dark" and chaotic, which is the root of existential dualism. In this connection one

[9] This variant of chess is described in the *Bhawisya Purana*. Alphonsus the Wise also speaks of a "great game of chess" which is played on a board of 12 x 12 squares and of which the pieces represent mythological animals; he attributes it to the sages of India.

[10] Given that the Chinese chess-board, which likewise had its origin in India, does not possess the alternation of the two colours, it is to be assumed that this element comes from Persia; it nevertheless remains faithful to the original symbolism of the chess-board.

[11] It also makes of it a symbol of inverse analogy; spring and autumn, morning and evening are inversely analogous. In a general manner the alternation of black and white corresponds to the rhythm of day and night, of life and death, of manifestation and of reabsorption in the unmanifest.

[12] For this reason the type of *Vastu-mandala* which has an uneven number of squares could not serve as a chess-board: the "battlefield" which the latter represents cannot have a manifested centre, for symbolically it had to be beyond oppositions.

[13] See *Sacred Art of East and West,* Chapter 2, "The Foundations of Christian Art".

[14] Cf. René Guénon, *The Symbolism of the Cross* (Luzac, London, 1958).

may recall the myth according to which the *Vāstu-mandala* represents an *asūra,* personification of brute existence: the *devas* have conquered this demon and have established their "dwelling-places" on the stretched-out body of their victim; thus they confer their "form" upon him, but it is he who manifests them.[15]

This double meaning which characterizes the *Vātstu-Purusha-mandala,* and which, moreover, is to be found in every symbol, is in a sense actualized by the combat which a game of chess represents. This combat, as we have said, is essentially that of the *devas* and the *asūras,* who dispute the chess-board of the world. It is here that the symbolism of black and white, already present in the squares of the chess-board, takes on its full value : the white army is that of Light, the black army that of darkness. In a relative domain, the battle which takes place on the chess-board represents, either that of two terrestrial armies each of which is fighting in the name of a principle,[16] or that of the spirit and of darkness in man; these are the two forms of the "holy war"; the "lesser holy war" and the "greater holy war", according to a saying of the Prophet Mohammed. One will see the relationship of the symbolism implied in the game of chess with the theme of the *Bhagavadgita,* a book which is likewise addressed to *Kshatriyas*.

If the significance of the different chessmen is transposed into the spiritual domain, the king becomes the heart, or spirit, and the other pieces the various faculties of the soul. Their movements, moreover, correspond to different ways of realizing the cosmic possibilities represented by the chess-board: there is the axial movement of the "castles" or war chariots, the diagonal movement of the "bishops" or elephants, which follow a single colour, and the complex movement of the knights. The axial movement, which "cuts" through the different "colours", is logical and virile, while the diagonal movement corresponds to an "existential"—and therefore feminine—continuity. The jump of the knights corresponds to intuition.

What most fascinates the man of noble and warlike caste is the relationship between will and destiny. Now it is just this that is so clearly illustrated by the game of chess, inasmuch as its moves always remain intelligible without being limited in their variation. Alphonsus the Wise, in his book on chess, relates how a king of India wished to know whether the world obeyed intelligence or chance. Two wise men, his advisers, gave opposing answers, and to prove their respective theses, one of them took as his example the game of chess in which intelligence prevails over chance, while the other produced dice, the symbol of fatality.[17]

Al- Mas'ūdī writes likewise that the king "Balhit", who is said to have codified the game of chess, gave it preference over *nerd,* a game of chance, because in the former intelligence always has the upper hand over ignorance.

At each stage of the game, the player is free to choose between several possibilities, but each movement will entail a series of unavoidable consequences, so that necessity increasingly limits free choice, the end of the game being seen, not as the fruit of hazard, but as the result of rigorous laws.

It is here that we see not only the relationship between will and fate, but likewise between

[15] The *mandala* of 8 x 8 squares is also called *Manduka,* "the frog" by allusion to the "Great Frog" (*maha-manduka*) which supports the whole universe and which is the symbol of obscure and undifferentiated *materia.*

[16] In a holy war it is possible that each of the combatants may legitimately consider himself as the protagonist of Light fighting the darkness. This again is a consequence of the double meaning of every symbol: what for one is the expression of the Spirit, may be the image of "dark" "matter" in the other's eyes.

[17] The *mandala* of the chess-board, on the one hand, and dice, on the other, represent two different and complementary symbols of the cosmos.

liberty and knowledge; except in the case of in-advertence on the part of his opponent, the player will only safeguard his liberty of action when his decisions correspond with the nature of the game, that is to say with the possibilities that the game implies. In other words, freedom of action is here in complete solidarity with foresight and knowledge of the possibilities; contrariwise, blind impulse, however free and spontaneous it may appear at first sight, is revealed in the final outcome as a non-liberty.

The "royal art" is to govern the world—outward and inward—in conformity with its own laws. This art presupposes wisdom; which is the knowledge of possibilities; now all possibilities are contained, in a synthetic manner, in the universal and divine Spirit. True wisdom is a more or less perfect identification with the Spirit (*Purusha*), this latter being symbolized by the geometrical quality[18] of the chess-board, "seal" of the essential unity of the cosmic possibilities. The Spirit is Truth; through Truth, man is free; outside truth, he is the slave of fate. That is the teaching of the game of chess; the *Kshatriya* who gives himself over to it does not only find in it a pastime or a means of sublimating his warlike passion and his need for adventure, but also, according to his intellectual capacity, a speculative support, and a "way" which leads from action to contemplation.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

In my novitiate, when I had become aware of the corruptions of the lower soul and acquainted with its places of ambush, I always felt a violent hatred of it in my heart. One day something like a young fox came forth from my throat and God caused me to know that it was my lower soul. I cast it under my feet, and at every kick that I gave it, it grew bigger. I said: "Other things are destroyed by pain and blows: why dost thou increase?" It replied: "Because I was created perverse: that which is pain to other things is pleasure to me, and their pleasure is my pain".

Muhammad b. 'Ulyáán of Nasá

[18] We may recall that the Spirit or the Word is the "form of forms", that is to say the formal principle of the universe.

The Ancient Wisdom in Africa

by

Patrick Bowen

THAT Asia is the source from whence all philosophy sprang is a universally accepted belief; and that Europe is the custodian and preserver of the knowledge originated in the elder Continent will likewise be generally maintained. Few ever consider that Africa also was once the home of a learning as profound as any Asia can show; and few, if any, will believe that such learning remains alive today among the inhabitants of the Dark Continent. Yet that such is the truth, I assert, and shall endeavour to make clear in the following pages.

Many years ago, when I, a boy of ten or twelve years of age, followed my father's wagon through the wild Bushlands of the Northern Transvaal, Portuguese East Africa and Mashonaland, I met and gained the friendship of many Natives—principally Zulus—of the class known as Isanusi, a term, popularly but improperly interpreted as "Witch Doctor". Why those men, who with Europeans and even with their own people are always intensely reserved, should have favoured me with their confidence is something I do not, even now, clearly understand, yet they certainly did so. I recall a conversation with one of their number, by name, Mankanyezi (The Starry One), with whom I was particularly intimate, which impressed me deeply; so much so that I have never forgotten it. My father had declared his intention of placing me in care of a Missionary, in order that I might receive some education, and learn white men's ways. I repeated his words to Mankanyezi, who shook his head doubtfully on hearing them and said:

"Your teachers are doubtless learned men. But why do they strive to force their beliefs on us without first learning what our beliefs are? Not one of them, not even Sobantu,[1] knows anything of our real belief. They think that we worship the spirits of our ancestors; that we believe our spirits, when we die, enter the bodies of animals. They, without proof or without enquiry, condemn us, the Isanusi, as deluders of our more ignorant brethren; or else they declare us to be wicked wizards having dealings with evil spirits. To show how ignorant they are, I shall tell you what we teach the Common Man (ordinary Native). We teach that he has a body; that within that body is a soul; and within the soul is a spark or portion of something we call Itongo, which the Common Man interprets as the Universal Spirit of the Tribe. We teach that after death the soul (*Idhlozi*) after hovering for a space near the body departs to a place called *Esilweni* (Place of Beasts). This is a very different thing, as you can see, from entering the body of a beast. In Esilweni, the soul assumes a shape, part beast and part human. This is its true shape, for man's nature is very like that of the beast, save for that spark of something higher, of which Common Man knows but little. For a period which is long or short, according to the strength of the animal nature, the soul remains in Esilweni, but at last it throws aside its beast-like shape and moves onward to a place of rest. There it sleeps till a time comes when it *dreams* that something to do or to learn awaits it on earth, then it awakes and returns, through the Place of Beasts, to earth and is born again as a child. Again and again-does the soul travel through the body, through the Place of Beasts, to its rest, dreams its dream and returns to the body; till at last the Man becomes true Man, and his soul when he dies goes straight to its rest, and thence, after a space, having ceased to dream of earth, moves on and becomes one with

[1] Sobantu, Bishop Colenso—a great authority on Native Tongues.

that from which it came—the Itongo. Then does the Man know that instead of being but himself, apart, he is truly all the tribe and the tribe is he. This is what we teach, I say, for this is the utmost the Common Man is capable of comprehending; indeed many have only a vague comprehension, even of this much. But the belief of us, Wiser Ones, is something far wider and greater, though similar. It is far too wide and great for Common Man's comprehension—or for yours, at present. But I may say this much, that we know that the Itongo is not the mere Spirit of the Tribe, but is the Spirit within and above all men—even all things ; and that at the end, all men being one in Spirit, all are brothers in the flesh".

Mankanyezi was a pure Zulu, of the royal blood. What his age might have been, I do not know, but certainly he was at least seventy, He was a tall, lean man, light chocolate in colour, of a distinctly Jewish cast of countenance, without a trace of the Negroid, with the exception of his snow-white hair which was frizzled. Both by the Natives and by the few white hunters who knew him he was regarded as a powerful magician, but only once did I get a glimpse of this side of his character.

A year or two subsequent to the talk above quoted, in company with a famous Boer hunter named Sarel Du Pont, I met Mankanyezi near the Limpopo River. "You go on a far journey", he said after some preliminary remarks.

"Only as far as the Zambezi", replied my companion.

Mankanyezi shook his head. "Much farther, I think. You will ere you again see this river visit the Great Lake of the North (Lake Nyassa). To the eastward of that lake, you will visit the springs of another river, and there you will meet one of my elder brothers".

"Indeed", said Du Pont, "if it should happen that we go so far, which is not our intention, how are we to know this brother of yours? I suppose he is not your brother in reality, but merely one in the Spirit, as you say all men are?"

"He is, as you say, not my brother in the flesh. I call him my elder brother because he is an Elder in the Family (Society) to which I belong, whose members are the guardians of the *Wisdom-which-comes-from-of-old*. There are many of us—one at least in every tribe and nation—throughout this great land. We are of many ranks, from the learner to the Master, and to those Higher Ones whose names may not be spoken, I am a common Brother; he of whom I speak is my Elder".

"But", I asked in some surprise, "how can you know this man, seeing you have often told me you have never travelled beyond the Zambezi?"

"I know him, because I have often seen him, though not in the flesh. Often have we spoken together. Do you think the mind of Man can travel only in the flesh? Do you think thought is limited by the power of the body? See this, and try to understand".

As he spoke he pointed to a lizard which basked in the sun, near by. Fixing his eyes upon it, he extended his hand, palm upward, towards it, and began to breathe slowly and regularly. In a few seconds, the beady eyes of the little reptile turned towards him. It took a little run forward, then stopped, its sides expanding and contracting, rhythmically. After a few seconds' further pause, it again darted forward and settled itself upon the old man's open palm. He let it rest for a minute, then slid it gently among the leaves where it quickly concealed itself. He looked at us and smiled gently. "That is witchcraft (*ubutakati*) perhaps you will say", he said, "perhaps I sent an evil spirit to call the lizard to me. Or perhaps it is itself an evil spirit which serves me. If I tell you that my mind went out and entered its brain and our two minds became one, you will not believe. Some day, perhaps, you will understand".

Over a year later, near the source of the Rovuma River, to the east of Lake Nyassa, we

put up at a Native village, and there met an old man (a Masai—not a Zulu) who greeted us as friends of his brother, Mankanyezi. From careful enquiries made by my companion, it became certain that this man and Mankanyezi could never have met. The one had certainly never been south of the Zambezi, and equally certainly the other had never been north of the river. Yet there was no question of their intimate knowledge of each other, a knowledge which could not have been gained second hand, for a thousand miles separated their dwelling places, and the tribes had no point of contact whatsoever.

About the time of Dr. Jameson's Raid on the Transvaal, I entered the service of the B.S.A. Co. (Chartered Company), and since then down to 1924, I was almost continually employed by one or other of the Colonial Administrations from the Equator to the Cape, always in some capacity which brought me in intimate contact with the Natives. Of the existence of the Society, mentioned by Mankanyezi, I received constant assurances, and once came in close touch with certain of its higher ranks.

Some years after the Boer War, I was engaged in work on behalf of the Natal Government, in a certain large Native Reserve,[2] in the course of which I was astonished to find occupying a remote, inaccessible valley, a small community of people—perhaps less than a hundred of all ages and both sexes—who were certainly not Zulus, nor, in fact, of an African Race I had ever seen. Had it not been for the fact that they lived the life of the Natives, and identified themselves in all respects with their Bantu neighbours, I should have said that they were members of some Southern European Race. In colour they varied a good deal, from the brown of a high caste Hindu to pure white. Their features were of pure European type, more uniformly classical indeed than is usual among Europeans.

The chief of this little community bore the Zulu name of Mandhla-langa (Strength of the Sun). He was a man of striking appearance, well over six feet in height, slight of figure, with wavy, snow-white hair, olive complexion and features which, with the exception of the cheek bones which were rather prominent, were almost pure Greek in type. Among the Zulus, he bore the reputation of being a supernatural being.

From the first, Mandhlalanga was extremely friendly towards me, and showed a desire to win my confidence. He gave me invaluable aid in the work upon which I was engaged, and that, eventually, I completed it successfully was largely owing to him. As regards himself, he remained for a time rather reserved, however. He and his people, he gave me to understand were Berbers, or rather Khabyles (he pronounced the name Kha-beel-ya, the "Kh" he pronounced as a guttural), from North Africa. But what they were doing five thousand miles from their native habitat, or why they chose to identify themselves with the Zulus, he did not explain.

Time, however, brought about a change in his attitude. One day I was speaking of the inexplicable manner in which news of distant happenings spreads among the Natives, when suddenly he said:

"Thought is speedier than the electric spark and needs no wires for its conveyance. All it requires is a brain to despatch it and another to receive it. Would you believe if I told you that I and others of the Brotherhood to which I belong can transmit our thoughts one to the other, no matter how far apart our bodies may be?"

This was a rather startling statement, but I recalled what I had learned from Mankanyezi. I replied, "Yes, I think I might believe that, but I should be more sure if you explained how it is done".

[2] The confidential nature of the work upon which I was engaged and other circumstances makes it necessary for me to be vague concerning dates and places.

"To attempt to explain our science to you", he said, smiling, "would be rather like trying to explain the differential calculus to a child who is ignorant of simple addition. However, I am satisfied that you have a mind unclouded by the average European's prejudices and preconceptions, so, if you will, I will take you as a pupil and teach you the simple addition of our lore. Whether you ever reach knowledge of the differential calculus, will depend entirely on yourself. I can teach, but I cannot guarantee that you can learn".

After some consideration I agreed to become Mandhlalanga's pupil, and for a year continued under his instruction. Then circumstances arose which led to my abandoning my studies and quitting this portion of the country. I never again encountered my teacher, nor for some considerable time afterwards did I ever receive a communication from him. With another of his fellows, however, whom I met at that period, I have several times been in contact, and have received from him communications at infrequent, though regular intervals.

The sum of the information I gained from Mandhlalanga, during that year, is not very large, and I am so far from clear concerning its exact significance that I shall make no attempt at explaining it. I shall content myself here with certain extracts from the copious notes I made of his discourses at the time they were delivered and allow the reader to interpret them as he sees fit.

Mandhlalanga, I may explain, is a master, or teacher in the Brotherhood mentioned by Mankanyezi. He has travelled in Europe, Asia and America. He speaks English and other European languages perfectly, but his talks with me were conducted in the secret Bantu tongue, which to the ordinary Native has been dead for ages, and of the continued existence of which few Europeans are aware. In the following quotations, the reader must realise that many obscurities are probably due to the difficulty of rendering in English the exact shades of meaning.

Mandhlalanga deals as follows with: "The Riddle of Existence".

"The *Itongo* (Universal Spirit) is ALL that ever was, is, or ever shall be, conceivable or inconceivable. The *Itongo* is ALL things, all things are of IT; but the sum of all things is not the *Itongo*. The *Itongo is* ALL the power there is, all power is of it; but all power, perceivable or conceivable, is not the *Itongo*. The *Itongo* is ALL the wisdom there is, all wisdom is of IT; but all wisdom conceivable is not the *Itongo*. ALL substance, ALL power, ALL wisdom is of IT, and IT is in them and manifest through them, but IT is also above them and beyond them, eternally unmanifest.

Man who is of the *Itongo* can never know the *Itongo* while he is man. All he can know of IT are certain manifestations which come within the range of his perceptions.

The pupil is generally taught that the manifestations are three in number. Namely:

1. Universal Mind.
2. Universal Force.
3. Universal Substance or Matter.

But really there are but two manifestations, Mind and Matter. What we call Force is not a separate manifestation. It is simply certain of the lowest, or grosser grades of Mind. *Force is simply that portion of Mind which endows Matter with Form.* It is that portion of mind which transmits the idea of Form to the higher grades where Consciousness dwells. Let the pupil think and he must see that this is so. Colour, size, shape, what are they? Simply light vibrations which when passed on to the Consciousness give the idea of Form. And what is vibration? It is Force. Heat, cold, hardness, softness, varieties of taste and smell are all vibrations, and therefore also Force. If you make Force a separate manifestation, then also must you make those planes of

Mind which transfer the ideas of passion or emotion separate manifestations.

In the beginning of a Cosmic Cycle the *Itongo* first manifested in all the many grades of mind, downward into all the grades of Matter. But at first both Mind and Matter were unindividualised. When, how, or why, only the *Itongo* can know. Individuality began in the highest planes of Mind—those planes which touch on pure Spirit. Understanding of what occurred is best gained by the following conception. Think of the Cosmos, just before Individuality began, as a vast, amorphous ocean of Mind and Matter, its surface ripples and upper reaches, those planes of Mind which touch on Spirit; growing denser and denser, downward till matter, in Etheric form, is reached: downward till Ether becomes Gas, which may be likened to the mineral-charged lower strata of the ocean; downward till gases become liquids (muddy water); finally into solids (thick mud).

The beginning of Individuality in this Cosmic Ocean may be likened to the starting of myriads of tiny "whirlpools" among the ripples of the surface (the Spiritualised Mind). These "whirlpools" under the force of a growing flood-tide, extended deeper and deeper, till at last all strata were involved in the swirl. Thus we have Individuality set up, extending from Spiritual Mind to the Physical Plane. The "whirlpool" on the surface represents the birth of the Soul. Its extension to the muddy depths represents the Soul's descent into matter. In matter the Soul has reached the aphelion of its cycle, and now it begins its long, slow return journey. By the process of evolution it climbs slowly upward, from mineral to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to man; through all grades and states of human development, shaking off, slowly and painfully as it climbs, the gross accretions gathered during its descent; up through the lower mind to the higher, it climbs, till at last, its cycle complete, it merges with its source, the *Itongo,* and ceases to be Individual, being one with the ALL."

On Man and his destiny, Mandhlalanga discoursed thus:

Man is an individual, having in him, as has everything on the physical plane, all the attributes of the Cosmic Ocean of which he is an individualised portion. He has reached on his upward journey the stage of personal consciousness. I speak of Man in general. There are undeveloped men whose personal consciousness is but rudimentary as there are others who have transcended personality and *know* their real Selves—that immortal portion first individualised from the lofty planes of the Spiritual Mind.

Man is on a journey, the goal of which is union with the source of his being—the *Itongo*. To reach that goal he must first pass through all experience the Cosmos affords, and must shake off all accretions accumulated on his descent from individualised Spiritual Mind into grossest Matter. To do this, he is born and born again, for his physical body dies, as do his lower mental principles; only his higher mental principles which are akin with the *Itongo* survive individuality bestowed upon them at its opening.

These are the Principles of Man:

(1) The Physical body (*Umzimba*).

(2) The Etheric Body (*Isitunzi*). This is merely the etheric counterpart of the physical body, and not really a separate principle, normally. But in certain abnormal states it is partially separable from the physical body. It is the medium through which the Lower Mind (or Force) functions.

(3) Lower Mind (*Amandhla*).	That portion of the Mind which shows as Life-force and other forms of what we call Energy.
(4) The Animal Mind (*Utiwesilo*).	The planes of Mind which manifest as passions, emotions, and instincts.
(5) Human Mind (*Utiwomuntu*).	The planes of Mind which manifest as human consciousness, Intellect, higher emotions, etc.
(6) Spiritual Mind (*Utiwetongo*).	The higher planes manifesting Spiritual Consciousness.
(7) *Itongo*.	The Ray, or spark of Universal Spirit which informs all lower manifestations.

My teacher gave the following account of the Brotherhood in which he holds the rank of Master.

We call our Brotherhood, *Bonaabakulu abasekhemu,* using the ancient Bantu speech which is the mother-tongue of the most widespread group of languages in the Continent. The name may be tendered in English as *The Brotherhood of the Higher Ones of Egypt*.

The Brotherhood was founded in Egypt in the reign of the Pharaoh Cheops; its founder being a priest of Isis. It has as its objects the spreading of the *Wisdom which comes from of Old* among all races and tribes in Africa, and the study and practice by its members of what we call *Ukwazikwesithabango,* which means that science which depends on the power of thought. It is the only true science there is.

These are the grades of the Brotherhood and some of the powers and functions they exercise.

(1) The Pupil.	The Pupil is one under probation which lasts from one to three years. During this time he is under instruction by a Master and subjects himself to certain disciplines. If found worthy he enters the Brotherhood as a Disciple, at the end of his period of probation. If unworthy he is dismissed back to the world.
(2) The Disciple.	The Disciple is an avowed member of the Brotherhood and subject to its disciplines. Under instruction he develops certain powers. That which in English is called "Mesmerism",is usually one of the earliest to develop.
(3) The Brother.	A full member of the Order with many developed powers, of which I may mention, only, power of communication by thought with those of equal or higher development, and what European occultists term *astral consciousness*.
(4) The Elder.	An advanced Brother.

(5) The Master.	The teacher of all lower grades. The Master has many developed powers (clairvoyance and clairaudience on the Etheric Plane, and control in a certain degree of Master, among many others). Mastership can be attained only by one who in a past life has reached Elderbrotherhood.
(6) Those who know (*Isangoma*).	Of these it is not permitted to speak save to say they have attained consciousness on the Plane of the Real Self. Only one who has reached Mastership in a previous life can gain Isangomanship.

Besides the above, we have lay Disciples and lay Brothers. They are men who are prevented by circumstances from becoming vowed to the Brotherhood. They are subject only to self-imposed disciplines and receive but such teaching as can be given from afar. We have many lay Disciples, not merely in Africa but in Asia, Europe and America. Lay Brothers, however, are but few, for without direct instruction from a Master few can reach this grade without incurring grave dangers. We constantly warn all unavowed Disciples against the danger of attempting to attain a brother's powers, unaided by the direct instruction of a Master.

Let it not be thought that our Isangoma, elevated though they be, represent the supreme development possible to Man on the Physical Plane. It is not so. There are others, not of any Brotherhood, save the Brotherhood of All. We call them Abakulubantu (that is, Supreme Ones, or Perfect Men). These are men for whom the necessity for rebirth has ceased. They dwell on earth in physical form by their own will, and can retain or relinquish that form as they choose. I speak of them but to assure the Pupil of their existence. Few, below the Grade of Master, have ever seen one in the flesh, though all, from Disciple upward, may meet them in the spirit."

Of the occult powers wielded by Mandhlalanga and his fellow Master, I saw several examples, but of these I do not feel at liberty to speak here. The reader has had, already, sufficient food for thought. I shall conclude with a rather cryptic quotation from Mandhlalanga on *The Source of the Brothers' Power.*

"Of the source of the power we wield, the Pupil can learn but little until he attains Discipleship. But let him ponder this much. I have likened Individuality to whirlpools in the Cosmic Ocean. But all that Ocean has not been cast into individuality. Between the "whirlpools", myriad though they be, stretch wide, smooth spaces, identical with them in composition. Now it can well be conceived that a "whirlpool" by setting up minor vibrations within itself may send out ripples through the smooth spaces which will strike upon and affect in some degree other "whirlpools". All the "whirlpools" are constantly doing this. Now suppose a "whirlpool" to have gained power to control its internal vibrations and to send them pulsating through the Ocean towards whatever objective it desires, can you not see that it may produce upon that objective whatever effect it desires? Now think of the "whirlpool" as being a Man. Is it not clear that by getting full control of the vibrations of his higher planes, he may despatch through the Cosmic Ocean of which he is a part, ripples of various kinds and intensities, which, according to their nature and strength, will produce effects on all strata, from the highest, which is of course the most sensitive, even down to the "slime" and "mud" of the depths. I give you this as food for thought, and bid you digest it well.

Book Reviews

HINDU WORLD.
An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism.
Compiled by Benjamin Walker.
In two volumes.
(Allen and Unwin, 10 gns. the set).

Review by Whitall N. Perry.

If Hinduism first and foremost connotes one of the great oriental religions, the term likewise comprises a multi-faceted phenomenon of spiritual, intellectual, political, social, and ethnic plexuses, — a primordial revelation or series of revelations "churned from the waters" at the dawn of time, and a vast system whose ever-expanding reverberations are still reaching down the centuries towards the farthest confines of the last age, or Kali Yuga. The compiler of this aptly titled work has endeavoured to extract a manageable survey of this phenomenon in a manner at once accessible and convincing to any serious lay reader in need of an erudite reference manual that is something less than a library. Quite candidly he stakes his claim for this attempt on the basis that no other work of its kind exists, and in fact the closest recent book in scope may well be A. L. Basham's excellent compendium, *The Wonder That Was India* (an entry in *Hindu World* under INDOLOGY lists the major western contributors in the field over the last two centuries). In assessing the value of one- and two-volume "dictionaries" and "encyclopaedias" of world religions and cultures, a margin of indulgence has to be ceded to the inevitable restrictions on space, and to the fact that the compiler's partialities will stand out more boldly than is the case with the collective impersonality of a fully exhaustive work. The chief merits of *Hindu World* are its documentary reliability and scholarship (if somewhat delimited to the socio-anthropological approach of modern historical criticism), its admirable classification of subject matter, and its extreme readability combined with thoroughness of treatment.

An ingenious system of indexing eliminates pagination while facilitating references. Thus, of the more than eight thousand items composing the Index, those given in capitals refer to separate articles entered in their proper place alphabetically, while those in small print have a key word or words annexed indicating the article in which the item is to be found; conversely, copious cross references are provided by an asterisk against each word in an article which in turn is treated as a separate entry; another convenience is a list of contents at the beginning of each volume. Every article is followed by a bibliography giving primary sources, which accumulated together are comprehensive (readers of *Studies in Comparative Religion* will be interested to know that Coomaraswamy and Guénon both figure in the source material). To show how this works, a reader seeking information on astrology, for example, will find through the index that the documentation is provided under the headings of "Astronomy" and "Divination". Again, the entry under AEON outlines the doctrine of cosmic cycles, showing among other things the complexities surrounding the definition of *manvantaras;* but further details can be had by tracing "Manvantara" through the Index to the heading "Manu", where the complexities are found to be inextricably compounded! Reincarnation might have received a special article;

instead, it is intelligently relegated to its proper setting under the entry ESCHATOLOGY, where it is equated with *sam-sâra,* "transmigration".

Through more painstaking editing the Index would be still larger ("Judgment" is missing, for example, even though the idea recurs in the articles on YAMA, HELL, ESCHATOLOGY, and KARMA). The doctrine of *avatâras* is explained under the heading GOD, but neither by index nor cross reference is the listing "Vishnu" placed in apposition with "Avatâra", although in the article under VISHNU are to be found the names of the ten best known *avatâras* (plus interesting information about still further "descents" of Vishnu). Again, while the entry on Swâmi Vivekânanda tells us he was a member of the kâyastha or clerical caste, an asterisk that is missing would facilitate the reader's discovery of the not astonishing fact that "most authorities designate the kâyasthas as śudras".

These volumes invite endless browsing. One learns that each yuga or "age" of mankind "is preceded by a period called its *samdhyâ,* 'morning twilight', and is followed by a period called the *samdhyamsa,* 'evening twilight'". There is a very full section on SACRIFICE. Another article suggests that the famous rope trick has its prototype and possibly origin in an ancient shamanistic initiatory rite setting forth symbolically the dismemberment and subsequent reintegration of the aspirant during his spiritual ascent (with echoes of this feat coming from Lisieux in the Middle Ages and from sixteenth-century Magdeburg). The article on MECHANICS even documents a widespread belief (c. AD 600) in flying "engines", *yantra,* built by Yavana (Greek) artisans for Indian kings. Yoga is treated under different headings, with a prudent warning conveyed in the section on OCCULTISM against the dangers of the grosser practices and postures. Indeed, one sees very clearly in this book how India has been able to nurture and contain everything from the highest realms of spirituality (*satyasa satyam*) to the basest aberrations of materialism (*nâstika*) with its *point de chute* in the dreadful antinomianism of the sinister Kâpâlika sects. If India is a land of pitfalls for the unwary western seeker, *Hindu World* could likewise be considered an *ignis fatuus* for the unguarded reader: the compiler is obliged to set forth an amorphous welter of information; he is after all a lexicographer, not a guru, and some of the material is explosive.

Inevitably, though, any reference work poses as a target for scholarly rebuttals over errors of commission and omission, and such faults are not lacking here. Taking the first category: everything pertaining to caste, while admirably documented, carries an undertone of virulent contempt (particularly as regards Brahmins); nowhere is there found even a rudimentary assessment of the profound principles stemming from archetypal realities on which the whole system is based. But perhaps this is not surprising on the part of one who can write under NASTIKA (=denier, nihilist, atheist): "Indian nonconformity is one of the finest chapters in the history of Hindu and Buddhist speculation". "Priestly editing", we are told, has been responsible for a great deal of forgery in the "mass of Sanskrit texts". The generality of Hindus will be gratuitously offended in reading that the *Bhagavadgîtâ* "may have borrowed (the idea of the deity incarnate as a saviour of all mankind) from the teachings of the New Testament," that "spiritually it is a disappointment... replete with tautology, contradiction and rhetoric... conceived by a mind ridden with vague philosophical concepts", while knowledgeable Westerners will simply brush this off with derision; but to reject *Hindu World* on this basis would be as irrational as to spurn the *Sacred Books of the East* because Max Müller was capable of writing that the *Brahmanas* "deserve to be studied as the physician studies the twaddle of idiots and the ravings of madmen". It seems, alas, that it often takes one kind of person to document spirituality and another to understand it. The compiler says that not "every byway

of the vast panorama of Hinduism has been described here in all its scholastic variora". One flagrant exception concerns the sexual domain. The Hindus being methodical and scientific in regard to everything pertaining to Mâyâ deal frankly with sexual phenomena no less than other matters in the realm of formal manifestation, but the ever-recurrent stress this receives in the book would give the idea that all Hindus with the exception, perhaps, of a few obstinate ascetics are sex-crazed (again it must be emphasized that taken alone the documentation here cannot be much faulted, although a certain scepticism is admissible to say the least in the face of some of the extravagances recorded).

In the second category: why, when nearly three pages are devoted to Sri Aurobindo is there nothing at all on Sri Ramana Maharshi? A good deal of space is allotted to Buddhism and Islam, which is justifiable considering the roots that the former and the impact which the latter have had on Hindu culture; by extension Jainism and Sikhism are also covered, and even Christianity: why, then, are the Parsees ignored except for dropping their name once or twice in the articles on Maga and Zoroastrianism? And why is there no rubric on Indonesia, the site of Hinduism's great exterritorial flowering? By all rights the Gypsies should also be included, as they form one of the most fascinating enigmas on the periphery of Hinduism.

Hindu World will certainly be a standard reference work pending the rather improbable appearance of a better compendium; therefore it is to be hoped that the book's reception will be such as to allow for a second edition, once it has passed the screening of scholars from India and the West to permit the necessary and inevitable rectifications and additions. And if the second edition could be intelligently illustrated (since Hinduism is also a feast for the eyes), this would still further heighten its appeal.

Book Review

RELIGION IN THE U.S.S.R.
Edited by Robert Conquest.
(The Bodley Head. 21s.).

Review by A.A.

If any further evidence was needed to show the evil inherent in communism this latest volume in the Soviet Studies Series, dealing with the various religions in the U.S.S.R. since the October revolution, would surely provide an overwhelming display of accredited facts. The strength of the book lies in the almost complete absence of the author's personal views and the reliance on quotations and information drawn from mostly Russian sources. These provide an appalling picture of the persecution suffered by the various religions unfortunate enough to fall under communist influence. All have been persecuted more or less continuously apart from the years of the German invasion when the communists, with typical hypocrisy, tolerated the religions for their support in the war, only to turn on them again when the danger had been averted. Today the Orthodox Church and some other religions are able to purchase a very small measure of freedom by supporting the lies and distortions of Soviet foreign policy; a high price to pay indeed, but who can judge them after the years of terror, murder and suppression?

Buddhism appears to be the religion that has suffered most. In Buryatia, for example, there were 36 *datsans* and 16,000 lamas in 1916, while in 1960 in the Buryat Autonomous Republic and the Chita region there were no more than 2 *datsans* and a few dozen lamas! In Tuva, where there had been 22 Buddhist temples and more than 4,000 lamas before the revolution, there were only 100 lamas in 1960 and no mention of any surviving Buddhist temples. In 1962 the total number of lamas in the Soviet Union was given as "about 300"!

The 54,174 churches of all types served by 50,105 priests and deacons, and the 1,025 monastic institutions housing 94,629 monks, belonging to the Orthodox Church in 1914, had been reduced by 1941 to 4,225 churches with 5,665 priests and 3,100 deacons and sacristans, and 37 monasteries.

The most hopeful fact that does emerge after fifty years of cruel persecution is that communism has completely failed to eradicate religion. It may have deterred those who were lukewarm in their beliefs but, on communist admission, anti-religious propaganda, the closing of churches and the disappearance of priests, has only served to reinforce the faith of literally millions of believers.

It is interesting to note that in the case of Islam, members and officials of the communist party have been criticized and expelled for following Muslim rites, and "in October, 1964, *Pravda Vastaka* announced the dismissal of the Minister of Trade of the Kara-Kalpak A.S.S.R., whose observance of Muslim rites had been reported in the newspapers in July". This is far from being a lone case.

Although this book presents a long line of communist crimes, it is in another sense a book of hope, for it shows how religion has survived and in some ways flourished under persecution. The "bleak hopelessness of modern secularism", or materialism, or atheism, has not triumphed

and, so long as intelligent Russians continue to be born, it probably never will.

This most factual and documented of books should be read by all believers in "peaceful co-existence"; the doctrine of "We'll leave you alone and you leave us alone to suppress, murder and otherwise tyrannize our own population until we are ready to deal with you". One does not leave a cancer to spread unchecked, nor make provision for the safety of evil. A little more concern for those suffering under communism, and particularly the unfortunate millions consigned to communist rule through the criminal actions or negligence of Western politicians after the last war, is something much needed in the West.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

How many of our "communists", I wonder, realize that the reference of "the common Man", COMMUNIS HOMO, *was originally not to the man in the street as such, but to the immanent deity, the very Man in everyman!*

A. K. Coomaraswamy

Correspondence

TEILHARD DE CHARDIN

Sir,

No, it is not true that "so long as a writer on religious subjects is affirming beliefs (whether his own or other people's) he is expressing the truth, but when depreciating other people's beliefs, his word is not to be trusted", for in that case the most erroneous sects, including Satanism, and the most absurd personal beliefs would be justified; the "discerning of spirits" of which the New Testament speaks would have no meaning. But perhaps the author of this remark is thinking somehow of the principle according to which a doctrinal pronouncement—not a metaphysical one but a dogmatic or moral one—may be perfectly valid within the framework of a given religion without necessarily being valid outside it and within the framework of another religion that is equally true in itself? However that may be, this principle does not apply to the case of Teilhard de Chardin, whose thesis on the genesis of man stands in opposition not only to the form and spirit of the Christian dogma, but also to all traditional wisdom. Let us say simply that this thesis is false, that it expresses no particle of transcendent truth. And how could it, seeing that it denies truth as such: according to Teilhard de Chardin, intelligence itself, including all that is deepest in it, all that is implicitly divine, is subject to change; it "evolves" together with the supposed evolution of matter, so that it could not have any fixed and immutable content; the spirit of man, according to Teilhard de Chardin, is entirely "in a state of becoming". It is here, moreover, that the Teilhardian thesis contradicts itself, for if human intelligence is no more than matter which has been in a state of progressive transformation ever since the age of the first molluscs, how could modern man, "half-developed" as he is, possibly take in, with the eye of his understanding, the whole movement which is carrying him along? How is it possible for the essentially impermanent to judge the nature of impermanence? This argument should be enough to condemn the Teilhardian thesis. It remains to be seen why it has so much success.

The average modern man "believes" above all in science—the science that has produced modern surgery and modern industry—and this is almost his basic "religion". If he considers himself a Christian at the same time, the two "beliefs" stand in opposition to each other in his soul, and engender a latent crisis which calls for a solution. This solution is what Teilhard de Chardin seems to bring. He "ties the two loose ends together"; but he does so, not by making as he should, the distinction between the different planes of reality—that of empirical knowledge which is exact in its way but necessarily fragmentary and provisional, and that of faith which is bound up with timeless certainties—but by mixing them inextricably together: he endows empirical science with an absolute certainty that it does not and cannot have, and he projects the idea of indefinite progress into God Himself.

He puts forward the theory of the transformation of the species as a certain fact, whereas it is no more than a hypothesis as its most serious defenders admit; no valid proof of it has ever, in fact, been made, and if in spite of everything it keeps its hold, this is because modern minds can only conceive of a genesis which takes place in time; the "vertical" genesis of specific forms from the supraformal and animic degrees of existence is beyond them. None the less, scientific honesty demands that one should make a distinction between proof and hypothesis, and that one should not build, as Teilhard de Chardin, does, a whole philosophy—indeed, a pseudo-

religion—on an entirely conjectural basis. It is not for nothing that Teilhard de Chardin was the victim of the famous Piltdown hoax—the Eoanthropus of unhappy memory—and that he was one of the inventors of the no less fantastic "Sinanthropus" of Chou-Kou-Tien! But the worst and most grotesque feature of Teilhardism is the fact that it is obliged to consider the prophets and sages of ancient times as being mentally "under-developed": are they not a little nearer to the ape than modern man is? It is true that in this respect the thesis of Teilhard de Chardin is in no sense original; its novelty lies in its being a Trojan horse to introduce materialism and progressism into the very bosom of the religion.

Switzerland, 7.5.69
TITUS BURCKHARDT

MAN AND THE PRESENCE OF EVIL

Sir,

I cannot answer Mr. Bolton's long and interesting letter on my article, *Man and the presence of evil in Christian and Platonic Doctrine*, because I don't think there is anything to answer; Mr. Bolton asserts what he calls the "complete principles" of "true metaphysics" and that is that. The only question to be asked, consequently, is not whether my interpretation of Christian or Platonic doctrine is right or wrong over particular points, but whether Mr. Bolton's complete principles of true metaphysics are right or wrong, or at least whether they can pretend to that absolute and overriding authority which Mr. Bolton attributes to them. Mr. Bolton's statement that "the ideas of emanation and creation are in no sense equal alternatives... the idea of creation relates to an altogether more relative point of view than that of emanation", will serve to illustrate what I mean. This statement presupposes the possession of certain principles of understanding which are derived from a doctrine that Mr. Bolton must claim is superior—metaphysically superior—to the Christian doctrine, because according to Christian doctrine it is the idea of emanation that is more relative than the idea of creation, and this is the reverse of what Mr. Bolton says is true. Similarly, his statement that finite being *"does not exist at all* (his italics) for the Infinite" must also derive from a doctrine which Mr. Bolton accepts as metaphysically superior to Christian doctrine, because of course Christian doctrine affirms a point of view which, it claims (mistakenly, Mr. Bolton would say, and certainly illogically), goes beyond the logical categories of thought which produce that concept of "irreversibility" he has in mind. And so on, where the other arguments are concerned. It is so easy to appeal to "complete principles" of "true metaphysics" while forgetting that this appeal begs an endless number of questions. Ultimately the degree and firmness of the assent one gives to a particular doctrine depend not on any demonstrable probability or proof of its metaphysical superiority over another doctrine, but on the strength of one's acceptance of it, or faith in it, in the first place. That is why I cannot answer Mr. Bolton's letter without first going into the whole question of the nature and authority of the principles of the doctrine he asserts—obviously something that cannot be done in a letter.

Athens, 27.11.68
PHILIP SHERRARD

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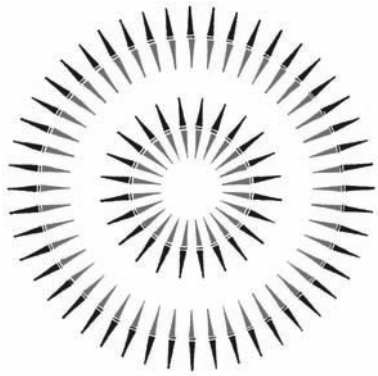

Understanding and Believing

by
Frithjof Schuon

IT is generally recognized that man is capable of believing without understanding; one is much less aware of the inverse possibility, that of understanding without believing, and it even appears as a contradiction, since faith does not seem to be incumbent except on those who do not understand. Yet hypocrisy is not only the dissimulation of a person who pretends to be better than he is; it also manifests itself in a disproportion between certainty and behavior, and in this respect most men are more or less hypocritical since they claim to admit truths which they put no more than feebly into practice. On the plane of simple belief, to believe without acting in accordance with the dictates of one's belief corresponds, on the intellectual plane, to an understanding without faith and without life; for real belief means identifying oneself with the truth that one accepts, whatever may be the level of this adherence. Piety is to religious belief what operative faith is to doctrinal understanding or, we may add, what sainthood is to truth.

If we take as a starting point the idea that spirituality has essentially two factors, namely discernment between the Real and the illusory and permanent concentration on the Real, the *conditio sine qua non* being the observance of traditional rules and the practice of the virtues that go with them, we shall see that there is a relationship between discernment and understanding, on the one hand, and between concentration and faith, on the other; faith, whatever its degree, always means a quasi-existential participation in Being or in Reality; it is, to take a basic *hadîth*, "to worship God as if thou sawest Him, and if thou seest Him not, yet He seeth thee". In other terms, faith is the participation of the will in the intelligence; just as on the physical plane man adapts his action to the physical facts which determine its nature, so also, on the spiritual plane, he should act in accordance with his convictions, by inward activity even more than by outward activity, for "before acting one must first be", and our being is nothing else but our inward activity. The soul must be to the intelligence what beauty is to truth, and this is what we have called the "moral qualification" that should accompany the "intellectual qualification".

There is a relationship between faith and the symbol; there is also one between faith and miracles. In the symbolic image as in the miraculous fact, it is the language of being, not of reasoning, which speaks; to a manifestation of being on the part of Heaven, man must respond with his own being, and he does so through faith or through love, which are the two aspects of one and the same reality, without thereby ceasing to be a creature endowed with thought. In plain terms, one might wonder what basis or justification there can be for an elementary faith which is disdainful, or almost so, of any attempt at comprehension; the answer has just been given, namely that such faith is based on the illuminating power which belongs in principle to the symbols, phenomena and arguments of Revelation;[1] the "obscure merit" of this faith consists in our not being closed to a grace for which our nature is made. There is room for

[1] The "signs" (*âyât*) of which the Koran speaks, and which may even be natural phenomena envisaged in the light of the revealed doctrine. A remark which should be made in this context is that the insensibility of the believers of any intrinsically orthodox religion to the arguments of another religion does not in any sense come into question here, since the motive for refusal is in that case a positive factor, namely an already existing faith which is in itself valid.

differences, on the human side, as regards the modes or degrees of receptivity and also the intellectual needs; these needs do not in any sense mean that the thinking man lacks faith, they merely show that his receptivity is sensible to the most subtle and most implicit aspects of the Divine Message; now what is implicit is not the inexpressible but the esoteric, and this has the right to be expressed.[2] Attention has already been drawn to the relationship between faith and miracles; in fact, perfect faith consists in being aware of the metaphysically miraculous character of natural phenomena and, as a result, in seeing in them the trace of God.

The demerit of unbelief or lack of faith does not therefore lie in a natural lack of special aptitudes, nor is it due to the unintelligibility of the Message, for then there would be no demerit; it lies in the passionate stiffening of the will and in the worldly tendencies which bring about this stiffening. The merit of faith is fidelity to the "supernaturally natural" receptivity of primordial man; it means remaining as God made us and remaining at His disposition with regard to a Message from Heaven which might be contrary to earthly experience, while being incontestable in view of subjective as well as objective criteria.[3]

It is related that Ibn Taimiyyah[4] once said, while coming down from the pulpit after a sermon: "God comes down from Heaven to earth as I am coming down now";[5] there is no reason to doubt that he meant this to be taken literally, with a literalism defying all interpretation, but his attitude has nonetheless a symbolic value which is independent of his personal opinions. The refusal to analyze a symbol by discursive and separative thought—in order to assimilate it directly and as it were existentially—does in fact correspond to a perspective which is possible and therefore valid in the appropriate circumstances. "Blind faith" may be seen to coincide here with an attitude which is its opposite while being at the same time analogous, namely the assimilation of truth through the symbol and by means of the whole soul, the soul as such.

* * *

Faith as a quality of the soul is the stabilizing complement of the discerning and as it were explosive intelligence; without this complement, intellectual activity—not pure intellection—lets itself be carried away by its own movement and is like a devouring fire; it loses its balance and ends either by devouring itself in a restlessness without issue or else simply by wearing itself out to the point of sclerosis. Faith implies all the static and gentle qualities such as patience, gratitude, confidence, generosity; it offers the mercurial intelligence a fixative element and thus realizes, together with discernment, an equilibrium which is like an anticipation of sainthood. It is to this polarity, at its highest level, that the complementary terms "blessing" (or "prayer",

[2] It goes without saying that the implicit is to be found even on the plane of the literal meaning, but this mode of indication causes practically no problems and is not in question here.

[3] To say that Abraham and Mary had the merit of great faith means that they were sensible to the Divine criteria despite the apparent impossibility of the Message; this means also that the men of old were by no means credulous, if we may be allowed to make this remark in a context which goes beyond the level of ordinary humanity, since we are speaking of prophets.

[4] Arab theologian of the thirteenth century, Hanbalite by origin and the protagonist of an extreme exoterism.

[5] With reference to the *hadîth* of "the Descent" (*an-Nuzûl*): "Our Lord—Blessed and Exalted be He—cometh down each night unto the nethermost heaven (*as-samâ' ad-dunyâ*, a Koranic term which signifies, not the lowest of the seven Heavens, but the terrestrial firmament) while the last third of the night yet remaineth, and He saith: Who calleth upon Me, that I may answer him? Who asketh of Me, that I may give unto him? Who seeketh My forgiveness, that: I may forgive him?"

salâh) and "peace" (or "greeting", *salâm*) are applied in Islam.

It must be stressed again that an intellectual qualification is not fully valid unless it be accompanied by an equivalent moral qualification; herein lies the explanation of all the fideist attitudes which seem bent on limiting the impetus of the intelligence. The upholders of tradition pure and simple (*naql*) in the first centuries of Islam were deeply conscious of this, and Ashari himself must have sensed it—although it took him in the opposite direction since he ventured on to the plane of theological reasoning—when he attributed to God an unintelligibility which, in the last analysis, could only signify the precariousness of man's intellectual means in the face of the dimension of absoluteness.

One can meditate or speculate indefinitely on transcendent truths and their applications (that is moreover what the author of this book does, but he has valid reasons for doing it, nor does he do it for himself). One can spend a whole lifetime speculating on the suprasensorial and the transcendent, but all that matters is the "leap into the void" which is the fixation of spirit and soul in an unthinkable dimension of the Real; this leap, which cuts short and completes in itself the endless chain of formulations,[6] depends on a direct understanding and on a grace, not on having reached a certain phase in the unfolding of the doctrine, for this unfolding, we repeat, has logically no end. This "leap into the void" we can call "faith"; it is the negation of this reality that is the source of all philosophy of the type that may be described as "art for art's sake", and of all thought that believes it can attain to an absolute contact with Reality by means of analyses, syntheses, arrangements, filtrations, and polishings—thought that is mundane by the very fact of this ignorance and because it is a "vicious circle" which not merely provides no escape from illusion, but even reinforces it through the lure of a progressive knowledge which in fact is inexistent.[7]

In view of the harm that the prejudices and tendencies of ordinary piety can sometimes do to metaphysical speculations, we might be tempted to conclude that piety should be abandoned on the threshold of pure knowledge, but this would be a false and highly pernicious conclusion; in reality, piety—or faith—must never be absent from the soul, but it is only too clear that it must be on a level with the truths that it accompanies, which implies that such an extension is perfectly in its nature, as is proved by the Vedantic hymns, to take just one particularly conclusive example.

The Hindus have been reproached for being inveterate idolators and for finding in the least phenomenon a pretext for idolatry; we are referred, for example, to an animal festival at which, so it seems, the artisan gathers his tools together in order to worship them. The truth is that the Hindu refuses to become rooted in outwardness: he readily looks to the Divine substratum of things, whence his acute sense of the sacred and his devotional mentality; this is the last thing that modern man wants, monstrously "adult" as he has become in conforming to the worst illusion that has ever darkened the human outlook. The reflection of the sun may not be the sun but it is nonetheless "something of the sun", and in this sense it is not wrong to

[6] But for this completion there would be no such thing as doctrines, these being by definition forms, delimitations, mental coagulations.

[7] A valid doctrine is a "description" which is based on direct, supramental knowledge, and the author is therefore under no illusion as to its inevitable formal limitations; on the other hand, a philosophy which claims to be a "research" is a mere nothing and its apparent modesty is no more than a pretentious negation of true wisdom, which is absurdly called "metaphysical dogmatism". There is clearly no humility in saying that one is ignorant because everyone is ignorant.

speak elliptically of a kind of identity, the light being always the one light and the cause being really present in the effect. Whoever does not respect the effect makes himself incapable of respecting fully the cause, apart from the fact that the cause withholds itself from whoever despises its reflections; whoever understands the cause perceives it also in its earthly traces. The sense of the sacred: this word felicitously expresses a dimension which should never be absent either in metaphysical thought or in everyday life; it is this which gives birth to the liturgies, and without it there is no faith. The sense of the sacred, with its concomitances of dignity, incorruptibility, patience, and generosity is the key to integral faith and to the supernatural virtues which are inherent in it.

* * *

If one adopts the distinction made by the alchemists between a "dry path" and a "moist path", the former corresponding to "knowledge" and the latter to "love", one should also be aware that the two poles "fire" and "water", which these paths represent respectively, are both reflected in each path, so that "knowledge" has necessarily an aspect of "moisture", and "love" an aspect of "dryness".

Within the framework of a path of love, this aspect of "dryness" or of "fire" is doctrinal orthodoxy, for it is well known that no spirituality is possible without the implacable and immutable bulwark of a Divine expression of the saving Truth; analogously and inversely, the aspect of "moisture" or of "water" which, being feminine, is derived from the Divine Substance (*Prakriti*, the *Shakti*) is indispensable to the path of "knowledge" for the evident and already mentioned reasons of equilibrium, stability and effectiveness.

When comparing the quality of "knowledge" with fire, one is aware that this comparison cannot perfectly and exhaustively account for the metaphysical reaches of the intelligence and for its activity of realization: fire in itself, besides its qualities of luminosity and ascension, has in fact an aspect of agitation and destructiveness, and it is this aspect—the very one that the fideist opponents of *kalâm* have in mind—which proves that the "fiery" element in knowledge is not self-sufficient and that it has in consequence an imperative need of a "moist" element, which is none other than faith with all its fixative and appeasing virtues.[8] Even the most penetrating intelligence, if it relies too much on its own strength, runs the risk of being abandoned by Heaven; forgetting that the Subject, the Knower, is God, it closes itself to the divine influx. Profane thought is not confined to thought which is ignorant of metaphysical and mystical truths,[9] but also includes thought which, while knowing these truths well enough in theory, has nonetheless a disproportionate approach to them, an approach that is unaccompanied by a sufficient adaptation of the soul; not that such thought is profane by definition as in the case of ignorant thought, but it is so secondarily or morally and lies in grave danger of error, for man is not merely a mirror, he is a cosmos which is both complex and fragile. The connection, often affirmed by tradition, between Knowledge and Peace, shows in its own way that in pure intellectuality the mathematical element is not everything, and also that fire by itself could not

[8] "There is no lustral water like unto knowledge", says the *Bhagavad Gîtâ*: it is here water, not fire, which is related to *jnâna*.

[9] "Metaphysical": concerning universal realities considered objectively. "Mystical": concerning the same realities considered subjectively, that is, in relation to the contemplative soul, insofar as they enter operatively into contact with it.

be the symbol of intellectuality.[10]

The two principles "fire" and "water" come together in "wine", which is both "liquid fire" and "igneous water";[11] liberating intoxication proceeds precisely from this alchemical and as it were miraculous combination of opposite elements. It is thus wine, and not fire, which is the most perfect image of liberating gnosis, envisaged not only in its total amplitude but also in the equilibrium of its virtual modes, for the equilibrium between discernment and contemplation can be conceived at every level. Another image of this equilibrium or of this concordance is oil; it is moreover through oil that fire is stabilized and that it becomes the calm and contemplative flame of the lamps in sanctuaries. Like wine, oil is an igneous liquid, which "shineth even though the fire have not touched it", according to the famous Verse of Light (*Âyât an-Nûr*).

From a certain elementary point of view, there is a connection between the emotional path of "warriors" and water, which is passive and "feminine", just as there is a connection between the intellectual path of "priests" and fire, which is active and "masculine"; but it remains abundantly clear that water has a sacerdotal aspect of peace, and that fire has a warlike aspect of devouring activity, and that each path has necessarily a "dry" pole and a "moist" pole.

All these considerations converge on the problem of the relationships between speculative intelligence and faith: faith is a pure and calm "water", intelligence is an active and discriminating "fire". To say that water is pure amounts to saying that is has a virtual quality of luminosity, that it is thus predisposed to be a vehicle for fire and to be transmuted into wine, as at the marriage in Cana; when considered with regard to its possibilities, water is a virtual wine since it already possesses luminosity by reason of its purity, and in this sense it is comparable to oil; like wine, oil is igneous by its very nature, but at the same time it does not correspond exactly to wine except when combined with the flame that it feeds, whereas wine has no need of any complement to manifest its nature.

* * *

It follows from all that has been said so far that faith and intelligence can each be conceived at two different levels: faith as a quasi-ontological and premental certitude ranks higher than the discerning and speculative aspects of intelligence,[12] but intelligence as pure Intellection ranks higher than that faith which is no more than sentimental adherence; it is this ambivalence which is the source of numerous misunderstandings, but which makes possible at the same time an exo-esoteric language that is both simple and complex. Faith in its higher aspect is what we

[10] Shankara, affirming his identity with "inward Wisdom", calls it: "That which is the stilling of mental agitation and the supreme appeasement. . . . That which is the pool Manikarnikâ. . . . That which is the Ganges. . .", images referring to water, not to fire. Islam, for its part, associates coolness, the color green and streams with Paradise.

[11] When the Red Indians called alcohol "fire-water", they were expressing, without knowing it, a profound truth: the alchemical and almost supernatural coincidence of liquidity and ignition. According to the *Brihad Âranyaka Upanishad* and the *Shatapatha Brâhmana*, the Divine Fire (*Agni*) is engendered in the undifferentiated Self (*Âtmâ*) by the tension between igneous Energy (*tejas*) and the Water of Life or the Elixir (*rasa*); *Agni* is "churned" and "born of the Waters", or "born of the Lotus"; he is the Lightning hidden in the Celestial Waters.

[12] This higher faith is something altogether different from the irresponsible and arrogant taking of liberties so characteristic of the profane improvisers of *Zen* or of *Jnâna*, who seek to "take a short cut" by stripping themselves of the essential human context of all realization, whereas in the East, and in the normal conditions of ethical and liturgical ambience, this context is largely supplied in advance. One does not enter the presence of a king by the back door.

might call *religio cordis*: it is the "inward religion" which is supernaturally natural to man and which coincides with *religio caeli*—or *perennis*—that is, with universal truth, which is beyond the contingencies of form and time. This faith can be satisfied with little. Unlike an intelligence which is all for exactness but never satisfied in its play of formulations—moving from concept to concept, from symbol to symbol, without being able to settle on any—the faith of the heart is capable of being satisfied by the first symbol that providentially comes its way,[13] and of living on it until the supreme Meeting.

The faith in question, which we have called *religio cordis*, the subjective and immanent side of *religio caeli*, has two poles, in conformity with the distinction between the "dry" and the "moist" paths; they are represented in the Buddhism of the North by *Zen* and *Jôdo* respectively. Both turn away from verbal comprehension, the one to plunge into our very being and the other to plunge into faith. For *Zen*, truth must coincide with reality and this is our substratum which is both existential and intellectual, whereas for *Jôdo*, truth-reality is attained in perfect faith, the giving up of oneself to the universal Substance which is Mercy and which is manifested in some Sign or some Key.[14]

The spiritual dimension symbolized by wine or intoxication is represented, in the Mahayana, by the union of the two poles *Vajra* ("Lightning" or "Diamond") and *Garbha* ("Matrix"); or *Mani* ("Jewel") and *Padma* ("Lotus"); or by the conjunction of expressed Truth (*Upâya*) and liberating Gnosis (*Prajnâ*); the "great Bliss" (*Mahâsukha*) which results from the union of the two poles evokes the Beatitude (*Ânanda*) of *Âtmâ*, wherein is the meeting of "Consciousness" (*Chit*) and "Being" (*Sat*). According to its most outward acceptation, this directly or indirectly sexual symbolism expresses the equilibrium between mental knowledge and virtue; on this basis, the equilibrium may be that between doctrinal investigation and spiritual practice, or that between doctrine and method. All these modes can be brought back to a confrontation between a "knowing" and a "being", or between an intellectual objectivation and a volitive or quasi-existential participation, or, we might say, between a mathematical or architectural dimension and an ethico-aesthetic, or musical dimension, in the vastest sense that these terms can have, bearing in mind that phenomena have their roots in the Divine. It is true that from a certain point of view, the element "being' is more than a complement, inasmuch as it combines the elements "knowing" and "willing"; and in this case it represents the synthesis of holiness that underlies the polarity "intelligence-beauty", which brings us back to the symbolism of love and wine, and to the mystery of the coincidence of faith and gnosis.

The cult of a Goddess, of a *Shakti*, of a *Târâ*—of a "Lady" one might simply say—, may indicate the predominance of a perspective of love, or of dogmatic and methodic *bhakti*, but it may equally well be the sign, even within a perspective of gnosis or of *jnâna*, that emphasis is being placed on the element of "faith" in the higher sense of the term in which *Zen* and *Jôdo* conceive it, the one according to the "dry path", and the other according to the "moist path". This is also what Ibn Arabi meant—and in his case there cannot be the slightest doubt that the perspective was that of gnosis—by the "religion of Love", which he identified with *al-islâm*,

[13] In the lives of the saints, the spiritual career is often inaugurated by an outward or inward incident which throws the soul into a particular and definitive attitude with regard to Heaven; the symbol here is not the incident itself, but the positive spiritual factor that the incident serves to bring out.

[14] In Amidism faith is ultimately based on intuition of the essential Goodness of Reality which is Divinely "the Other" in relation to the existence-bound subject; in *Zen,* on the contrary, what we call "faith" is based on intuition of the essential reality of our "Self", of our subjective essence in its Nirvanic Transpersonality.

the essential conforming of the intelligence and the soul to the divine nature, which is beyond forms and oppositions.

Thomas Merton 1915-1968

AN APPRECIATION OF HIS LIFE AND WORK, BY ONE WHO KNEW HIM.

THE death at the age of fifty-three of Father Louis, as he was named in religion, while taking part in a multi-monastic conference at Bangkok—an early report said he was the victim of an accident caused by contact with a defective electric fan, while a later version spoke of unsuspected heart trouble—sent a feeling of shock round the world. For many people Thomas Merton had stood for what was most hopeful in the Catholic Church and this was true even of some who were critical of things he wrote, for he was a most prolific author of books and articles; rather too prolific as some had thought.

Among those persons whose interest in "dialogue" between the religions which hitherto have shared the allegiance of mankind goes beyond superficial expressions of goodwill, regret at the sudden passing of this man will be felt with especial poignancy; for many had come to see, with Thomas Merton, that this unprecedented intercourse across what formerly seemed like impenetrable religious barriers corresponds to a very present spiritual necessity, one which itself is a bi-product of the crisis through which the Christian Churches, and other religions in greater or lesser degree, are passing at the present time. To be able (and willing) to recognise the action of the Spirit wherever and howsoever it chooses to manifest itself—whether within or without the circle of one's own personal and traditional loyalties—this has in fact become one of the prime conditions for regaining one's intellectual balance in a world which has virtually discarded all that the word "religion" stands for. More particularly, this power of recognition constitutes an almost indispensable qualification for anyone wishing to follow a contemplative discipline today, whether under one of the accepted monastic forms, as with Father Thomas Merton, or else while remaining in the lay state and practising, for instance, the "Jesus Prayer", or any other corresponding form if a non-Christian way be in question.

A great heresy of our time, one to which many other current errors can be referred directly or indirectly, is the belief now being propagated on all sides that God is not approachable except by way of human love and service; in practice, it is especially in collective form that this love is expected to be applied—a Marxist touch most characteristic of the times. In other words, it is argued that of Christ's two commandments, love of God and love of neighbour, it is the second which alone can render the first effective, so much so that love of God can practically be ignored as hardly imposing any claims in its own right; thus regarded it becomes an abstraction to which it is unnecessary to pay serious attention.

The traditional teaching of all the great religions, on the other hand, declares just the opposite, namely that the love or service of mankind, or indeed any desirable activity at the level of this world, can only become effective as a means of salvation in function of a prior love of God, whereof it will be a reflection as to its intention and a symbolical enactment in the realm of human intercourse. The order in which Christ named his two commandments therefore remains principial: to reverse the emphasis, whether explicitly or else by ignoring the prior term, is to divorce one's own attempts to carry out that second commandment from their empowering cause, thus condemning them to a kind of illegitimacy; it is to spread the smear of idolatry over all one does in this world, since this is what idolatry really means, namely to value things apart from God as if they were self-created and self-subsistent. As God's creations they

can (and must) be loved and served within the limits imposed by their respective natures, their *svadharma* as Hindus would say, that which displays the divine purpose behind each form and determines for each being its intrinsic vocation. Regarded in this way, love of creatures both derives from the love of God and leads back to it, and that is why Christ was able to say, of the second commandment, that it is "like unto" the first. An effect always retains something of its cause, from which moreover it never becomes entirely dissociated. In its own order, the love of "neighbour" is a necessary expression of the love of God, but this fact certainly does not make it co-extensive with the possibilities of that love either in theory or practice.

From all this, it should be sufficiently apparent that the field for the exercise of the love of God corresponds, for human beings, to the Contemplative Life under its various aspects—prayer, meditation, communion with Nature (for this too belongs here) and that ineffable state of recollection that makes the saint; while the field for the exercise of the love of neighbour (taking this word in its universal sense, as embracing all creation "down to the last blade of grass" as Buddhism puts it) corresponds to the Active Life of men in the world. As for liturgy and the sacramental life under all its forms, this displays something of both lives or loves, seeing that its exercise does not go without action outwardly directed, yet its context and motivation remain implicitly contemplative, failing which any ritual action would become virtually unintelligible.

It is in the light of the foregoing considerations that the life of Thomas Merton has to be viewed; for that life to deliver its message in a form answering to our condition it has to be read in the context of the cardinal truth concerning the essential primacy of Contemplation to which he clung during all his years as a monk and of which he was always trying to deepen awareness at whatever cost to himself. Nor did he merely regard this as the special concern of a monastic vocation, for (as he told me himself) he considered this to be the greatest lack of the world today. From this conviction he never swerved; we must not let ourselves be deceived, on this score, by a number of dubious opinions he allowed himself to voice at times, opinions which caused many people to dub him a "modernist", whether with approval or otherwise. Despite an openness of mind which sometimes took an imprudent turn—even to the point of unwitting, lapse into error—and despite his castigation of the many intellectual and moral evasions that had become conventional in the Christian Church, the one thing Thomas Merton never did was to surrender his soul to the "activist" trend now in vogue, of which an anti-metaphysical, anti-contemplative, anti-traditional and anti-symbolical bias is the sinister hallmark.

* * *

My own acquaintance with Thomas Merton dates from the year 1963, when we were put in touch by a third party in connection with an article of mine he thought Father Merton would find of particular interest, as proved to be the case. This first encounter started a correspondence between us which gradually grew more frequent and intimate; his own evident fondness for Buddhistic ways of thinking and not thinking—the second especially—helped further to foster a mutual sympathy. Soon we were exchanging books; I sent him one of mine, and several by other authors: among the latter was included *A Moslem Saint of the Twentieth Century* by Martin Lings (Allen and Unwin) which contains some marvellous English renderings of poems by the saint in question, the Algerian Shaikh Ahmad al-'Allawī, one of the great Masters of Sufism. His life, and especially his poems, so moved Father Merton that he decided forthwith to take them as a subject for intensive meditation: this was typical of the man—he would plunge for

the pearl of great price the moment he caught sight of it.

Reciprocally, Father Merton sent me a wide selection from his own earlier works, including the autobiographical volume *The Seven Storey Mountain* describing his entry into the Catholic Church and his subsequent urge to embrace a monastic discipline. After that, other things of his followed at intervals: separate papers on a variety of subjects, collections of essays, some poetry, also one or two longer works dealing with questions of the day such as racial relations in American society and the question of war, concerning which his own views owed much to the Gandhian idea of "non-violent resistance". With all this material in my possession I was able to gain a considerable insight into the many-facetted structure of the author's mind.

In the fall of 1964, while touring in the States as a member of *The English Consort of Viols* I found myself, between two concerts, quite close to the abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky where Thomas Merton belonged; with the abbot's permission a meeting was arranged, the only meeting face to face we ever had. Never shall I forget that afternoon spent in his company pacing slowly round the wide courtyard adjoining the abbey buildings or else sitting under a great tree turned to sheer gold by the magic touch of the North American autumn. On that day I got the clearest impression that I was with a man who walked with the Spirit and this impression has not been dimmed with the passage of time.

Thomas Merton was a man who, to judge by what he said by word of mouth and in private letters, was clearly opposed to the "dynamism" (his own word) now become fashionable in the Church which, for all its claims to teach, seems unaccountably eager to take its cue from the profane world; even in his own Cistercian Order, so he said, the change of outlook during the last few years had been almost unbelievable; walls and rules were quite powerless to keep the worldly influences at bay. A rekindling of the genuinely contemplative spirit in such manner as to affect both teachings and the way those teachings shall be lived, by this means alone could the Christian Church hope to find its soul again; but, as he also told me once, those who have it in them to voice this unpopular truth can have little expectation of being listened to, yet speak of it they must.

Given these views, one may well ask how came it about that our author, when expressing himself *in print,* often resorted to phraseology which, given the bias of the times, was bound to be read in the sense of a concession to that very relativism and activism he privately disavowed? That such was the case is proved both by the praise he won from so-called "progressives" with whose opinions he was at variance and, conversely, by the criticisms he incurred at the hands of persons to whom he stood much closer as to essentials and who, for this very reason, were surprised at what appeared like unaccountable intellectual inconsistencies on the part of a man they otherwise esteemed highly.

The fact is that Thomas Merton was very much of a "traveller" in the realms he had set out to explore with such unquestionable ardour. Rigorous discrimination was not always his strong point, so that he easily let his enthusiasms outrun his perspicacity. When the subject being written about has a spiritual bearing, this only makes it doubly incumbent upon an author to weigh his words, and all the more so since nowadays so many words and terms formerly precise have become vague by dint of loose usage or, worse still, have developed false overtones by reason of their employment by persons of tendentious intent. To guard against these dangers one has to be fully conscious of all that is at stake, which also means one has to train oneself in the rigorous use of language in a degree that goes much beyond a mere question of good literary technique. Failure in this respect will usually imply some kind of sentimental intrusion into the intellectual field causing at least a momentary obscuration in the thinking mind of the

individual concerned.

It would be easy to spread oneself in a detailed analysis of Thomas Merton's many sided activities as a writer, those which earned him his reputation with the world at large, but this is not the purpose of the present study; if these have been mentioned to some extent, this was in order to clear the ground for consideration of what became for him in the end a virtually exclusive concern, namely the search for a perfect contemplativity in God. In pursuit of this aim, which had led him into the Trappist Order in the first place, he was prepared to jettison whatever might seem, at any given time or stage of the way, to have become a factor of distraction; the only limits he would recognise in this respect were the obligations imposed by his monastic vow of obedience which he always observed with the utmost strictness in the knowledge that what other people might regard as irksome restrictions, when freely accepted, but served to canalise a man's spiritual activity thus giving it all the greater force, as happens to a stream hemmed in closely by high rocky banks. His colleagues at the Bangkok conference, in reporting his death to the abbot of Gethsemani in a tone of mixed sadness and joy, summed him up well when they said "here indeed was a true monk".

It is from this overwhelming urge to lose himself in God that Thomas Merton's interest in Eastern religions primarily stemmed. Within the Christian mystical tradition he had already found a model to attract him among the Desert Fathers of Egypt during the early centuries as revealed in their legends; soon he was discovering parallels between what he read there and the meditational practices of Hindu and Buddhist contemplative saints. The essential association of *Guru* and disciple taken for granted in all the Oriental initiations was something which, as he soon perceived, had practically disappeared from the Christian scene—certainly as far as the Latin Church is concerned—and he was convinced that this absence of qualified instruction represented a spiritual lacuna of the most serious kind: too much had been sacrificed to the collective interest at its most mediocre and this largely accounted for the present defencelessness of Christian faith in the face of materialist and humanist pressures. Christian doctrine had become too abstract, it lacked the dimension of "method" which, as Mahāyāna Buddhism continually stresses, is necessary if wisdom is to ripen in effective fruit. Led on by his wish to restore the missing dimension he read all he could lay his hands on of the Eastern traditions and it was in the direction of Zen Buddhism, as presented in the works of the late Dr. D. T. Suzuki, its eminent spokesman to the West, that Father Merton felt himself immediately drawn; a personal meeting with Dr. Suzuki, for whom he developed a great feeling of reverence, helped to deepen his understanding still further.

The reasons why Zen had such a strong appeal for Thomas Merton are not difficult to divine: for one who had received his schooling between the solid four walls of Latin Scholasticism, cemented all over, as these are, with syllogisms—the advantages of such a schooling are far from negligible—the contrast offered by Zen could be both refreshing and illuminating; just as it could become merely disruptive, as frequently happens to Westerners who approach Zen from the angle of a Christian faith that has collapsed on them. Deprived of their normal traditional background, these people are apt to seize on a few tag-ends of a noticeably paradoxical kind and think that here is the essential; to the travesty that results they then give the name of Zen and proceed to inflict it on others under that label.

The great value of Zen, when rightly appreciated, as of Buddhism generally, is that it acts as an antidote to the poison of a too persistent conceptualism. The philosophism inherited from the Greeks, the Roman legalism and lastly the collectivist obsession are all factors which, historically speaking, have operated to Christianity's great detriment, with the modern anti-

religion as their end product. Whatever helps to free the mind from the intellectual cramping these things spell in the aggregate will be to the good: it is here that a sound knowledge of Eastern teachings and methods can be so valuable to a Christian today, as Thomas Merton clearly perceived, and that is why he never missed an opportunity to widen his own knowledge, with a special emphasis on Buddhism. A collection of essays on Zen of recent date (*Zen and the Birds of Appetite,* a New Directions book) testifies to the depth to which his mind had been able to penetrate this side of the Buddhist wisdom.

If one were asked to define in a few words the aim which Thomas Merton kept in view, letting it determine for him, to the best of his ability, both actions and abstentions and relations with his fellow-beings, this aim could be summed up in the phrase "the uninterrupted practice of the Presence of God". All through his life as a monk, in fact, he had been feeling his way towards a fulfilment of a contemplative vocation that would go further than just the observance of a very strict monastic discipline coupled with a piety content to float upon the surface of things. As the years passed he became ever more concerned with the fact that the old-time defences against the intrusions of "the world" were ceasing to work because the conditions which in past centuries had made them work, at least on an average showing, no longer applied. The hitherto coherent structure of Christian tradition was suffering a disintegration inconceivable to those who drew up the ancient rule; on all sides the dykes were being eroded, gaping breaches were appearing in every direction. All this was no cause for despair, however—for a man like Thomas Merton such words as optimism and pessimism hold little meaning—but rather was it an occasion for a frank and fearless questioning of conventional assumptions and, still more, for testing one's own intellectual and moral attitudes in the fire of an unflinching self-examination. Above all, it was an occasion for deepening one's communion with God or, in other words, for rendering one's contemplative professions real; if Church and world were in crisis, this was no excuse for neglecting this innermost work which, did people but know it, provides their surest hope.

Some considerable time prior to receiving the astonishing call that took him to the East, he had asked his abbot's consent to his withdrawing into a hermitage in order to give himself up to a life of solitary meditation and prayer; that this would incidentally curtail his activities as a writer whether of articles and books or of private letters was evident; in fact during that period I only heard from him once very briefly. Just before going into retreat at the hermitage he wrote to me that he was pulling out from various movements with which his name had been publicly associated; as he then said, many of those who had regarded his participation as a great asset would feel disappointed and would most probably misconstrue his motives for thus retiring into solitude, an act which, for them, might well savour of "quietism", not to say "selfishness"; nevertheless he was convinced that his vocation required of him this step and that if it caused misunderstanding in the minds of some, this was an incidental cross that had to be accepted. There things remained until the summons came to attend the conference in the East, that East which by now had come to mean so much to Themas Melton but which he never hoped to see and from which he was fated never to return.

One of the first things he did after being informed of his assignment was to consult me about possible contacts both in Japan where I have one or two personal connections and in India where I have many, mostly in Sikkim and among the Tibetan refugee community. This first request for introductions was followed by another in which he put a number of far-reaching questions about how best to proceed once he reached the Asiatic scene. To which I answered that to do full justice to these questions a discussion by word of mouth would be desirable,

for which reason I invited him to travel via Europe so that he might spend at least some days with me here in London. The course of *karma* did not run this way for him, however, and he replied that it was already too late to alter existing arrangements which were that he should cross the Pacific from California, with the result that we were never able to meet again, much as we both desired it.

Not long after his arrival in India Father Merton, piloted by a friend, was received in audience by the Dalai Lama at his place of residence at Dharmsala in the Panjab hills; this meeting, during which the deeper implications of a monastic vocation was the chief subject of discussion, was twice repeated at His Holiness' own wish. Soon after that, Father Merton moved over to Darjeeling with the intention of visiting Sikkim where he was already awaited as a result of my letters to friends there. In particular it was hoped he would spend some time with His Holiness the Karmapa Laina at his newly established centre at Rumtek, but unusually heavy rains followed by landslides which destroyed the bridges over the Tista river and disrupted local communications for several weeks prevented him from reaching this more distant objective. However it was during his stay in the hills of northern Bengal that he was destined to find what he had long been imagining but had never actually seen in the flesh—his contemplative ideal embodied in a man, this is what Providence unexpectedly offered to Thomas Merton.

The Spiritual Master in question belonged to the initiatic family known as *Dzogchhen* ("great accomplishment") which is a branch of the *Nyingmapa* or "Order of the Ancients", the one that represents the original foundation of Buddhism in Tibet. By comparison with the much later "reformed" foundation of the *Gelugpa* (= Order of Virtuous Usage) to which the Dalai Lama belongs, the Nyingmapa remain relatively less strictly organised and correspondingly more open, on the one hand, to possible human laxities and, on the other, to the liberating influx of the Spirit "that bloweth where it listeth". In our time the great spiritual lights among the Tibetan Lamas have been most commonly (but not exclusively) found among the older "un-reformed" Orders.

In fact the Lama Father Merton met was one of those who passed for being slightly "queer", a description which among Tibetans is not accounted a reproach, but rather a sign of unwonted sanctity, of an intelligence going beyond ordinary human capacity; an Islamic parallel is to be found in the *Malamatiyah* or "men of blame", namely persons who display a certain outrageousness in their public behaviour which, however, masks a deeply contemplative spirit, the peace that passeth understanding. The ordinary people leave these Lamas alone, by reason of their strange ways, but reverence them nonetheless, feeling instinctively that their presence in the world is a great blessing in itself and a protection for the community on the fringe of which they dwell. The Taoists of China had much the same attitude: the Sage of crazy appearance is a well-known Taoist figure, whose contempt for conventional ties translates, not a disorder, but a norm in which all may participate, if indirectly. According to my informant, the Lama was of this kind.

There is no doubt that Thomas Merton was very deeply affected by his meeting with this Master, which he hoped to repeat later. His immediate response was to withdraw for four days to a secluded spot where he could recapitulate his experience in meditation. I happen to know the place, it lies surrounded by virgin forest full of birds and animals, like a forgotten corner of paradise waiting to welcome one that would fain recollect himself following a soul-stirring episode. From there Father Merton went on to the Bangkok conference where he met his end.

As for the Lama, he showed by unmistakeable signs that he recognised in his visitor the

qualities that belong to a true aspiration; after conversing with him for some time, his parting remark to Thomas Merton was "You have made me at last understand Christianity". To another European who came to see him soon after he said "now I know more about your religion than you do", in evident allusion to his meeting with Father Merton.

"You have made me understand Christianity": could a Christian monk about to die ask for any better epitaph than these words the sainted Nyingmapa Master spoke?

MARCO PALLIS

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

A man engaged in spiritual struggle should not only withdraw from all evil deeds, but should also try to be free from thoughts and ideas (opposed to the commandments and the will of God), and must always be occupied with salutary and spiritual recollections, remaining detached from all worldly cares.

St. Simeon

Tradition and Commentary As Religious Categories in Judaism

by
Gershom G. Scholem

I. In considering the problem of tradition, we must distinguish between two questions. The first is historical: How did a tradition endowed with religious dignity come to be formed? The other question is: How was this tradition understood once it had been accepted as a religious phenomenon? For the faithful promptly discard the historical question once they have accepted a tradition; this is the usual process in the establishment of religious systems. Yet for the historian the historical question remains fundamental: in order to understand the meaning of what the faithful simply accept, the historian is not bound to accept fictions that veil more than they reveal concerning the origins of the accepted faith. Thus, tradition as a special aspect of revelation is historically a product of the process that formed rabbinic Judaism between the 4th or 3rd pre-Christian centuries and the 2nd century of the Common Era.

In all religions, the acceptance of a Divine revelation originally referred to the concrete communication of positive, substantive and expressible content. It never occurred to the bearers of such a revelation to question or to limit the specific quality and closely delineated content of the communication they had received. Where, as in Judaism, such revelation is set down in holy writings and is accepted in that form, it initially constitutes concrete communication, factual content, and nothing else. But in as much as such revelation, once set down in holy scriptures, takes on authoritative character, an essential change takes place. For one thing, new historical circumstances require that the communication, whose authoritativeness has been granted, be applied to ever changing conditions. Furthermore, the spontaneous force of human productivity seizes this communication and expands it beyond its original scope. "Tradition" thus comes into being. It embodies the realization of the effectiveness of the Word in every concrete state and relationship entered into by a society.

At this point begins the process in which two questions gain importance: How can revelation be preserved as a concrete communication, i.e., how can it be passed on from generation to generation? (This is a virtually impossible undertaking by itself). And, with ever greater urgency: Can this revelation be applied at all, and if so, how? With this second question, spontaneity has burst into the nascent tradition. In the process of this renewed productivity, holy scriptures themselves are sometimes enlarged; new written communications take their place alongside the old ones. A sort of no-man's-land is created between the original revelation and the tradition. Precisely this happened in Judaism, for example, as the Torah, to which the quality of revelation was originally confined, was "expanded" to include other writings of the Biblical canon that had at first been subsumed, completely and emphatically, under the heading of tradition and considered merely repositories of this. Later, the boundaries often shifted: the canon, as Holy Writ, confronted tradition and within the tradition itself, similar processes of differentiation between written and oral elements were repeated.

From now on tradition asserts itself ever more emphatically as a new religious value and as a category of religious thinking. It becomes the medium through which creative forces express themselves. By the side of the Written Torah tradition arraigns itself, and it is called Oral Torah from approximately the first Christian century on. Tradition is not simply the totality of that which the community possesses as its cultural patrimony and which it bequeathes to

its posterity; it is a specific selection from this patrimony, which is elevated and garbed with religious authority. It proclaims certain things, sentences, or insights to be Torah, and thus connects them with the revelation. In the process, the original meaning of revelation as a unique, positively established, and clearly delineated realm of propositions is put in doubt—and thus a development as fruitful as it is unpredictable begins which is highly instructive for the religious problematic of the concept of tradition.

The unfolding of the truths, statements, and circumstances that are given in or accompany revelation becomes the function of the Oral Torah, which creates in the process a new type of religious person. In the history of religion, this type has evoked admiration as much as rejection and derision, and not without reason. The Biblical scholar perceives revelation not as a unique and clearly delineated occurrence, but rather as a phenomenon of eternal fruitfulness to be unearthed and examined; "Turn it and turn it again, for everything is in it". Thus the achievement of these scholars, who established a tradition rooted in the Torah and growing out of it, is a prime example of spontaneity in receptivity. They are leaders because they know themselves to be led. Out of the religious tradition they bring forth something entirely new, something that itself commands religious dignity: commentary. Revelation needs commentary in order to be rightly understood and applied—this is the far from self-evident religious doctrine out of which grew both the phenomenon of Biblical éxegesis and the Jewish tradition which it created.

This inner law of development of the concept of revelation is also traceable in other religions which accept the authority of revelation. The process under discussion here is therefore of general significance for the phenomenology of religion. Judaism experienced this process in a peculiarly vigorous and consequential form, and its agents examined it with great thoroughness. This will make our consideration of the present complex of problems especially illuminating and far-reaching.

A creative process begins to operate which will permeate and alter tradition—the Midrash: the more regulated Halachic and the somewhat freer Aggadic exegesis of scriptures, and the views of the Biblical scholars in their various schools, are regarded as implicitly contained in the Written Torah. No longer only old and carefully guarded sentences but now also the analyses of scriptures by the scholars themselves lay claim to being tradition. The desire for historical continuity which is of the very essence of tradition is translated into an historical construction whose fictitious character cannot be doubted but which serves the believing mind as a crutch of external authentication. Especially peculiar in this historical construction is the metamorphosis of the prophets into bearers of tradition—a very characteristic, albeit to our minds a very paradoxical, transformation. Originally only the last of the prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, had been meant by this proposition, for they possess special importance in the doctrine of the uninterrupted chain of tradition[1]: the last of the prophets are, not without all justification, regarded as the first of the scribes and "men of the Great Assembly". Subsequently, also the older prophets are designated as links in the chain, which would otherwise have had to be invisible.

This leads to the viewpoint expressed daringly in Talmudic writings, namely, that the total substance of the Oral Torah, which had in fact been the achievement of the scholars, comes from the same source as the Written Torah, and that it was therefore basically always

[1] Comp. Bacher, *Tradition und Tradenten,* pp. 27-31.

known. The saying "turn it..." reflects this viewpoint. But underneath this fiction, the details of which do not concern us here, there lies a religious attitude which is interesting and which had significant results. I refer to the distinctive notion of revelation including within itself as sacred tradition the later commentary concerning its own meaning. This was the beginning of a road which, with a full measure of inherent logic, was to lead to the establishment of mystical theses concerning the character of revelation as well as the character of tradition.

Here we immediately encounter a significant tension in the religious consciousness of the scholars themselves, between the process by which the tradition actually developed and the interpretation of that process. On the one hand, there was the blossoming productivity of the academies where the Scriptures were explored and examined in ever greater detail—the spontaneous achievement of the generations upon whom, in turn, was bestowed such authority as was transmitted by the great teachers and the tradition. On the other hand, there arose the claim apparently flowing from the dogma of the revealed nature of the Oral Law. What this claim amounted to was that all this was somehow part of revelation itself—and more: not only was it given along with revelation, but it was given in a special, timeless sphere of revelation in which all generations were, as it were, gathered together; everything really had been made explicit to Moses, the first and most comprehensive recipient of Torah. The achievement of every generation, its contribution to tradition, was projected back into the eternal present of the revelation at Sinai. This, of course, is something which no longer has anything in common with the notion of revelation with which we began, namely, revelation as unequivocal, clear, and understandable communication. According to this new doctrine, revelation comprises within it everything that will ever be legitimately offered to interpret its meaning.

The patent absurdity of this claim reveals a religious assumption that must be taken all the more seriously. The Rabbis did not hesitate to express this assumption in rather extravagant formulations. In the forty days that Moses spent on Mount Sinai (Ex. XXXIV, 28), he learned the Torah with all its implications.[2] Rabbi Joshua ben Levi (a third-century Palestinian teacher) said: "Torah, Mishna, Talmud, and Aggadah—indeed even the comments some bright student will one day make to his teacher—were already given to Moses on Mount Sinai"—and even the questions that such a bright student will some day ask his teacher![3] In our context, statements such as these are highly suggestive. They make absolute the concept of tradition in which the meaning of revelation unfolds in the course of historical time—but only because everything that can corne to be known has already been deposited in a timeless substratum. In other words, we have arrived at an assumption concerning the nature of truth which is characteristic of rabbinic Judaism (and probably of every traditional religious establishment): Truth is given once and for all, and it is laid down with precision. Fundamentally, truth merely needs to be transmitted. The originality of the exploring scholar has two aspects. In his spontaneity, he develops and explains that which was transmitted at Sinai, no matter whether it was always known or whether it was forgotten and had to be rediscovered. The effort of the seeker after truth consists not in having new ideas but rather in subordinating himself to the continuity of the tradition of the Divine word and in laying open what he receives from it in the context of his own time. In other words: not system but *commentary* is the legitimate form through which truth is approached.

[2] *Midrash Tanhuma, ed.* Buber, II, p. 60a.

[3] Ibid., p. 58b.

This is a most important principle indeed for the kind of productivity we encounter in Jewish literature. Truth must be laid bare in a text in which it already preexists. We shall deal later with the nature of this preexistent givenness. In any case, truth must be brought forth from the text. Commentary thus became the characteristic expression of Jewish thinking about truth, which is another way of describing the rabbinic genius. Under the influence of Greek thought, there were also explications and attempts at system-construction within Judaism. But its innermost life is to be found where holy texts received commentary, no matter how remote from the text itself these commentaries and their ideas may appear to the present-day critical reader. There is, of course, a striking contrast between the awe of the text, founded on the assumption that everything already exists in it, and the presumptuousness of imposing the truth upon ancient texts. The commentator, who is truly the Biblical scholar, always combines both attitudes.

Tradition as a living force produces in its unfolding another problem. What had originally been believed to be consistent, unified, and self-enclosed now becomes diversified, multifold, and full of contradictions. It is precisely the wealth of contradictions, of differing views, which is encompassed and unqualifiedly, affirmed by tradition. There were many possibilities of interpreting the Torah, and tradition claimed to comprise them all.[4] It maintains the contradictory views with astounding seriousness and intrepidity, as if to say that one can never know whether a view at one time rejected may not one day become the cornerstone of an entirely new edifice. In Jewish tradition the views of the schools of Hillel and Shammai, two teachers who lived shortly before Jesus, play an important part. Their mutually contradictory attitudes toward theoretical and practical problems are codified by the Talmud with great thoroughness, although the rule is that in the application of the law the views of Hillel's school are decisive. But the rejected views are stated no less carefully than the accepted ones. The Talmudists formulated no ultimate thesis concerning the unity of these contradictions, concerning dialectical relationships within the tradition. It was only one of the latest Kabbalists who formulated the daring and, at first blush, surprising thesis, which has since been often reiterated, that the *Halachah* would be decided according to the now rejected view of the school of Shammai in the Messianic era. That is to say, the conception of the meaning and of the applicability of the Torah which is unacceptable at any given time within history in reality anticipates a Messianic condition in which it will have its legitimate function—and thereby the unity of the Torah, which embraces all of this, is fully sealed.[5]

Thus, tradition is concerned with the realization, the enactment of the Divine task which is set in the revelation. It demands application, execution, and decision, and at the same time it is, indeed, "true growth and unfolding from within". It constitutes a living organism, whose religious authority was asserted with as much emphasis as is at all possible within this system of thought.

The question remains: Does tradition keep its freshness in such a view, or does it freeze into

[4] Of R. Meir it is said in Erubin 13b: "He pronounces the impure pure and proves it and the pure impure and proves this" (in order to force the scholars to think through the problems most conscientiously before arriving at a decision). Of his disciple Symmachos it is there reported that he adduced 48 reasons for the impurity of each impure object and 48 reasons for the purity of each pure object. In the same place the Talmud reports very soberly the tradition, which must be particularly disquieting to a pious mind, that in Jabneh there was even an acute student who was able to adduce 150 reasons why a crawling animal is pure—whereas in fact the Torah explicitly and unambiguously prohibits it.

[5] This thesis seems first to have been stated by Moses Graf of Prague: see his Vayakhel Moshe, Dessau 1699, pp. 45b and 54a.

Alexandrianism and lose its organic ability to grow when too much is demanded of it? At what point does deadly decay lurk? The question is as important as it is hard to answer. As long as there is a living relationship between religious consciousness and revelation there is no danger to the tradition from within. But when this relationship dies tradition ceases to be a living force. To be sure, this looks very different to an outside observer. Everyone who studies the tradition of any religious community is aware of this 'antinomy. For example: For the Church Fathers the rabbinical students of Scripture were still guardians of a valuable tradition; to later Christendom, they appeared incomprehensible and rather terrifying—and this at a time when the tradition enjoyed a very active inner life. For tradition omnipotence and impotence dwell closely together; all is in the eye of the beholder.

In Judaism, tradition becomes the reflective impulse that intervenes between the absoluteness of the Divine word—revelation—and its receiver. Tradition thus raises a question about the possibility of immediacy in man's relationship to the Divine, even though it has been incorporated in revelation. To put it another way: Can the Divine word confront us without mediation? And, can it be fulfilled without mediation? Or, given the assumption of the Jewish tradition which we have formulated, does the Divine word rather not require just such mediation by tradition in order to be apprehensible and therefore fulfillable? For rabbinic Judaism, the answer is in the affirmative. Every religious experience after revelation is a mediated one. It is the experience of the voice of God rather than the experience of God. But all reference to the "voice of God" is highly anthropomorphic—a fact from which theologians have always carefully tried to escape. And here we face questions which, in Judaism, have been thought through only in the mystic doctrines of the Kabbalists.

II. The Kabbalists were in no sense of the word heretics. Rather they strove to penetrate, more deeply than their predecessors, into the meaning of Jewish concepts. They took the step from the tradition of the Talmudists to mystical tradition. In order to understand the mystical concept of tradition, we must take a step backward and try to visualize the Kabbalists' concept of Torah as revelation and as the word of God. The Kabbalists sought to unlock the innermost core of the Torah, to decode the text, so to speak. (Here we have a new concept of tradition: after all, the Hebrew word *kabbalah* means "the receiving of the tradition"). This goes far beyond what had been thought about these questions in exoteric Judaism, and yet the Kabbalists' thinking remains specifically Jewish. In a way, they have merely drawn the final consequence from the assumption of the Talmudists concerning revelation and tradition as religious categories.

The first question which presented itself to the Kabbalists in this connection concerned the nature of that Torah which is known as the "Written Torah". What is it that God can actually reveal, and of what does the so-called word of God consist that is given to the recipients of revelation? The answer is: God reveals nothing but Himself as He becomes speech and voice. The expression through which the Divine power presents itself to man in manifestation, no matter how concealed and how inward, is the name of God. It is this that is expressed and given voice in scripture and revelation, no matter how hieroglyphically. It is encoded in every so-called communication that revelation makes to man. "For the Holy Scriptures, the great mysterium of the revelation of God, containing all within all, is a hieroglyph of unending hieroglyphs, an eternal spring of mysteries, inexhaustible, pouring forth without end, ever new and glorious".[6]

[6] Molitor, F. J., *Philosophie der Geschichte oder Ueber die Tradition, vol. I (1857)* p. 47.

To be sure, those secret signatures (*rishumim*) that God had placed upon things are as much concealments of His revelation as revelation of His concealment. The script of these signatures differs from what we view as Torah, as revealed Scripture, only in the unconditional, undistracted concentration in which these are here collected. The language, which lives in things as their creative principle, is the same; but here, concentrated upon its own essence, it is not (or at most thinly) concealed by the creaturely existence in which it appears. Thus, revelation is revelation of the name or names of God, which are perhaps the different modes of His active being. God's language has no grammar; it consists only of names. The oldest Kabbalists—Nachmanides, for example—profess to have received as tradition this understanding of the structure of the Torah. It is clear, however, that this was originally a tradition of magical character, now transposed into a mystical tradition.

The creative force thus concentrated in the name of God, which is the essential word that God sends forth from Himself, is far greater than any human expression, than any creaturely word can grasp. It is never exhausted by the finite, human word. It represents an absolute which, resting in itself—one might as well say: self-moved—sends its rays through everything that seeks expression and form in all worlds and through all languages. Thus, the Torah is a texture (Hebrew: *ariga*) fashioned out of the names of God and, as the earliest Spanish Kabbalists already put it, out of the great, absolute name of God, which is the final signature of all things. It constitutes a mysterious whole, whose primary purpose is not to transmit a specific sense, to "mean" something, but rather to express the force of the Divinity itself which is concentrated in this "name". This conception has nothing to do with any rational understanding of the possible social function of a name; this Name cannot, after all, even be pronounced. The Torah is built up out of this Name, just as a tree grows out of its root, or, to use another favorite image of the Kabbalists, just as a building is erected out of an artistic interweaving of bricks that ultimately also consist of one basic material. This is the thesis repeated in every possible form in the classical writings of the Kabbalah: "The_ whole Torah is no more than the great name of God". As Joseph Gikatilla has set forth in great detail, in the Torah the living texture constructed out of the tetra grammaton is seen as an infinitely subtle braiding of the permutations and combination of its consonants; these in turn were subjected to more such processes of combination, and so on *ad infinitum,* until they finally appear to us in the form of the Hebrew sentences of the Torah. Thus, the very words that we read in the written Torah and that constitute the audible "word of God" and communicate a comprehensible message, are in reality mediations through which the absolute word, incomprehensible to us, is offered. This absolute word is originally communicated in its limitless fullness, but—and that is the key point—this communication is incomprehensible! It is not a communication which provides comprehension; being basically nothing but the expression of essence, it becomes a comprehensible communication only when it is mediated.

This strict, mystical view of the nature of revelation is basic to any analysis of tradition. It has significant consequences. One of them is so radical that it was taught only in veiled, symbolical terminology. It amounted to the assertion that there was no such thing as a written Torah in the sense of an immediate revelation of the Divine word. For such a revelation is contained in the Wisdom of God, where it forms an "Ur-Torah" in which the "word" rests as yet completely undeveloped in a mode of being in which no differentiation of the individual elements into sounds and letters takes place. The sphere in which this "Ur-Torah" (*Torah kelula*) comes to articulate itself into the so-called written Torah, where signs (the forms of the consonants) or sounds and expressions exist—that sphere itself is already interpretation. An old dictum of the

Midrash, according to which the pre-existent Torah was written before God with black fire upon white fire, was given the esoteric interpretation that the white fire is the Written Torah in which the letters are not yet formed; only by means of the black fire, which is the Oral Torah, do the letters acquire form. The black fire is likened to the ink on the parchment of the Torah scroll. This would imply that what we on earth call the Written Torah has already gone through the medium of the Oral Torah and has taken on a perceptible form in that process. The Written Torah is not really the blackness of the inked writing (already a specification), but the mystic whiteness of the letters on the parchment of the scroll on which we see nothing at all. According to this, the Written Torah is a purely mystical concept, understood only by prophets who can penetrate to this level. As for us, we can perceive revelation only as unfolding oral tradition.

While this notion was only rarely hinted at, there was general acceptance of another conclusion drawn from the principle of the Torah as the name of God, and this one is central to our discussion. It is the thesis that the word of God carries infinite meanings, however it may be defined. Even that which has already become a sign in the strict sense, and is already a mediated word, retains the character of the absolute. But if there is such a thing as God's word, it must, of course, be totally different from the human word. It is far-reaching, all-embracing, and, unlike a human word, cannot be applied to a specific context of meaning. In other words: God's word is infinitely interpretable; indeed, it is *the* object of interpretation *par excellence*. Saying that, we have indeed moved far away from the origin of our consideration, i.e. from the original historical notions of revelation as a specific and positive communication. In this new perspective, the old notions are but the exoteric garments of an insight that probes far deeper. Here revelation, which has yet no specific meaning, is that in the word which gives an infinite wealth of meaning. Itself without meaning, it is yet quintessential interpretability. For mystical theology, this is a decisive criterion of revelation. In every word there now shines an infinite multitude of lights. The primeval light of the Torah that shines in the holy letters refracts on the unending facets of "meaning". In this connection, the Kabbalists always speak of the "seventy faces of the Torah"; the number seventy simply represents the inexhaustible totality and meaning of the Divine word.

We now face the problem of tradition as it presented itself to the Kabbalists. If the conception of revelation as absolute and meaning-giving but in itself meaningless is correct, then it must also be true that revelation will come to unfold its infinite meaning (which cannot be confined to the unique event of revelation) only in its constant relationship to history, the arena in which tradition unfolds. Theologians have described the word of God as the "absolutely concrete". But the absolutely concrete is, at the same time, the simply unfulfilable—it is that which in no way can be put into practice. The Kabbalistic idea of tradition is founded upon the dialectic tension of precisely this paradox: it is precisely the absoluteness that effects the unending reflections in the contingencies of fulfilment. Only in the mirrorings in which it reflects itself does revelation become practicable and accessible to human action as something concrete. There is no immediate, undialectic application of the Divine word. If there were it would be destructive. From this point of view, so-called concreteness—which has so many admirers these days and whose glorification is the labour of a whole philosophical school—is something mediated and reflected, something that has gone through many refractions. It is the tradition of the word of God—for the Kabbalists the basis of any possible action that deserves the name of action—that permits its application in history. Tradition undergoes changes with the times, new facets of its meaning shining forth and lighting its way. Tradition, according to its mystical

sense, is Oral Torah, precisely because every stabilization in the text would hinder and destroy the infinitely moving, the constantly progressing and unfolding element within it, which would otherwise become petrified. The writing down and codification of the Oral Torah, undertaken in order to save it from being forgotten, was therefore as much a protective as (in the deeper sense) a pernicious act. Demanded by the historical circumstance of exile, it was profoundly problematic for the living growth and continuance of the tradition in its original sense. It is therefore not surprising that, according to Talmudic report,[7] it was originally prohibited to write down the Oral Torah; and it is not surprising that great Kabbalists (Nathan Adler in Frankfurt, for example) are said not to have committed their learning to writing because, since he and his students were keeping tradition from being forgotten, the prohibition against writing it down continued to be valid for him.

The understanding of tradition as a process that creates productivity through receptivity can now be seen clearly. Talmudic literature recognizes two types of men who preserve the tradition. One is the man who was useful in the Houses of Study, who could recite from memory the texts of all the old traditions of the schools—mere receptacles who preserved tradition without augmenting it in the slightest by their own inquiry. But this man, a conduit for tradition, is at best an expedient, virtually an oral book. The truly learned man is the one who is bound to tradition through his inquiries. So far as the consciousness of future generations is concerned, only the men of the second type are the true carriers of tradition, for tradition is living creativity in the context of revelation. Precisely because tradition perceives, receives, and unfolds that which lives in the word, it is the force within which contradictions and tensions are not destructive but rather stimulating and creative. For those who stand within the tradition it is easy to see the organic unity of these contradictions, precisely because it presents a dialectic relationship in which the word of revelation is developed. Without contradictions it would not perform this function.

The scholar and commentator, therefore, fulfils a set task: to make the Torah concrete at the point where he stands, to make it applicable *hic et nunc,* and, moreover, to fashion his specific form of concretization in such a manner that it may be transmitted. The latter Kabbalah formulated a widely accepted dictum: that the Torah turns a special face to every single Jew, meant only for him and apprehensible only by him, and that a Jew therefore fulfills his true purpose only when he comes to see this face and is able to incorporate it into the tradition. The "chain of tradition" is never broken; it is the translation of the inexhaustible word of God into the human and attainable sphere; it is the transcription of the voice sounding from Sinai in an unending richness of sound. The musician who plays a symphony has not composed it; still, he participates in significant measure in its production. This, of course, is valid only for those who assume a metaphysical contemporaneity for all tradition. For those, on the other hand, who see tradition as the creature of history, in whose course revelation is reflected, tradition legitimately represents the greatest creation of Judaism, which when properly understood is constituted only within this tradition.

For the Kabbalists the voice from Sinai was the constant medium, the foundation for the continuing existence of tradition. The unique event called revelation—in just the sense analysed here—is juxtaposed to the continuity of the voice. Every carrier of tradition refers back to it, as is emphasized by the texts I shall now examine. These texts attempt to unify the

[7] Gittin 60b.

exoteric concept of tradition as developed by the Talmudists with the mystical concept that was conditioned by the assumptions of the Kabbalists concerning the nature of revelation. They are extracts from two of the most important works of later kabbalistic literature and to me seem highly important for our considerations.

In this literature, the most extensive discussion concerning the nature of tradition is found in the work *Avodat ha-Kodesh,* written in 1531 in Turkey by Meir ben Gabbai.[8] He set out to prove that tradition is not a profane achievement of human thought and deliberation, but that it is precisely "Oral Torah" and a resounding of the voice (in the sense adduced earlier). At the same time, Meir ben Gabbai tried to answer the question of how it was possible, even necessary, for the tradition to offer such differing conceptions concerning the observance of the Torah, since the Torah, perfect within itself, is after all the revelation of the Divine Will. I quote here one of his very detailed explications:

"The highest wisdom [the *Sophia* of God, which is the second *Sefiraj* contains as the foundation of all emanations pouring forth out of the hidden Eden the true fountain from which the Written and the Oral Torah emanate and are impressed [upon the forms of the celestial letters and signatures]. This fountain is never interrupted; it gushes forth in constant production. Were it to be interrupted for even a moment, all creatures would sink back into their non-being; for the gushing forth is the cause of God's great name appearing in its oneness and in its glory [as depicted by this emanation]. On this fountain rests the continued existence of all creatures; it is said of it (*Psalms,* XXXVI, 10): 'For with Thee is the fountain of life'. And this is a life that has no measure and no end, no death or dissolution. Now, since the nature of the original source is also preserved in what was formed from it, it necessarily follows that the Torah, arising out of this source, also never has an interruption within itself. Rather, its fountain always gushes forth, to indicate the source whence it was formed [literally: 'hewed out']. We learn this from the prayer which designates God as The One Who 'gives the Torah' [present tense]. For that great voice with which He gave it has not ceased. After He gave us His holy words and caused us to hear them as the very essence of the whole Torah, He did not cease to let us hear its details through His prophet, the trusted one of His house [i.e. Moses]. This is what Onkelos meant when he interpreted the Hebrew text of *Deuteronomy V,* 19 on the voice of God at the revelation [which, if taken literally, can more readily have the opposite interpretation] as 'a great voice that did not cease speaking'. That great voice sounds forth without interruption; it calls with that eternal duration that is its nature; whatever the prophets and scholars of all generations have taught, proclaimed, and produced they have received precisely out of that voice which never ceases, in which all regulations, determinations, and decisions are implicitly contained, as well as everything new that may ever be said in any future. In all generations, these men stand in the same relationship to that voice as the trumpet to the mouth of a man who blows into it and brings forth a sound. In that process, there is no production from their own sense and understanding. Instead, they bring out of potentiality into actuality that which they received from that voice when they stood at Sinai. And when the Scriptures say: All these words God spoke to your congregation, a great voice that does not cease speaking, everything is thus contained in it... Not only did all the prophets receive their prophecy [out of this voice] at Sinai, but also all the sages who arose in every generation. Everyone received that which is his from Sinai, from that continuous voice, and certainly not according to his human understanding

[8] *Avodat ha-Kodesh,* Lemberg 1857, part I, chapters 21 and 22, as well as part III, chapters 20-24.

and reckoning. And this is so because the completion of the unity has been entrusted into the hands of man, as the Scriptural verse says (*Isaiah,* XLIII, 10): 'If ye are my witnesses, says the Eternal One, I am God'. All words that can ever be said in a new way have thus been placed into this 'fundament which is the Divine voice; the Master of the world desired that they receive actuality through men of this earth who form and fulfil God's name. That great voice is the gate and the portal for all other voices, and that is [the meaning of] 'fence of unity', and the reference of the verse in the *Psalms:* 'This is the gate of the Lord', the gate representing the Oral Law which leads to God, Who is the Written Torah, guarded by the Oral Torah. This is the reason for the fences and limitations with which the scholars enclose the Torah. But since that voice is never interrupted and that fountain always gushes forth, the deliberations of the scholars in the Talmud were necessary; Rabina and Rab Ashi, its redactors, refrained from interrupting that stream [which flows and becomes visible in those deliberations]. And this is also the path walked by scholars of all generations, and there is no fulfilment of the Torah except on that path. If new teachings [regarding the understanding of the Torah] are produced daily, this proves that the fountain ever gushes and that the great voice sounds forth without interruption. For that reason, the deliberations upon the Torah may not suffer any interruptions, nor the production of new teachings and laws and incisive discussion. But the authority of the prophets and scholars who know the secret is nothing but the authority of that voice from which they have received all they have produced and taught, which in no way arose out of their own mind and out of their rational investigations" (III, chapt. 23).

Later on in this disquisition, we discover how Meir ben Gabbai explains the conflicts of opinion that appear in the tradition from this kabbalistic point of view. He holds them to be facets of revelation:

"That ever-flowing fountain [of emanation from which the Torah originates] has different sides, a front and a back; from this stem the differences and the conflicts and the varying conceptions regarding the clean and the unclean, the prohibited and the permitted, the usable and the unusable, as it is known to the mystics. The great, continuing voice contains all these diverse ways of interpretation, for in that voice there can be nothing missing. According to the size and strength of that voice the opposing interpretations appear within it and confront one another. For the one has seen the face of that voice as it was turned toward him and made his decision for purity, the other one for impurity, each according to the place where he stood nd where he received it. But all originates from one place and goes [despite all apparent contradictions] to the one place, as is explained in the *Zohar* (III, 6b). For the differences and contradictions do not originate out of different realms, but out of the one place in which no difference and no contradiction is possible. The implicit meaning of this secret is that it lets every scholar insist on his own opinion and cite proofs for it from the Torah; for only in this manner and in no other way is the unity [of the various aspects of the one stream of revelation] achieved. Therefore it is incumbent upon us to hear the different opinions, and this is the sense of 'these and those are the words of the living God'. For all depend ultimately upon the Divine wisdom that unites them in their origin, even though this is incomprehensible for us and the last portal remained closed to Moses. For that reason, these things appear contradictory and different to us, but only as seen from our own standpoint—for we are unable to penetrate to those points where the contradictions are resolved. And it is only because we are unable to maintain two contradictory teachings at the same time that the *halachah is* established according to one of these two teachings; for all is one from the side of the Giver. But from our side it appears as manifold and different opinions, and the *halachah is* established according to

the teaching of the school of Hillel".

This interpretation achieved its widest dissemination above all through the authority of Isaiah Horowitz (*ca.* 1565-1630), who presented an unexcelled synopsis of rabbinic and kabbalistic Judaism in his great work *The Two Tables of the Covenant*. Drawing upon the disquisition just quoted, he develops the religious dignity of the creative tradition by proceeding from the explanation of a particularly pointed Talmudic saying which states: "The Holy One blessed be He, speaks Torah out of the mouths of all rabbis".[9] Horowitz comments:

"Some interpret this saying in reference to the petition which we express in the prayer 'Give us our share in Thy Torah', which is taken to mean: Give us a share in the Torah which God Himself studies; or else: May we become worthy of having Him say a teaching in our name. And this is the situation: the scholars produce new words [in the understanding of the Torah] or derive them through the power of their insight. But all of it was contained in the power of that voice that was heard at the revelation; and now the time has come for them to bring it from potentiality into actuality through the efforts of their meditation. But God is great and mighty in power, and there is no limit to His understanding. His potentiality permits no interruption [in this voice]; rather, it is boundless and endless, and all this [that the sages hear in the voice] is guided by the measure of renewal and the origin of souls in every generation as well as the ability of man to arouse the higher power. It thus follows that while we say of God that 'He has given the Torah' [in the past], He can also be designated at the same time [in every present time] as 'the One Who gives the Torah'. At every hour and time the fountain gushes forth without interruption, and what He gives at any time was potentially contained in what He gave [at Sinai]. Let me explain the essence of this matter further. We know that the domain of what is made more stringent [in the law by the rabbis] becomes enlarged in every generation. In the days of our teacher Moses the only prohibitions were those which he had expressly received at Sinai. Nevertheless, he added ordinances here and there for special purposes as they arose; and so did the prophets after him, and the scribes, and every generation with its scholars. For the more the snake's poison spreads, the more is the protecting fence needed, as is said (*Ecclesiasticus,* X, 8): 'He who breaks the fence is bitten by the snake'. The Holy One, blessed be He, gave us 365 prohibitions [in the Torah] in order to prevent the snake's poison from taking effect. The more this poison spreads within a generation, the larger must the realm of prohibition become. If this had been so at the time when the Torah was given, then all these prohibitions would have been written into the Torah. As it is, all this is contained by implication in the Torah's prohibitions; for in all this, there is only one point [namely, fighting the snake's poison]. Therefore God commanded: Set a watch upon the watch,[10] which means: act according to the prevailing conditions. Thus, all the additional stringencies [in fulfilling the Torah] that had to be added in every generation derive from the authority of the Torah. As the snake's poison spreads, and more of its potential becomes actual, the statement[11] that God created the evil inclination as well as the antidote to it becomes valid. Then we need stimulation from above in order to translate the [additional] prohibitions from potentiality into actuality as well, until [at the time of'' redemption] we shall again be reunited with the highest fountain of all fountains [which will then nullify the prohibitions]".

[9] Chagiga 15b.

[10] *Yebamoth* 21a, as an interpretation of *Leviticus* XVIII, 30.

[11] *Baba Bathra* 16a.

"I must reveal further secrets which are related to this matter in order to make plain that all the words of the wise men are words of the living God [and thus have religious dignity]. The words of the Talmud in Tractate *'Erubin* (*f.* 13b) will thereby become understandable: 'Rabbi Akiba said in the name of Rabbi Samuel: For three years the school of Shammai and the school of Hillel engaged in argument. The one said the *halachah is* according to us, and the other one said the *halachah is* according to us. A Divine voice then sounded forth and said: Both these and those are the words of the living God, but the *halachah* is to be decided according to the school of Hillel'. Rabbi Yomtov ben Abraham of Seville reported in his commentary that the rabbis of France had raised the question: How is it possible that both are the words of the living God when one prohibits what the other one permits? Their answer was that when Moses ascended the heights in order to receive the Torah he was shown forty-nine reasons for a prohibition and forty-nine reasons for a permission for every problem. He asked God about this and was told that this would be left to the sages of Israel of every generation, and that the decision was theirs to make. And this —so says the scholar from Seville—is correct according to the Talmud; but according to the Kabbalah there is a special reason for this. It appears to me that the expression of the Talmud 'These and those are the words of the living God' is justified *prima facie* only where it is possible to hold that the words of both parties are valid at the same time. This applies, for example, to the place in the Talmud (*Gittin, f.* 6b) which refers to the unfaithfulness of the concubine in Gibea (*Judges,* XIX, 2): 'Once when R. Ebiathar met the prophet Elijah and asked him what the Holy One, blessed be He, was thinking about, Elijah answered: "About the story of the concubine in Gibea" [about which Ebiathar and his colleagues Jonathan had expressed different opinions]. "What did he say about it?" [asked the rabbi]. "My son Ebiathar says thus, and my son Jonathan says thus". The rabbi said: "Is it possible for God to have doubt?" Elijah answered: "These and those are the words of the living God". For it is possible to consider the sayings of both valid. But in a situation where one prohibits something which the other permits, it is clearly impossible to consider both of their sayings valid. For the decision supports the one, and we do not accept the validity of the words of the other. But if these words are also considered words of the living God, how can one word of His be invalid? The full import, therefore, cannot rest with the words of the French rabbis, since they are insufficient in this case. But it can rest with the reason and the secret that apply here according to the kabbalistic tradition, as indicated by the rabbi from Seville. The verse in *Ecclesiastes,* XII, 11: 'The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails well fastened are those that are composed in collections, they are given from one shepherd' is interpreted in the Tractate *Chagiga* (*f.* 3b) as follows: " 'Composed in collections', this refers to the Biblical scholars who sit in assemblies and occupy themselves with the Torah; some declare a matter unclean, and others declare it clean; some prohibit, others permit; some declare it unusable, and others declare it usable. Someone might say: If this is so, how can I study the Law? Therefore Scripture continues: 'They are given by *one* shepherd; One God gave them, one spokesman [Moses] said them out of the mouth of the Lord of all actions, praised be He, as is said (*Exodus, XX,* 1): 'And God spoke all these words'. You, too, turn your ear into a funnel and fashion for yourself an understanding heart in order to understand the words of those who declare as unclean and the words of those who declare as clean, the words of those who prohibit and the words of those who permit, the words of those who declare as unusable and the words of those who declare as usable. We have here the affirmation that all differences of opinion and viewpoint that contradict one another were given by one God and said by one spokesman. This seems to be very alien to human understanding, and man's nature would be unable to grasp it were it not for the help given to him by the

prepared way of God, the pathway upon which dwells the light of the Kabbalah".[12]

In the Jewish conception, therefore, genuine tradition, like everything that is creative, is not the achievement of human productivity alone. It derives from a bedrock foundation. Vegh's quotation of Max Scheler is relevant here: "The artist is merely the mother of the work of art; God is the father". The tradition is one of the great achievements in which relationship of human life to its foundations is realized. It is the living contact in which man takes hold of ancient truth and is bound to it, across all generations, in the dialogue of giving and taking. The poet's word applies to it:

The truth that long ago was found
Has all noble spirits bound,
The ancient truth, take hold of it.
(*Das Wahre war schon laengst gefunden,*
Hat edle Geisterschaft verbunden,
Das alte Wahre, fass es an.)

[12] Cf. Isaiah Horowitz, *Shne Luchot ha-Brith,* Amsterdam 1698, pp. 25b-26a.

Between Time and Eternity

JOHN OF THE ANGELS ON *The Conquest of the Divine Kingdom*

Edited and translated by
PEDRO and ANN-LAWRIE AISA and MACKENZIE BROWN

"You will also know that the spirit is in this world midway between time and eternity, and if you elect to walk with exterior things and are converted to time, that is, if you become temporal by loving temporal things, you will, without doubt, forget eternity".

JUAN DE LOS ANGELES was born Juan Martinez in Oropesa, near Avila, in the year 1536, some twenty-one years after the birth of Avila's most famous personage, Saint Teresa of Jesus. The conspiracy of silence which enveloped John of the Angels after his death in 1609 has removed any certainty from statements concerning the time and place of his birth and from those concerning his early years. But circumstantial evidence points strongly to the Avilan beginnings.

It appears that Juan Martinez entered the University of Alcald at the age of seventeen to study Greek and Hebrew and to perfect his knowledge of Latin. After the University, he joined the Franciscan Order, probably in the Province of San Gabriel, and by 1562 we find him professed as one of the Discalced Franciscans under the name of "de los Angeles". The following ten years were spent under the severe disciplines of monastic life, although he was permitted to further his studies by visits to masters, including Friar Luis de Leon at Salamanca. By 1572 he was delivering his first addresses as a Professor of the Order and preacher in the Royal Court in Madrid, having been named Confessor to the Royal discalced the previous year. By his mid-thirties, Fray Juan de los Angeles was already a power in that world which was to count Saint John of the Cross, Saint Teresa of Avila and Luis of Leon as contemporary products of the Spanish mystical genius.

Shortly after the founding of a new Franciscan monastery in the city of Zamora in 1578, John of the Angels was sent as Official Predicator or Preacher. It was in the quiet of this monastery that he composed his first writings—a series of devotional poems; and he seems to have at least begun here his first published work: *Triunfos del Amor de Dios* (Triumphs of the Love of God). In spite of favorable notices this work did not become popular and it remained for another study to establish him as a major writer of his period.

This latter work is associated with his life in Seville. He was sent in 1589 to found a house in this bustling city on the Guadalquivir river, then a major port for the trade of the Indies and a place which so reeked of wealth and fleshpots that Saint Teresa was appalled by the atmosphere. But Fray Juan was much taken by the walled gardens, the orange blossoms, the fishing fleets anchored beside tall galleons returned from Mexico and Panama. He entered his duties as Provincial Commisary of the Province with great skill and energy. Soon the new foundation was completed and he was invited to speak in the major pulpits of Seville. But such was his eloquence and popularity that in time he aroused the envy and jealousies of the established clergy there and he found himself the object of ill-will, slander and petty persecutions. For the next three years he continued his Seville assignment, bringing to a successful conclusion the

development of the Church of San Diego de Sevilla. During this time, he began work on his *Diálogos de la Conquista del Espiritual y Secreto Reino de Dios*. A selection from this work has been chosen for the present English translation.

Not long after the celebrations marking the completion of San Diego de Sevilla, John of the Angels left the Andalusian capital—probably late in 1592 or early the following year. The violent arguments which had marked his stay involved not only other Franciscan groups but his own discalced brothers and concerned principally matters of jurisdiction and precedence. It was the sort of bitter experience shared by Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross in Andalusia. The Franciscan father fled Seville to the comparative peace of Portugal where he was welcomed by the friars there and by the Archduke of Austria, then governor of the territory. He now had opportunity to complete the *Dialogues*. Some time during 1593, he returned to Madrid and received approval of his new work by his superiors. It was another two years, however, before the book could be published because Juan de los Angeles was immediately called upon to make visits of inspection to five provinces as distant as Valencia. Most of this visitation was upon foot and under the most difficult and fatiguing circumstances that left no time to attend to matters of writing or publication. By 1595 he was again in Madrid where he saw to the printing of the *Dialogues*. They were dedicated to Cardinal Alberto, Archduke of Austria, who had welcomed him so cordially to Portugal after his tribulations in Seville.

The new publication was accepted by the public and, in contrast to his earlier *Triunfos,* sold so well that all the early editions were quickly exhausted. If Juan de los Angeles had written nothing but the *Dialogues,* his position among sixteenth century religious writers would have been assured.

Three more years of administrative responsibility in Madrid and Guadalajara ended when he was appointed to the office of General Visitor. Ironically, we find him by the middle of the year 1598 again in Seville. But this time those who had caused him such grief six years before were now bound to render him respect and obedience and to accept him as judge and arbitrator in questions involving the Provinces of Andalusia. Those same brothers who had quarreled over jurisdiction of the house established by Fray Juan on his first visit, now accepted an agreement which he forwarded to the Pope. Other disputes between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of Seville were also resolved. After a period of rest in the convent of San Bernardino, during which he worked on his *Comentarios sobre el Cantar de los Cantares* (Commentaries on the Song of Songs), he left for Rome on matters concerning the Order in the spring of 1599. He then travelled throughout Italy and France, returning to Madrid in 1600.

He resumed charge of his Franciscan house in that city and devoted himself to revising his *Triunfos* for republication. This consisted largely in condensing and clarifying the earlier work and the result was that three editions were made within a few years and it was translated into French. The revision was brought out under the title *Lucha Espiritual y Amorosa entre Dios y el Alma* (Spiritual Battle between God and the Soul).

In the next two years, events occurred which, though they brought the highest honors and responsibilities to Juan de los Angeles, were to prove disastrous to his personal life and peace of mind in the last years. In June of 1601 he was elected Minister, Predicator, Definitor and Guardian of his Province, with his residence in Madrid. The notice refers to him as "a man of great note, of fine letters and prudence."[1] He quickly set about the work of his new

[1] Quoted in Sala's Introduction to the 1912 Madrid edition of *Dialogos de la Conquista del Espiritual y Secreto Reino de Dios* (p. xxix).

office, travelling constantly throughout the large area under his administration, and adjudicating disputes, particularly those involving the secular and regular clergy. Then, early in the year 1602, he was given special honors. He received appointment as Confessor to the Royal Discalced of Madrid with a special commission to attend the Princess, Sister Margarita de la Cruz. At the same time, Empress Maria of Austria made him Predicator of her royal chapel. For all his abilities, the combination of offices placed an impossible burden upon his time and energy. He found it necessary to make a choice of responsibilities. Pressed with obedience by his superiors not to offend the Royal Family, he renounced his office as Provincial Head.

His clerical brothers were outraged and left the following record in the official Chronicles of the Province: "The Provincial Friar Juan de los Angeles, did not carry out nor even begin to complete his three-year term of office because the most serene Empress, sister of the King, Don Felipe II, made him her Predicator and the Most Reverend General Friar Francisco de Sosa instituted him as Confessor to the discalced ladies of the Royal and very religious convent of Madrid. He had more liking for preaching and confessing than for walking on long journeys. He renounced his Provincial office after a year and a half".[2] A later biographer defends him, however, in these terms: "Had he not given repeated proof of sacrifice in the many journeys he had made?... Great men, such as captivate and are admired by those of noble heart, awaken jealousy and envy in timid souls... Although they did not resort to imprisoning him, as with Friar Luis de Leon... it was not insignificant the injury they did him by painting him an unworthy when he was so very virtuous... Were not too many honors heaped upon this one Friar, leaving other prelates and men neglected in their convents? The envious then tried to break this great cedar tree, stripping from it even the foliage. And since they could not compete with him for earthly honors, they contested those of heaven so that his virtue might be clouded with slurs of imperfection and none would kneel before his image nor venerate him as a saint. And in part they realized their objective... With a conspiracy of silence they concealed all that could have exalted him, concealing with such a mask that none could know him nor honor him for his virtues".[3]

Fray Juan de los Angeles remained with the Royal Discalced and the Empress in his declining years, devoting himself to the completion of some of his finest mystical studies. To the Empress he dedicated his *Tratado Utilisimo de Consideraciones Espirituales sobre el Can tar de los Cantares de Salomon* (Most Useful Treatise on Spiritual Considerations concerning the Song of Songs of Solomon). Although the work dealt only with the first two sections of the Song of Songs, it was a long text. After two years of sale in Spain it was brought out in a French edition and held in great esteem in Europe. He also wrote a series of essays to complete the full text of his *Manual de Vida Perfecta* (Manual of the Perfect Life), which forms the second part of his *Conquista*. In his last days he was working on a Treatise on the Mass, *Tratado sobre la Misa,* editing *Vergel del Anima Religiosa* (Orchard of Religious Enthusiasm) and revising works which the Royal Board wished to print.

We are told that, despite his Royal patronage, Fray Juan led no life of ease. While he was confessor to many of the aristocracy of Madrid, he devoted himself tirelessly to the poor and his door was always open to the most humble peasant at all hours. He continued to accept, even in his last illness, much of the hard work and obedience of the monastic life. His last writing, *Libro*

[2] *Ibid* (p. *xxxi*).

[3] *Ibid* (p. *xxxii*).

de la Pasion de Jesus (Book of the Passion of Jesus) was written for a father of the Franciscan Order. Only the first of its four parts was printed, the remainder being lost. He died in the house of the Royal Discalced in December of 1609, beloved of all whom he had served, but somehow never forgiven by his contemporary religious.

What can be said of his place in history? Though he was rejected in his day, the 18th century Franciscans considered him a most venerable man and proposed setting in motion the machinery of beatification in Rome. The Spanish critic Pablo Rouselot hails Juan de los Angeles as the psychologist and moralist of the Spanish mystics. Menéndez y Pelayo in the nineteenth century wrote, "I confess that he is one of my favorite authors: it is not possible to read him without loving him and without being pulled along by his marvellous sweetness, as angelical as his name".[4] The Franciscan scholar, Mir, in his foreword to the *Dialogues* described Fray Juan as "one of the most illustrious theologians of his age... He exhibits all the greatness and sublimity of... the mystic doctrine of the Franciscan school".[5]

Considering the high estimates of his life and work, how can we account for the obscurity which has enveloped the man since his death? Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross were themselves involved in the most bitter disputes and knew the humiliation of rejection and persecution. Saint Teresa, at least, was also on familiar terms with royalty and nobility. Was it that John of the Angels exhibited no miracles? One of his biographers, however, refers to his "miraculous deeds".[6] Was it that he was not tested and refined by the type of hellish suffering endured by the Carmelite saints? Yet we are told of his arduous journeys, his severe illness, his tireless devotion to the poor. Or was it that the Franciscan order did not suffer the terrible and dramatic upheaval that characterized the Carmmelite reform in sixteenth century Spain, bringing both disgrace and fame to the leaders? Juan de los Angeles had no advocate after death like P. Crisóstomo who spent his last years praising and preserving the name of that same John of the Cross whom he had so cruelly persecuted in life. Nor was Fray Juan asked under penalty of obedience to write his "Life" as happened with Saint Teresa of Avila.

Whether Juan de los Angeles remains an unheralded saint or simply another distinguished member of his order, his place in the literature of Spanish mysticism is assured. The noted scholar and authority on the religious writings of sixteenth century Spain, Allison Peers, says, "In him, better than in any of his contemporaries, may be studied the psychology of mysticism".[7]

Fray Juan is thoroughly conversant with the various currents of mystical thought of his day, including, of course, the lives and writings of his distinguished countrymen, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and Luis de Leon. He discusses fluently the works of the Flemish Ruysbroeck, the German Tauler and others.[8] In common with these mystics, he stresses contemplative disciplines leading to Divine Union.

It may seem to modern readers that he devalues love and service to the world and mankind by his advocacy of the interior life. Such argument might well seem to him to be beside the point. Service to mankind is, he would hold, an inevitable and natural expression of the virtue of Charity which he so stresses. But Charity is not to be found in that heart or mind bound

[4] *Ibid* (p. liv).

[5] *Ibid* (p. 1v).

[6] *Ibid* (e.g. p. xlv).

[7] *The Mystics of Spain* (p. 19).

[8] Angel Gonzalez Palencia, in his prologue to the 1946 Madrid edition of *Dialogos de la Conquista del Reino de Dios* has a detailed analysis of German and other influences upon the thought of Juan de los Angeles (pp. 24-30).

by or obsessed with creatures, as creatures. Only when fellow creatures are recognized as not different from oneself (because they share the same Divine presence) is it possible to serve them truly and without hypocrisy. And as John of the Angels sees it, this recognition comes only through Divine grace working in the heart which has been emptied of all contrary concerns and competing loyalties. "In order that God may dwell in a soul He asks that it first be emptied of the love of all creatures, including itself". His conclusion on works: "It is not possible for me to be essentially and genuinely good and yet for God not to be pleased and proud of my works... nor, if I were of bad and leprous interior could my works avoid being themselves leprous and therefore not pleasing to God".[9] Thus it seems clear that, although his enemies denounced him for choosing to serve as Confessor to the Royal convent of Madrid in preference to the administrative activities of the Provincial office, Fray Juan does not reject the active life—which would indeed be contrary to the tradition of his own Order. He insists rather that all works be offered to God and judged not by their apparent outer qualities but rather, whether large or small, by their inner motivation. He holds that without a continuous inner awareness of divine imperatives, the actions of the natural man are soon conformed to the ends of the Devil.

The Conquest of the Divine Kingdom is possibly the best single source for the theology of Juan de los Angeles. And the message and the content of the ten dialogues of the treatise are summarized in the first. Of it the author says, "I advise the religious and devout reader that in this one dialogue is the sum of all mystic theology and that it will serve as the fountain of everlasting life and the true road to perfect union with the Divine".[10]

* * *

Concerning the interior or centred life of the soul or Kingdom of God. On the harmony of Man and the true understanding of the commandment of love.

(*A dialogue between friar and master, beginning with the friar alone inside the monastery. The conversation later moves to the walled garden.*)

Friar: If the desire to be perfect were perfection, I would be perfect in every kind of virtue—for I spend all my life in good intentions and desires. In the secular state my desires and intentions were to enter into the religious life where God might be served and my soul might benefit. His Majesty heard them, in his infinite mercy, as he usually hears the desires of his poor, and made me one of them in the clergy. And although I confess to be, up to the present, lacking in works, I am not lacking in those earlier desires, and other new ones—and the foremost of all is to be inwardly that which I appear to be on the outside. I am ashamed and confounded greatly that the world should judge me to be perfect and holy, when in the eyes of God there is more in me to be pitied than to be envied. Indeed, how many persons have desired the same thing in the same manner as I, but surprised by sudden and unexpected death, now burn and

[9] *Dialogos* 1: 2.

[10] *Dialogos* 1:6.

Text : The scriptural citations in parentheses are precisely as given in Sala's 1912 edition of the 1595 original text. Citations which follow the parentheses are those of the translators, indicating more precise references to the King James version of the *Bible* unless otherwise indicated. Other notes, identifying personages, etc. are by the translators.

will burn forever in hell? And why shouldn't one who, like myself, with his hands clutched piously to his breast, consumes and ends his life in mere desiring, fear the same end? In truth I must be that unfortunate type of soul of whom Solomon spoke, "The lazy man wants but does not achieve".[11] I say unfortunate, because from wanting and not having is formed and solidified a desire which, far from causing to happen that which is desired, invites the penalty of the indifferent, which is to have God belch them from his stomach and expel them as vomit.[12] This is the state that the Saints refer to as "insensibility"—in which neither the consideration of heaven delights, nor that of hell frightens, where neither beneficences inspire, nor wounds pain... But, God of my soul, what do I see? Is it by chance my Master who comes here? It is he without doubt. I am not sorry, although I would be just as glad, had he not heard me.

Master: God save you, Friar Desirous.

Friar: Your health be equally enduring.

Master: What soliloquies are these which you have been carrying on with yourself, all alone, this afternoon? It pleases me to see you so desirous of your spiritual improvement, and to realize that it is not by accident, but by divine inspiration and the command of heaven that you were given the name, "Friar Desirous". Indeed, upon careful consideration, we see that a great part of good health is in desiring it. The holy Prophet said, "My soul desired to obtain your judgments at all times".[13] The Angel called Daniel a "man of desires".[14] Ejaculatory prayers, which, as the Saints say, penetrate the heavens, also are desires. The church celebrates those desires, which the Virgin, swollen with God, had of seeing Him already born into the world and in her arms. We celebrate these on the day of the "O", and all the prayers in those seven Antiphons, before the birth of the Lord, signify the desires which the Holy Fathers had that God would send the Desired One to the people.[15] If this is true, as it is, why are you so disconsolate, since your desires are so many and so good?

Friar: Because those saintly desires grow within me along with countless imperfections. A thousand good intentions are accompanied by innumerable faults. No sooner has a healthy thought burst forth in my soul, than conversation and association with friends cast it aside. And following the course of the insensible ones (who are numerous) I recognize myself as a man of religion only in my robe, for in other respects I am a man of the times. The profession that I have adopted is very rigid, and I am very lax[16]; it announces me as dead to the world, yet I live only for the world; it denies me and prohibits all that is flesh and blood, yet I am a carnal man given over to sin; it commands me to be poor, yet I flee from poverty; and finally, all my good desires disappear in flower, and at each step I find myself caught up in bad deeds.

[11] (Eccles. 4 ; Prov. 13), Ecclesiastes 4:5 ; Proverbs 13:4.
Although some of John of the Angels' quotes are paraphrases of his sources, the translators, here and in the rest of the text, have indicated them all with quotation marks for the sake of clarity.

[12] (Apoc. 3). Apocalypse 3:16.

[13] (Psal. 118). Psalm 119: 20.

[14] (Dan. 7). The Vulgate has *vir desideriorum* in Dan. 10:11 and 19.
The Douay version has "man of desires", the King James version has "a man greatly beloved", the Jerusalem Bible has "a man specially chosen". Modern Spanish versions of the Vulgate have "muy agradable (a Dios)". Juan de los Angeles' point is that the Bible speaks of a man's *desires* for the spiritual vision. If he is correct, later translations have missed the point.

[15] The Seven "O"s or great antiphons are responses sung during Advent at vespers from 17 December to 23 December.

[16] (Rom. 7). Romans 7:14.

Master: Do not continue with this conversation, for it appears that today you are overcome by melancholy. Let us go out a while, if you like, into the garden.

Friar: We leave at an opportune time. Do you perhaps have something you wish to discuss privately with me?

Master: Yes I have, and I want your complete attention; because that which I wish to explain does not permit divided attention, nor a man distracted and beside himself.

Friar: You have always spoken to me with honesty and without flattery, but you never cautioned me as you do now.

Master: You have probably never heard from my mouth that which I wish to say to you today.

Friar: It seems that you come as one sent by God in response to my desire, which has been to find someone who might speak to my heart and teach me things that are substantial, interior, and spiritual; for that which is commonly discussed in these clays, even among great men of saintly repute, is for the greater part exterior and of very little satisfaction to the soul.

Master: We are of the same thought, except that I am more concerned with the barbaric talk that prevails in the world on the subject of virtue than you, who were born yesterday. If you examine the matter carefully, every effort is devoted to forming the exterior man and to fulfilling the wishes of those who are so formed. He who remembers the interior and divine man is rarely found. Those who waste their time in wrong efforts should realize that the completed interior man, without any effort composes and orders the exterior man, and not the other way around. I have read that Plato made this prayer regularly to God: *Amice Deus, da mihi, ut intus pulcher efficiar; et quae exterius sun t, intimis sint arnica;* which is to say, "Friend God, make me appear beautiful to you in the interior, and make my exterior correspond and be in harmony with my interior".[17]

Friar: That truly is a most devout prayer and more fitting for a Christian than for a philosopher.

Master: What the holy prophet says of the soul as the wife of Christ in the 45th Psalm also applies here directly and is of even greater authority. The prophet, having described with elegant metaphors the beauties and virtues of the celestial husband, of his admirable disposition and dignity, turns to the wife and says: "That which the husband has by nature, the wife has, in the same greatness, by grace, but in her it is hidden, there within, where only the eyes of God see it and approve; although not so hidden that it fails to give some outward signs".[18] In the Song of Songs, it is written that the wife, who is described as dark-skinned and slovenly, while not denying her slovenliness and dark skin, confesses that with her walks the beauty of the wife of Christ.[19] "I am", she says, "like the tents of Cedar and the curtains of Solomon, on the outside black and lacking brilliance (through exposure to the sun and the buffeting of the seasons), but in the secret and interior parts filled with great riches and soft and precious fragrance". This interior should in all ways be good, as Saint Paul says.[20] Essentially we should seem fragrant to God.

[17] The passage referred to is apparently from the end of Plato's *Phaedrus,* which in Jowett's translation (279) reads : "Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul ; and may the outward and inward man be at one ...".

[18] (Psal. 44). Psalm 45:3.

[19] (Cant. 1). Song of Solomon 1:15.

[20] (II Cor. 2). II Cor. 2:15.

Thus there are men who are wanton, sensual and profane yet wherever they go they leave the soft odor and fragrance of amber and musk in which they seem to be embalmed. But if you happen to examine them closely they are vile in their persons. Just so, you will find many whose sole business is to give a good odor of virtue and holiness to men, while forgetting that principally they owe this to God. These men teach themselves to bow the head, compose the hands, to be modest and lower the eyes, incline the shoulders, speak evenly and in a devoted tone, measure their steps, and hang the rosary with its skull from the waist, and other things of this kind. They do not try to develop the interior man nor to mortify the passions, nor walk within themselves in the truly virtuous life. How little Saint Paul cared if the outward man became corrupt and was slovenly![21] He knew very well that from this very corruption and discomposure came the reformation and adornment of the inward man. They who really try to be perfect, imitate nature, which, not forgetting to form the exterior parts of the animal, attends first to the formation of the heart. False saints, like fraudulent works of art, are of such nature that they are not concerned with the interior substance but only with that which can be seen: the emaciated face, weeping where they can be seen, sighing in Church and making gestures (a thing loathed by God), and confessing and taking Holy Communion often because of pride and even because of the temporal benefit that is found in these exercises.

II

Friar: Then is it not good to do these things which you denounce?

Master: I do not condemn the good exterior example, nor the works in which are sought only the glory of God and edification of one's fellow man: because God wanted works to be such that men should see them and that they should glorify the Father who is in Heaven.[22] What I criticize is the detaining of oneself in these things and giving all one's attention to them, not because they are for the glory of God, but rather because they are symbols of holiness. At times such works are so full of self interest that His Majesty would be better honored if we should abandon them for he is not honored by our doing them. In Amos, these fearful words are written: "Loathsome and detestable I consider your celebrations. Those perfumes and incense that you offer to me in your assemblies offend me and serve as stench to my nostrils. Do not bother to burn animals nor make other offerings to me, for I do not care to see them nor turn my eyes to them; I absolve you of the vows you have made for me that you might remain in my memory, because they do not please me. Clear away this confusion of voices and the notes of your violins, for you torment me with them".[23] These are the admonitions of God our Lord, who reproves all the services made in his church if they do not hold life, if they lack the essential thing, which is the spirit and truth with which he wishes to be served and adored.[24] Saint Caesarius recounts that, while musicians sang in a church with great talent and harmony,

[21] (II Cor. 4). II Cor. 4:16-18..

[22] (Math. 5). Mathew 5:16.

[23] (Amos 5). Amos 5: 23 Douay: "Take away from me the tumult of thy songs : and I will not hear the canticles of thy harp". King James Version: "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols". Jerusalem; "Let me have no more of the din of your chanting, no more of your strumming on harps". Modern Spanish version of Vulgate: "Lejos de mi vuestros tumultuosos himnos ; yo no escucharé las canciones al son de vuestra lira".

[24] (loan. 4). St. John 4:24.

a saint present at that time saw a demon high up in the main chapel, who, with the left hand, held an open sack and with the right was catching the voices and putting them in it until he had filled it. When the service was finished, the musicians (as they were accustomed) began among themselves to praise their motet and the organ music. "How beautiful was the cornet!" said one; another, "How well so-and-so sang; what rich trills he made with his throat!" etc. The servant of God, who heard the conversation, approached them and said: "You have sung very well, for the sack is full". Surprised at this, and having learned why he said it, they were very confused and ashamed at how much they were bragging.[25]

Friar: Was there nothing else in which to capture such soft voices than a sack?

Master: No, because the most harmonious voices in the world, if they are without spirit, are as straw in God's eyes; and so he commanded that they be put in a sack as straw is collected for beasts[26]. And I want you to know that the same thing which happened with those voices will be true for all corporal exercises if they lack the life which God bids that they have.

Friar: And what is that life?

Master: Listen, not to me, but to the divine contemplative Ruysbroeck whose carefully chosen words are these: "We must not so much attend to that which we do as to that which we truthfully are; because if we were good inwardly, in the intimacy of our souls, so would our works be good, and if in our most intimate interior we were just and right, so would our actions be just and right. Many attribute sanctity to doing; but they are not correct. If it can be explained in the following way, sanctity consists only in being, because no matter how saintly our works appear, they do not sanctify in themselves but only in as much as we are saintly and our works come from a holy interior or center. So much only are they holy, and no more. Therefore the holy center sanctifies all that we do, be it eating, drinking, sleeping, praying, talking, macerating the flesh with fasting and other similar things which in themselves are not wrong, but good and natural. And he has the most saintly interior and center who has the greatest love of God in his soul, and his works are more highly esteemed when the glory of God is more purely seen in them. Therefore, we should work with all care to make this intimate center good and noble and to make our actions originate in it; because, without any doubt, in it is constituted the essence and blessedness of man. Those works which are virtuous are so only because of originating there, since the good spirit exhalted through the love of God in turn exhalts and perfects our works and makes them pleasing to His Majesty".[27]

These are the views of Ruysbroeck, who, in my judgement, wanted to say that God does not look at the quantity of our works nor does he care if they are grand, but that what God heeds is the spirit from which they come. This spirit gives them their quality and character and uplifts them in the extent to which the spirit itself is uplifted and elevated by the love of God and no more. Thus in the measure that this intimate part of our spirit is greater and more saintly, and that which we do cones forth essentially and with true concern from it, so much and no more is the deed agreeable and acceptable to God. This is what the divine Scripture signified when it said: "God looked at Abel and at his gifts, being first pleased with

[25] "Cesario" refers to Caesarius of Heisterbach (1180-1240) a Cistercian monk of Cologne, who published a collection of stories, titled *Dialogus Miraculorum, a* work widely read during the Middle Ages.

[26] (Isai. 58).

[27] Jan Van Ruysbroeck (1293-1381) the Flemish mystic, was well known in Spain, where his works had been translated and published in 1552. The passages quoted here are from chapter IV of *The Book of the Twelve Virtues*.

the person who made the sacrifice, and the sacrifice was accepted in accordance with the degree of acceptance of him who offered it".[28] And that which was true of Abel is the same with all men of the world, whose works (in as much as they are a part of them) are accepted or not by God according to the degree to which they themselves are or are not accepted by the same God. In my soul divine love is planted, which is its life and that of all that I do. Therefore it is not possible for nie to be essentially or genuinely good and yet for God not to be pleased and proud of my works, however few they may be, if, as has been said, these works carry as their end and goal, purely and without any consideration for my own benefit or comfort, His glory and honor. Nor, if I were of bad and leprous interior could my works avoid being themselves leprous and, therefore, not pleasing to God. For it is written: "The gifts of evil men are not accepted by his Highness".[29]

III

Friar: What is this that you call the intimate part of the soul, which according to what Ruysbroeck has said should be the principal thing in us and to which we should always aspire?

Master: My answer to you is that until you have found within yourself that center or intimate part you will not have known what the interior or essential life is, which is indeed what I desire you to know and experience; since afterwards there is no necessity of rules or documents in the spiritual life. All cease at that point; and the soul once there, God takes one's hand and teaches one himself, which is the greatest blessing which can come to you in this life. As the Prophet said: "Blessed is he whom you, Lord, teach and to whom you give an understanding of your law".[30]

Friar: But, in the end, you have still left me with my ignorance.

Master: For the time being, yes. My intention in this bit of conversation is only to inspire you to walk within yourself and towards an essentially good life—one not built upon toothpicks, nor tied to the eyes of men, but regulated according to the consent of God and guided by his interior voice. Saint Gregory says: "He who does not hide and withdraw from exterior things, never penetrates the interior ones".[31] And he says moreover, that it is necessary to hide oneself in order to hear, and to hide oneself after having heard; because the soul which is separated from visible things perceives and contemplates invisible ones. Filled with the invisible, it scorns completely the visible and hears secretly the whisperings of the divine word, because it knows softly and secretly the occult ways of its inspiration. All of which cannot be done by him who is not accustomed to living within himself in this divine and essential center of his spirit, which properly speaking is the Kingdom of God, where He dwells in all His magnificence.[32] And if I

[28] (Genes. 3). Gen. 4 :4.

[29] (Eccl. 34). Ecclesiasticus 35:12, Douay: "The most High approveth not the gifts of the wicked". Modern Spanish version of Vulgate: "El Altisimo no acepta los dones de los impios".

[30] (Psal. 93). Psalm 94:12.

[31] Saint Gregory the Great (540-604), Pope from 590 to 604, established the papal system that prevailed through the Middle Ages. He wrote prolifically and his *Dialogues* appeared in several Spanish editions in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

[32] (Rom. 14). Vulgate, Ps. 144:12 : "Gloria magnificentiae regni tui". Douay : "The glory of the magificence of thy kingdom".

do not deceive myself, by this Kingdom is understood that which Christ says according to Saint Luke: "My kingdom is within' you".[33] And this was compared by Saint Matthew to the hidden treasure, which was hidden again by the one who found it, who after selling all his possessions, bought the field where it was hidden in order to dig in it in more privacy and in order to enjoy it more freely.[34]

Friar: How can it be truthfully said that he hid the treasure, if it was already hidden?

Master: You know very little if you do not know this. It is clear that for the fortunate one who found the treasure, it had been hidden from him as from all, but after being found it was known to him and remained secret to the rest. And it is said that he hid it in order to conserve it, and that he renounced all he had in order to enjoy it.[35] This great good holds so much joy and consolation for him who finds it that putting aside with ease all those things that appear to give satisfaction in this world, he enters into solitude to mine and withdraw the gold which alone can enrich souls and liberate them from all misery and want. Oh, how few come upon this treasure which is so hidden! But this does not disturb me, for in the end it is a result of grace and no one by his natural efforts can attain it. Nor are you likely to find, even among many, anyone who can be persuaded that there is so much good within us. The holy Blois, Ruysbroeck, Tauler and others say that this center of the soul is more fundamental and of greater measure than any of the three faculties or superior forces in it, because it is the origin and beginning of them all.[36] In itself, it is simple, essential and unchanging. It has no multiplicity, only unity. But within it are those faculties of understanding, memory and will.

Friar: You seem to be close to telling me what I desire so much to know.

Master: You would reasonably have expected that, by what has been said. Since we have arrived at that point (advising you first that it is the highest point that there is in spiritual life and is what you must keep in mind in order to go forward) you should know that the interior part of the soul is the simplest essence of it, stamped with the image of God, and called by some saints the center, by others the intimate, by others the apex of the spirit, by others the intellect. Saint Augustine called it the sum. More modern men call it the depth because it is the most interior and secret part, where there are no images of created things, but (as has been said) only the presence of the Creator. Here there is absolute tranquillity and absolute silence, because no representation of a created thing ever reaches to this center, and according to Augustine we are thereby godly or divine, or so conformed to God that wisdom considers us gods.[37] This bare interior plain, without figures, is elevated over all created things, and over all the feelings and forces of the spirit. It transcends time and place, and here the soul remains in a perpetual union and bond with God, its source. When this intimate part (which the eternal and

[33] (Luc. 17). Luke 17:21.

[34] (Math. 13). Matthew 13:44.

[35] cf. St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul,* II, 16:13.

[36] Francois Louis de Blois (Franciscus Ludovicus Blosius) (1506-1566) was a Benedictine whose works were widely translated and read in 16th century Europe. His *Institutio Spiritualis,* a book of spiritual instruction, was especially well known. Jan Van Ruysbroeck (see above note 27) expresses this thought in his *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage* (Ch. II). John Tauler (1300-1361), the Dominican of Strasbourg, deals with the same subject in his *Spiritual Conferences* (Ch. IV).

[37] Juan de Ios Angeles may refer here to the *Confessions,* especially VIII-XXV on "Memory". Vulgate: Ps. 81: 6 "Ego dixi dii estis, et filii excelsi omnes". Douay: "I have said: You are gods, and all of you the sons of the most High". John 10:34. "Jesus answered them: Is it not written in your law: I said you are gods ? " "Wisdom" is a common word used for "Holy Scripture" in the Slav and Greek rites.

non-created light continually lluminates and makes clear) is manifested and revealed to man, it it greatly inspires him and makes him compassionate. This was said of him who found the treasure, who as a result of the ecstatic joy which he received sold all his possessions and bought the land. Oh noble and divine temple, from which God never leaves, where the holy Trinity dwells and one enjoys eternity! One single perfect conversion to God in this intimate place is of greater importance than many other exercises, whether interior or exterior, and it can restore ten or more lost years. Here bubbles forth a fountain of live water which leaps toward eternal life.[38] It is of such virtue and efficacy and of such great softness, that it easily banishes all the bitterness of vice and conquers and surmounts all the rebellion, contradiction and pangs of the vicious and ill-inclined nature. Because, after this water of life is drunk, it flows through all the regions of the body and the spirit, and gives and communicates to them a marvellous purity and fecundity.

(*To be continued*)

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

It is related that in the time of Abu Muslim, the head of the ('Abbasid) propaganda, an innocent dervish was seized on suspicion of theft, and was imprisoned at Chahar Taq. On the same night Abu Muslim dreamed that the Apostle came to him and said: "God has sent me to tell you that one of His friends is in your prison. Arise and set him free". Abu Muslim leapt from his bed, and ran with bare head and feet to the prison gate, and gave orders to release the dervish, and begged his pardon and bade him ask a boon "O prince", he replied, "one whose Master rouses Abu Muslim at midnight, and sends him to deliver a poor dervish from affliction—how should that one ask a boon of others T' Abu Muslim began to weep, and the dervish went on his way.

Kashf al-Muhjub.

[38] (Ioan. 4). St. John 4:14. Following Teresa, Fray Juan uses the water image.

The Seven Liberal Arts and the West Door of Chartres Cathedral

by
Titus Burckhardt[1]

ACCORDING to the medieval theologians the Virgin Mary, by virtue of the innate perfection of her soul, possessed all the wisdom of which man is capable. A direct reference to this wisdom is to be found in the allegories of the seven liberal arts which, just outside an inner circle of adoring angels, decorate the tympanum of the Door of the Virgin.[2] In the medieval context the seven sciences—which were classified as the *trivium* of grammar, logic and rhetoric and the *quadrivium* of arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy—were not exclusively empirical sciences, as are those we know today. They were the expression of so many faculties of the soul, faculties demanding harmonious development. This is why they were also called arts.

Following ancient tradition, Dante, in his "Convivio", compares the seven liberal arts to the seven planets, grammar corresponding to the moon, logic to Mercury, rhetoric to Venus, arithmetic to the sun, music to Mars, geometry to Jupiter, and astronomy to Saturn. The creators of the Royal Door of Chartres were certainly aware of this correspondence. It is thus doubly significant that on the tympanum of the left of the three doors the signs of the zodiac are portrayed. These belong to the unchanging heaven of fixed stars and thus represent the kingdom of the Divine Spirit, to Whom this door, with its representation of the ascension of Christ, is dedicated. The seven planets, on the other hand, govern, according to the ancient viewpoint, the world of the soul. And Mary is the human soul in all its perfection.

By means of the signs of the zodiac—not all of which, incidentally, appear on the same door, *Pisces* and *Gemini,* having had to be transposed, for want of room, to the Door of the Virgin—the arches surrounding the representation of Christ's ascension (on the left-hand door), can be seen to represent the firmament. Beside each of the twelve signs of the zodiac the corresponding month is represented pictorially in the form of its natural activity.

These natural activities—one for each month—are the terrestrial reflections of the twelve signs of the zodiac. From them one learns to what extent the course of human existence depends upon the heavens: in seedtime and harvest, in work and leisure; for the heavens, in their cycle, bring heat after cold, dry after wet, and thus keep life in being.

This is significant for medieval art: in two tympanums and in the arches surrounding them, the whole cosmos is represented, in its three great divisions: spiritual, psychic, and corporeal. Medieval man always kept the profound order of things in mind.

* * *

The order in which the seven liberal arts are listed, when properly understood, testifies to

[1] Extract from *Chartres and die Geburt der Kathedrale,* (Chartres and the Birth of the Gothic Cathedral), Urs Graf Verlag, Olten Switzerland, 1962. pp. 60-64.

[2] The Door of the Virgin is the right-hand of the three constituent doors of the Royal Door of the West Facade. On the tympanum of the central door is a portrayal of Christ in Majesty.

a Pythagorean view of things, and this was not without influence on medieval art. The division of these sciences—and all their elements—into *trivium* and *quadrivium* came into Christian culture from Greek antiquity in a late and simplified form. The medieval spirit, however, was able to reanimate the integral vision originally inherent in it.

"Philosophy has two main instruments", writes Thierry of Chartres, "namely intellect (*intellectus*) and its expression. Intellect is illumined by the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy). Its expression is the concern of the *trivium* (grammar, logic and rhetoric)".

In fact the *trivium* was a schooling both in language and in thought. It is language which makes man man; and this is why grammar comes at the beginning. Not without humour, the sculptor of the Door of the Virgin has portrayed this art as a woman threatening with a rod two young children who are writing. The figures of the famous grammarians Donat and Priscian stand beside her. Dialectic, whose feminine representation in Chartres carries a scorpion and has Aristotle as a companion, is none other than logic. Rhetoric is the art of speaking, or rather, speaking in so far as it is an art; Cicero accompanies its allegorical figure.

The four members of the *quadrivium* are likewise represented in a feminine form in Chartres. They are: arithmetic with a reckoning board, music with a glockenspiel, geometry with a drawing-board, and astronomy, contemplating the heavens and accompanied by Boethius, V Pythagoras, Euclid and Ptolemy. These four arts or sciences refer to the four conditions of corporeal existence: number, time, space and motion. Music, of course, is not only concerned with time, but also with sound; but it is in the realm of sound that time manifests itself most immediately and characteristically; otherwise we can only grasp it in movement, in which it is united with space.

"Everything proceeding from the profound nature of things", writes Boethius, the great transmitter of the *quadrivium,* "shows the influence of the law of number; for this is the highest prototype contained in the mind of the Founder. From this are derived the four elements, the succession of the seasons, the movement of the stars, and the course of the heavens".

It is a qualitative, and not a quantitative, conception of number that lies at the basis of medieval arithmetic. It is thus less a method of reckoning than a way of understanding the nature of number, its properties, and the uniqueness of numerical series obtained by certain constant relationships.

That each individual number does not merely represent a sum of elements, but in itself is an expression of an essential unity, appears most clearly when one transposes each number into its corresponding geometrical form: three into an equilateral triangle, four into a square, five into a regular pentagon etc. In each of these figures innumerable relationships appear, which multifariously throw light on the inner law proper to the figure in question.

THE SEVEN LIBERAL ARTS

Trivium	**Grammar** — *language*	Moon
"the expression of intellect"	**Logic** — *logic*	Mercury
	Rhetoric — *speech as art*	Venus
	Arithmetic — *number*	Sun
	Music — *time* (*harmony*)	Mars
Quadrivium "intellect"	**Geometry** — *space* (*proportion*)	Jupiter
	Astronomy — *motion* (*rhythm*)	Saturn

The connection between arithmetic, geometry and music can be seen in that the relationship of musical notes to one another is made visible in the mutual relationship of the variously long strings which produce them. This can be easily demonstrated on a monochord, which has a single string and a movable bridge.

Following Greek tradition, Boethius distinguishes three kinds of proportions: the arithmetical, in which the same interval obtains between all members of the series, as, for example: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6...; the geometrical, which progresses by means of a constant multiplication (a: c=c: b); and the harmonic, which unites the preceding two, according to the formula a: c=a-b: b-c. This is the most perfect proportion: in music it is made manifest as harmony, and in geometry as the "golden cut".

The regular relationship of different movements to one another is rhythm. The day, the year, the cycle of the moon, are the great rhythms which measure all change, and in this regard astronomy, the last member of the *quadrivium,* is the science of cosmic rhythms.

Number, proportion, harmony and rhythm are clear manifestations of unity in diversity and also clear indications of how to find the way back from diversity to unity. According to Boethius, the essence of things is intimately connected with unity: the more unity a thing possesses in itself, the more profoundly it participates in being.

In medieval science, it is less a question of knowing many things, than of having a "whole" view of existence. Its method was anything but designed for the investigation of the material world and the furthering of technology. On the contrary: it possessed the means to open the spiritual eye to the beauty of mathematical proportions, and the spiritual ear to the music of the spheres.

Book Review

A CULTURAL HISTORY OF TIBET.
By *David Snellgrove* and *Hugh Richardson*.
(Weidenfeld & Nicholson, price—U.K. only—63s.).

Review by Marco Pallis.

This splendidly laid out and illustrated volume is the joint work of two authors who, between them, combine a remarkable number of qualifications for the work they undertook. Mr. Hugh Richardson has had the rare advantage of spending some eleven years at Lhasa as representative of the Government of India—a historian by temperament, his appraisal of social and political conditions in Tibet prior to the Chinese Communist invasion has been particularly valuable; Dr. David Snellgrove, who is in charge of Tibetan studies at London University, is strong on the side of classical source-material where his knowledge of Sanskrit as well as Tibetan has been an invaluable asset. Moreover, his own researches in the field of the pre-Buddhist culture of the Tibetans have greatly enriched this book—some vivid renderings into English of early poems convey the flavour of this ancient culture as nothing else could have done.

There would be little point in describing the contents of the present work section by section; here all one needs say is that it always makes good reading despite the vast amount of detail presented. Both the man of scholarly disposition and the ordinary reader who simply wants to know something of the Tibetan way of life will find his needs catered for with accuracy as to fact and with an evident sympathy for the people who form the subject of the present study—with a sympathy that is neither indiscriminate on the one hand, nor patronising on the other.

One of the conclusions that stands out from the mass of facts concerning the daily life of the Tibetans as collected in this book is that, contrary to what pro-Communist propaganda would have us believe, the government of Tibet under the old theocratic system was mild, as human societies go, and that the generality of people remained reasonably contented under it. This does not mean that no grievances ever arose—of what human society could this be said?—but those grievances did not add up to anything meriting the label of oppression as we understand it. Whether great or small, a grievance will always seem important to the man who feels it: when I was in Tibet 1 met a man who was complaining about certain taxes; but when I told him how much I myself had to pay out annually to the Government he exclaimed "Do you mean to say that in your country people are burdened with such heavy taxation? Why, I had always been led to suppose that in England everyone is very happy, very clever and very rich!"

In regard to the prime material necessities of feeding, housing and clothing Tibetans on average were quite well provided, but without much to spare "and certainly without luxuries" absence of the latter can scarcely be called an indigence, however. Though the Tibetans have been described as "poor", their condition bore not the slightest resemblance to the grinding poverty common in the cities of Britain when I was young (the authors also make this point); certainly it is highly misleading to use the same word to cover both cases. Moreover, even the poorer members of the Tibetan population shared in many things which well-to-do people in other countries are without; in a very real sense they participated in a common culture through eye, ear and in many other ways. Beauty surrounded them on every side, both the beauty of Nature and the beauty of things fashioned by human hands. Things we would call "works of

art" and would promptly house in a museum were often to be seen in quite humble homes—a painting here, a beautifully chased metal teapot there and so on. Life in Tibet was full of variety and colour, with religion running through it as its central thread thus giving it form and meaning, just as it also gave a meaning to death. On any estimate of *real* values the standard of living of the Tibetans was anything but low; on this score, the facts assembled in the present book leave no room for doubt.

On the credit side of things, I would gladly have found in these pages some specific reference to one prominent characteristic of all Tibetans, namely their eminently enlightened attitude towards their non-human neighbours both wild and domestic, wherein they excel even by Buddhist standards. The Tibetan soul would not be what it is but for this feature which, for this reason, deserves particular stress whenever Tibetan "culture" is discussed.

Though Tibetans are in principle opposed to taking life, they do not (as people often rashly assume) abstain from meat-eating: the case of certain contemplative saints apart, to eschew meat altogether is hardly possible in Tibet for climatic reasons, though many people abstain from meat on certain days as a token of intent. In all other respects the relations between men and animals in Tibet have been almost ideal: both public opinion and the law were at one in this matter. No beating, no swearing at mules or other beasts of burden, no harrying of the animals and birds of mountain or field, no wanton cruelty by adults or children—a Tibetan child would never think of crushing an insect—, all this adds up to a marvellous showing that puts most other parts of the world to shame. One can only say that, in this respect, the old Tibet was not far short of paradise: what may have happened to the animals of Tibet since the Occupation does not bear thinking about. The step from paradise to hell is a short one in this world, though we are apt to forget it.

As was to be expected when retracing the cultural history of a people as artistically gifted as the Tibetans, a good many pages are devoted to arts and crafts of all kinds, from architecture and painting down to those crafts catering especially for domestic needs, of which metalwork is one of the chief: the Tibetans, and especially the Khambas, have exhibited such an extraordinary genius for this branch of the arts that it might perhaps have been given somewhat more detailed consideration even in a book where space was necessarily limited.

In a paragraph dealing with another craft, that of carpet-weaving which the Tibetans originally received via the Chinese, there occurs a statement which, I confess, has puzzled me greatly: among the classical motives figuring in Tibetan rugs the authors mention a "dragon and peacock" design of which a photograph is shown on page 256. So far as I know, designs depicting animals or birds were never traditional in Tibet; such designs only came in round about the year 1940 when Tibetan taste in these things was well on the way to collapse as a result of a partial commercialization of the rug industry coupled with the diffusion of chemical dyes.

One of the reasons why good examples of classical Tibetan rugs are so rare today is because about the date mentioned the richer Tibetans developed a taste for newfangled rug designs of a sensational kind, rendered all the worse by strident aniline colours and by a horrible board-like texture having nothing in common with the beautiful flexibility of the old-time products. These bemused people, whose social position turned them into arbiters of fashion, hastened to banish all their fine traditional rugs to the servants' quarters where they were quickly worn out. Thus did a once flourishing craft become vulgarized beyond recognition in the course of a few years.

As for the design that occasioned these remarks, I very much doubt any remote Persian connection; to my eye it smacks unmistakeably of all-too-recent Chinese inspiration. As the

authors rightly say, the bird is a phoenix, not a peacock; Tibetans are apt to use names of plants and animals very loosely, "lotus" and "peacock" being cases in point: it is amazing how many different species have been covered by these particular labels!

The concluding chapter of this most informative book covers developments during the 20th Century when Tibet, as a result of the Younghusband incursion of 1903-4, became drawn into the British orbit: some of the questions raised, just because they refer to such recent happenings, remain more discussible than the facts, of ancient history, or at least they could admit of supplementary comments from various points of view. One such question is the voluntary isolation of Tibet during latter times and another is the question of education, which became even more pressing as contacts with the outer world, through trade and official travel to and fro, were extended in range and duration. The authors have some cogent things to say about the failure of the Tibetan authorities to prepare in time to meet the pressures that were building up on all sides; insofar as this criticism applies to the need for new forms of schooling I think good measure required an explicit reference to the fact that Tibetan fears on the subject were far from baseless: the history of many other Asian countries shows that the kind of education developed in post-Christian Europe, with its built-in rationalist and materialist assumptions, is anything but neutral in its effects on the minds of growing children.

All one can say is that monastic opinion in Tibet, while opposing attempts to organize schools inside the country under British headmasters—the authors mention three such cases—, showed itself singularly blind to the far greater danger of sending young Tibetans away to be boarded in missionary-run schools at Darjeeling and Kalimpong: while living at the latter place I myself had many opportunities of observing the effects of religious and cultural alienation on the behaviour of children so placed; "out of sight, out of mind" seems to have been the attitude of Tibetan officials and parents alike in regard to this vital matter. The fact is that any attempt to solve the educational problem in Tibetan, not foreign, terms called for qualities of initiative coupled with discrimination that no-one at the time possessed—or rather the few who did possess these qualities were in no position to impose their views, with the result that the question was never considered in the light of tradition or of common sense either; the case went by default.

There is one other question which, in my opinion, might well have found a place in this final chapter: this is the growing evil of "absenteeism" which, during the last years of Tibet, was affecting the great landowning families to the country's serious detriment. Instead of spending much time on their estates in personal contact with their tenants as in the past, more and more members of these families were coming to prefer the low-grade excitements afforded by shopping expeditions down to Calcutta where they could also enjoy the Cinema and other still more doubtful luxuries and whence they would go back to Lhasa with their luggage stuffed with gadgets; though there were still many honourable exceptions, the trend among the great families had set strongly in this direction—a sure sign that the feudal arrangements were about to break down. As the great houses all over the country had hitherto been important centres of a culture in which all the local people shared, this subject merited more mention than it got in a history of the kind here under review: this is said in no officious spirit, since the book's two hundred and seventy pages provide such a complete picture of the Tibetan civilization from its earliest years till now that it might seem almost presumptuous for anyone to suggest that something important might still be added.

The last paragraphs of the book strike an inevitably mournful note—uninformed people are apt to speak optimistically of "preserving" such and such a culture without paying heed to

the necessary human conditions. In a sense we all are suffering the same disability: no culture worthy of the name can exist minus a religious tradition to animate it; on this score our own claims to possess a culture have worn very thin. Tibetan culture, though somewhat in decline in recent years, was still alive when the Communist invasion took place; it still could produce some living saints, and of near-saints not a few. A work like the present one is not merely a pointer to past Tibetan glories; indirectly it is a call to self-questioning on the part of all who will read with attention, wherever they may belong.

Book Review

THE LOST DIMENSION.
by *Hugh l'Anson Faussett.*
(Stuart & Watkins, 18s. 6d.).

Review by J. C. Cooper.

Man's need today is to recover the traditionally recognised God-consciousness, an extension of awareness, not in mundane knowledge, but in the dormant spiritual faculties. While his dual nature is capable of experiencing reality both in adaptation to the world of multiplicity and by realisation of unity in the spiritual realm, he is easily led astray by the world of the senses and the "morbid individualism" of the West. It should be his chief function to reconcile and unify the natural and the spiritual. It is in the wholeness of the spiritual self, which exceeds individual consciousness, that the awareness is attained through which grace is received from a power beyond the limitations of the ego.

Just as the natural and spiritual natures must be reconciled, so must thought and feeling be brought into harmony; unfeeling thought, an arid intellectualism, and unthinking emotionalism and sentimentality are equally harmful, they should serve each other in a complementary capacity. Mind and heart must not be in conflict but should live and work together in a true marriage of "habitual intimacy and reciprocity". "The underlying aim of all education should be to keep the partners to this ultimate marriage in as close and sensitive association as possible and to seize every opportunity of fostering imaginative insight, in which the mind is no longer merely an analytical or reflective instrument of the ego, but the feeling as well as the thinking organ of the larger Self". It is through the practice of self-effacement, of attentive awareness, or what Buddhism calls "mindfulness", that "each level of our being and the centres which govern them are released from the distorting grasp of the ego" and then are able to "experience life as an expression of something greater than itself".

Exploitation of any sort, whether it be the cruelty to animals some try to justify on scientific grounds, or of the earth itself, rebounds on man, not only in sickness and disease but in "spiritual impotence". Spiritual poverty is also manifested in the ways in which man seeks to escape his inward conflicts and the "dreary spectre of himself" by artificial means of relaxing his morbid tensions in sex, alcohol and drugs. Modern man is alienated from his real being by the pathological one-sidedness of rationalism: he is "menaced inwardly by the arid analytical mind and outwardly by the mechanical monsters which its ingenuity has contrived and multiplied". He must realise that he cannot exist wholly within the human situation and must acknowledge and experience the "heavenly dimension". No quantitative expansion will be effective unless he changes qualitatively. "No philosophy which excludes That which transcends our partiality and infinitely informs our finitude can either explain man convincingly to himself or really enable him to be free and enlightened". Nor can moral codes be more than partial and relative unless they are derived from a spiritual source. "The moral chaos of our times and the misuse of power is intimately involved with the denial of a metaphysical dimension". Man's greatest need today is to recover the 'lost dimension', the sense of the transcendent on the conscious level of his being.

Book Review

THE YOGI AND THE DEVOTEE.
by *Ninian Smart.*
(George Allen & Unwin, 30s.).

Review by J. C. Cooper.

Sub-titled "The Interplay between the Upanishads and Catholic Theology", the book is an expansion of lectures given in the University of Delhi and is a study of religion in general and Hinduism and Christianity in particular in the context of the devotional and intellectual aspects of religious experience. The first section examines the various developments within the Indian tradition in Jainism, Buddhism, (more particularly of the Theravada) Madhva's dualistic theism, the non-dualism of Shankara and the Ramanuja system of theistic and qualified non-dualism, showing their similarities and divergencies. It is suggested that the varieties of teachings in Indian theology can be explained by the different patterns of religious experience and that "there is some correlation between types of doctrine and patterns of religious experience". These differing patterns are largely explained by the polarity of *dhyana*, or the yogic path of contemplation, and *bhakti*, or the path of devotion and individual dependence on a personal Lord. Most religions lean towards one or the other of the two paths; Christianity being largely *bhaktic*, while Hinduism is predominantly yogic, but Mahayana Buddhism is seen as a synthesis of the two though with the *dhyana* influence remaining the stronger, as is also the case with the Advaita of Shankara. On the other hand the Madhva of Ramanuja places the emphasis on *bhakti;* but no theology can be considered adequate which does not do justice to both aspects which have their own vital functions to perform and which must "live in harmony and equality".

Professor Smart sees a need for a new approach to Natural Theology, finding the Catholic tradition over-intellectualised and rationalised, while Protestantism rejects Natural Theology in favour of revelation and salvation by faith rather than works. He also exposes the weakness of the Secularist off-shoot of Protestantism, pointing out that it must face the fact that the Christ whose message it purports to preach in no way expressed himself in secularist terms and was steeped in the religion it professes to supercede. "What is objectionable about the dogmatism of this secretly theistic secularism is that it makes use of the heart of religion while professing to be against religion. It uses 'religion' in a loaded sense, to refer to superstition, and to refer to the wrong kind of dependence upon God... While making use of *bhakti* it yet claims to transcend religion and therefore religions. While bathing in the light of the experiential dimension of religion, it pretends to evade the real challenge presented by the universality of religious experience. It addresses itself to the condition of some Western men, at the expense of neglecting the condition of other great traditions. Thus this secularist alternative does not help in the dialectical interplay between faiths".

The two aspects of religion must not merely live in harmony and equality, but must be complementary; for instance, it is necessary to balance the Christian moralistic emphasis on will with the Indian view of ignorance as being the source of man's troubles and mistakes. In Ramanuja's qualified non-dualism, with its combination of the ways of *dhyana* and *bhakti,*

the author sees an approach to Christian theism which, nevertheless, does not break with the "Upanishadic doctrine of the Holy Power, Brahman, and includes the theism of the Gita", thus providing the synthesis of the Indian tradition and a basis for "Indian Christianity" and a natural theology of religious experience equally relevant to modern Western religious needs. He also sees in a complementary relationship between Hinduism and Christianity the contribution each can make to the understanding of the other in the "doctrinal and experiential dimensions of religion" and maintains that "the Christian experience as hitherto understood can be enriched by the insights of the multitudinous traditions of India".

New Books

by J. C. Cooper.

Sub-titled "A Religious alternative to Christianity", *Honest to Man,* by Victor Skipp (Darwen Finlayson, 18s.), examines and rejects Humanism as too limited by rational inhibitions, and the Secularism of Bonhoeffer, Tillich and Robinson as too superficial and self-contradictory since it must end in a religionless Christianity "which has ceased to be centred on the sanctuary and dominated by theistic practices" and is thus "philosophically ersatz". He then turns to the tenets of the Hindu with his experience of the mystery of life and his ability to see the world "through the unitive consciousness of his childhood and his life-long love affair with creation". An appeal is made for a rediscovery of the direct, childlike awareness of the wonder of the world and a reawakening to the ever-present, but normally ignored, mystery around us, and "a life lived primarily in terms of feeling". This is not a regression to the sub-rational, but to go forward to the supra-rational in spiritual values. Rational knowledge belongs to the fallen world, redeemed knowledge must come through "an intimate and numinous apprehension of the object's true character". Man before the Fall was in a state of 'being'; through the Fall he gained knowledge which could be divorced from 'being'. The return to Paradise is the way of being which must now know itself.

The Faith of Other Men. Wilfred Cantwell Smith. (Mentor Paperback 60e.) is a thoughtful and thought-provoking study, simply written for the layman, of the way in which the world's faiths impinge upon each other and why it is necessary to understand each other's faiths if we are to gain international understanding also. The faiths of Hindus, Buddhists, Moslims, Chinese, Christians and Jews are commented upon individually. There appears, however, to be a misunderstanding of the Chinese yin-yang symbolism. It is a *hysteron proteron* to speak of yang-yin: the terms are not interchangeable. One might as well re-tell the story of Genesis with the primordial waters of chaos coming after the light of creation. Nor is it a case of "you may, if you like, put a dot of white in the middle of the black, and a black dot in the white". These symbolic embryos are essential, not optional, showing that either nature contains within itself the germ of the other.

Sub-titled "The Practice of Spiritual Healing", *Realisation of Oneness,* by Joel S. Goldsmith. (George Allen & Unwin, 25s.) is a series of essays written for students of "The Infinite Way". God, the author maintains, is Pure Being, totally detached from all evil or disaster in the world. Evil arises in living separate from God, it is impersonal and, therefore, equally has nothing to do with the individual, but merely manifests through ignorance.

In *The Paradox of Self-Denial.* W. Artro Evans (Stuart& Watkins, 2Is.) shows that ego-centricity, the concentration on self-hood, is the cause of suffering, fear and the sense of isolation in man. It is a delusion which can be overcome by denying this self with its positive and pleasure-seeking and negative and pain-avoiding outlooks. There are quotations from Oriental, O.T. and N.T. sources to prove the universality of the doctrine of self-denial. Through the death of the ego-delusion man comes to life.

Kindred Soul. (Essence of Health Publishers. Durban). Under the cover of a somewhat bizarre, pseudo-scriptural and at times gramatically slovenly presentation, with sentimental illustrations, there is some sound conservationist advice and a necessary warning against the exploitation of the material world and an insistence on man's need for realising his kinship with all forms of life.

Correspondence

ASTROLOGICAL SYMBOLISM

Sir,

I would like to call for some reservation concerning the astrological symbolism discussed in your recent article on the Symbolism of the Fish, by René Guénon, where the signs of Cancer and Capricorn were said to mark the extreme positions of the Sun's ascendent and descendent motion in the ecliptic. Cosmic symbolism is the last field in which one's data should be suspected of getting out of date, but unfortunately this is the exception which proves the rule. Owing to the precession of the equinoxes, the Sun at the end of each year always falls slightly short of the position it had reached the year before, and in the course of the past two thousand years, these small successive differences have added up almost to the extent of a whole zodiacal sign. In terms of observable facts, this means that on the 21st March at the present era, the Sun is actually just past the beginning of the sign of Pisces, and not at the beginning of the sign of Aries as it once was.

Consequently, whatever is referred to a sign in the (traditional) Zodiac must now be referred to the sign immediately before it in order, but if this is done in the present instance, none of the related considerations will still apply, as the signs of Gemini and Sagittarius call for quite different relationships. Now that the inherent meaning of each sign has been completely divulsed from its positional meaning in relation to the ecliptic, much traditional symbolism in this field must have only an historical interest. Modern astrology has sought to evade this issue by saying that the sign which the Sun is entering on 21st March is *by definition* the sign of Aries, no matter what it actually is, so that all the other signs exchange names accordingly. But anyone used to observing the unmistakable qualities of the real signs in the sky, however, will hardly be able to avoid the impression that modern astrology consists only in the manipulation of symbolic abstractions which attach to no concrete reality. The task of recasting the meanings of the Zodiac so as to accord with present-day cosmic conditions would call for a degree of wisdom and science far beyond anything possessed by Guénon himself, and is probably beyond the reach of Twentieth-Century mankind altogether.

At the present date, the Sun is rather more than half way through the sign of Taurus, and I will leave it to the reader to see if this news will serve to prevent an astrologer from awarding a "Gemini" horoscope to anyone born in the first three weeks of this month!

Coventry
8.6.69
R. BOLTON.

It is to be hoped that this interesting letter will receive a reply, although the questions raised in it have been asked and answered more than once during the last two thousand years. Needless to say, Guénon himself was fully aware of the facts mentioned by Mr. Bolton—Editor.

CHANGES IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sir,

I have noted with great interest the letters in your journal with regard to "Changes in the

Catholic Church".

As a practising Catholic I do feel in sympathy with certain points raised by these correspondents. The changes in the Mass are regrettable and in some ways it can be difficult to adjust oneself. However, I agree with the viewpoint expressed by F. W. McMorran, regarding exaggeration of some factors.

It is at this point I feel that one should examine various facts. The Mass itself is VALID. The celibacy of the priesthood has been affirmed, and the Sacraments of the Church available in their true essence for all the faithful. May I suggest that for anyone disturbed by "Progressives" in the affairs of the Church, that they will bear these things in mind.

It is in availing oneself of every rite and support that the framework of a Valid Tradition can give, that the earnest spiritual seeker will realise these truths.

Woodford, E.18,
21.6.69
MARIA WARREN.

MAN AND THE PRESENCE OF EVIL

Sir,

I would like to reply to Mr. Sherrard's letter by saying firstly that I agree with his final conclusion that it is not proof but the firmness of our conviction that decides us for one doctrine rather than another. However, as I had no intention of questioning the truth of Christian doctrine, I was somewhat perturbed that Mr. Sherrard should also have concluded that I was representing one doctrine as superior to another, when my actual intention was to show that a contradiction between doctrines does not necessarily imply the falsity of either, as it would in purely rational questions. If metaphysics is the science of the ways in which universal principles relate to one another, it clearly cannot be Christian, (or Hindu, Moslem, or anything else), for the same reasons that physics cannot, so that it must needs appear defective from any purely theological point of view. There is in fact no reason why, from a "non-human" point of view, there should be only one right answer to a theoretical question, because if Infinity is "not-many", it is equally "not-one" either, whence a metaphysical pluralism can be as adequate to its nature as monism.

That, of course, does not imply that we can place our faith in a multitude of theologies, because man as a whole is subject to conditions which only the isolated intellect can escape, and that in a more or less symbolic manner. Theology is less universal than metaphysics by reason of its form, but it is equally universal by reason of its Origin, whence the two cannot be compared, least of all under such concepts as that of relative "superiority".

This is not intended as a merely partial statement of orthodoxy, however, and in contrast with the position taken by *Studies,* may I say that if there is truly such a thing as an insoluble contradiction, it must surely be that of defending orthodoxy from a point of view not recognised by orthodoxy itself? To be joined to a tradition while implicitly denying its total adequacy seems to me a false and unintelligible position, though I have long tried to see how it could be otherwise. The traditionalist outlook itself, if taken beyond a certain point, would imply the truly profane assumption that our existence at a certain point in time is nothing but an accident to be met with remedial treatment. In reality, such things can never be accidental, being decided by the will of God, the justice of which rules that grace cannot be harder to obtain at one

time than at another, and that if its means become weaker, so will the things opposed to it. Traditionalism would in fact seem to contain an element of caricature which detains it from its object immovably, whether at a very small distance or at a great one, depending on the point of view.

The last word on this subject could well be given to the eminent traditionalist who stated that man cannot hope to reach the truth while judging that which, by definition, judges him.

Coventry
ROBERT BOLTON.

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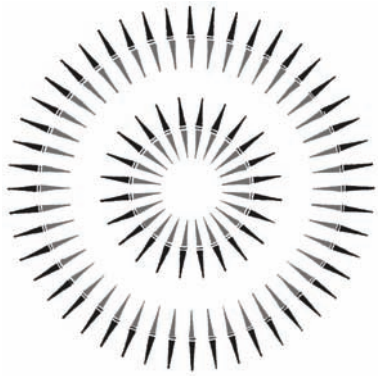

No Activity Without Truth

by
Frithjof Schuon

This paper was originally composed, by request, to be read at a congress convened for the purpose of considering the deeper causes of the crisis through which the world is passing with a view to positive remedial action in the light of religion. The congress was held in Japan in 1961, hence the number of allusions to Japanese Buddhism to be found in the text.

The Editor

THE purpose of this congress is of the most extreme importance, since it concerns, directly or indirectly, the destiny of mankind. In the face of the perils of the modern world, we ask ourselves: What must we do? This is an empty question if it be not founded upon antecedent certainties, for action counts for nothing unless it be the expression of a knowing and also of a manner of being. Before it is possible to envisage any kind of remedial activity, it is necessary to see things as they are, even if, as things turn out, it costs us much to do so; one must be conscious of those fundamental truths that reveal to us the values and proportions of things. If one's aim is to save mankind, one must first know what it means to be a man; if one wishes to defend the spirit, one must know what is spirit. "Before doing, one must be," says the proverb; but without knowing, it is impossible to do. "The soul is all that it knows," as Aristotle said.
In our time one has often heard it said that in order to fight against materialism, technocracy, and pseudo-spiritualism, a new ideology is needed, one capable of standing up to all seductions and assaults, and of galvanizing those of good will. Now, the need for an ideology or the wish to oppose one ideology to another is already an admission of weakness, and anything undertaken on this basis is false and doomed to fail. What must be done is to counter false ideologies with the truth that has always been and that we could never invent since it exists outside us and above us. The present-day world is obsessed with "dynamism", as if this constituted a "categorical imperative" and a universal remedy and as if dynamism had any meaning or positive efficacy outside truth.[2]

No man in possession of his faculties could have the intention of merely substituting one error for another, whether "dynamic" or not; before speaking of force and effectiveness one ought to speak of truth and nothing else. A truth is effective to the extent that we assimilate it; if the truth does not confer on us the strength we need, this only goes to prove that we have not really grasped it. It is not for truth to be dynamic, but for us to be dynamic in function of a true conviction. What is lacking in today's world is a penetrating and comprehensive knowledge of the nature of things; the fundamental truths are always there, but they are not obvious for those who are unwilling to accept them.

It is obvious that we are concerned here, not with the quite external data with which experimental science can possibly provide us, but with realities which that science does not and indeed cannot handle and which are transmitted through quite a different channel, notably that of mythological and metaphysical symbolism. The symbolical language of the great traditions

[2] In popular language this is called "putting the cart before the horse." We recall that during the Depression, one spoke of "creating a mystique of recovery"; as if the fatalities of industrialism were imaginary maladies, curable through autosuggestion, and as if autosuggestion could transform subjective chimeras into objective realities.

of mankind may indeed seem arduous and baffling to some minds, but it is nevertheless perfectly intelligible in the light of the orthodox commentaries; symbolism—this point must be stressed—is a real and rigorous science, and nothing can be more naïve than to suppose that its apparent naïvety springs from an immature and "prelogical" mentality. This science, which can properly be described as "sacred," quite plainly does not have to adjust itself to the modern experimental approach; the realm of revelation, of symbolism, of pure and direct intellection, stands in fact above both the physical and the psychic realms, and consequently it lies beyond the scope of so-called scientific methods. If we believe we cannot accept the language of traditional symbolism because to us it seems fanciful and arbitrary, this shows we have not yet understood that language, and certainly not that we have advanced beyond it.
Nothing is more misleading than to pretend, as is so speciously done in our day, that the religions have compromised themselves hopelessly in the course of the centuries and that their role is now over. If one knows what a religion really consists of, one also knows that the religions cannot compromise themselves and that they are independent of human abuses; in fact, nothing men do is able to affect the traditional doctrines, symbols, or rites, so long of course as human actions remain on their own level and do not attack sacred things. The fact that a man may exploit religion in order to support national or private interests in no wise affects religion as message and patrimony. In Japan, Shinto, for example, was eventually made to serve political ends, but it was in no wise compromised in itself by this fact, nor could it be. Its symbols, rites, traditions, moral code, and doctrine remain what they always were, from the "Divine Epoch" down to our own times; and as for an exhausting of the religions, one might speak of this if all men had by now become saints or Buddhas. In that case only could it be admitted that the religions were exhausted, at least as regards their forms.

Tradition speaks to each man the language he can comprehend, provided he wishes to listen. The latter proviso is crucial, for tradition, let it be repeated, cannot "become bankrupt"; rather is it of the bankruptcy of man that one should speak, for it is he that has lost all intuition of the supernatural and the sense of the sacred. It is man who has let himself be deceived by the discoveries and inventions of a falsely totalitarian science; that is to say, a science that does not recognize its own proper limits and for that same reason misses whatever lies beyond those limits.

Fascinated alike by scientific phenomena and by the erroneous conclusions he draws from them, man has ended by being submerged by his own creations; he will not realize that a traditional message is situated on quite a different plane or how much more real that plane is, and he allows himself to be dazzled all the more readily since scientism provides him with all the excuses he wants in order to justify his own attachment to the world of appearances and to his ego and his consequent flight from the presence of the Absolute in any form.

People speak of a duty to make oneself useful to society, but they neglect to ask the question whether that society does or does not in itself possess the usefulness that a human society normally should exhibit, for if the individual must be useful to the collectivity, the latter for its part must be useful to the individual, and one must never lose sight of the fact that there exists no higher usefulness than that which envisages the final ends of man. By its divorce from traditional truth—as primarily perceivable in that "flowering forth" that revelation is—society forfeits its own justification, doubtless not in a perfunctorily animal sense, but in the human sense. This human quality implies that the collectivity, as such, cannot be the aim and purpose of the individual but that, on the contrary, it is the individual who, in his solitary station before the Absolute and in the exercise of his supreme function, is the aim and purpose of the

collectivity. Man, whether he be conceived in the plural or the singular, or whether his function be direct or indirect, is like "a fragment of absoluteness" and is made for the Absolute; he has no other choice before him. In any case, one can define the social in terms of truth, but one cannot define truth in terms of the social.

Reference is often made to the "selfishness" of those who busy themselves with salvation, and it is said that instead of saving oneself one ought to save others; but this is an absurd kind of argument, since either it is impossible to save others, or else it is possible to save them but only in virtue of our own salvation or of our own effort toward salvation. No man has ever done a service to anyone else whatsoever by remaining "altruistically" attached to his own defects. He who is capable of being a saint but fails to become such certainly will save no one else; it is sheer hypocrisy to conceal one's own weakness and spiritual lukewarmness behind a screen of good works believed to be indispensable and of absolute value.

Another error, closely related to the one just pointed out, consists in supposing that contemplative spirituality is opposed to action or renders a man incapable of acting, a belief that is belied by all the sacred scriptures and especially by the Bhagavad Gita. In Japan the example of saints such as Shotoku Taishi, Hojo Tokimune, Shinran Shonin, and Nichiren proves—if proof is needed—that spirituality is neither opposed to action nor dependent upon it, and also that spirituality leads to the most perfect action whenever circumstances require it, just as it can also, if necessary, turn away from the urge to action when no immediate aim imposes the need for it.

To cut off man from the Absolute and reduce him to a collective phenomenon is to deprive him of all right to existence qua man. If man deserves that so many efforts should be spent on his behalf, this cannot be simply because he exists, eats, and sleeps or because he likes what is pleasant and hates what is unpleasant, for the lowest of the animals share this same modality without therefore being considered our equals and deserving to be treated accordingly. To the objection that man is distinguished from the animals by his intelligence, we will answer that it is precisely this intellectual superiority that the social egalitarianism of the moderns fails to take into account, so much so that an argument that is not applied consistently to men cannot then be turned against the animals. To the objection that man is distinguished from animals by his "culture" we will answer that the completely profane and worldly "culture" in question is nothing more than a specifically dated pastime of the human animal; that is to say, this culture can be anything one pleases, while waiting for the human animal to suppress it altogether. The capacity for absoluteness that characterizes human intelligence is the only thing conferring on man a right of primacy; it is only this capacity that gives him the right to harness a horse to a cart. Tradition, by its otherworldly character, manifests the real superiority of man; tradition alone is a "humanism" in the positive sense of the word. Anti-traditional culture, by the very fact that it is without the sense of the Absolute and even the sense of truth—for these two things go together—could never confer on man that unconditional value and those indisputable rights that modern humanitarianism attributes to him *a priori* and without any logical justification.
The same could also be expressed in another way: When people speak of "culture", they generally think of a host of contingencies, of a thousand ways of uselessly agitating the mind and dispersing one's attention, but they do not think of that principle that alone confers lawfulness on human works; this principle is the transcendent truth, whence springs all genuine culture. It is impossible to defend a culture effectively—such as the traditional culture of Japan, which is one of the most precious in the world—without referring it back to its spiritual principle and without seeking therein the sap that supports life. Agreement as between cultures means

agreement on spiritual principles; for truth, despite great differences of expression, remains one.

Many people of our time reason along the following lines: The religions—or the differing spiritual perspectives within a given religion—contradict one another, therefore they cannot all be right; consequently none is true. This is exactly as if one said: Every individual claims to be "I", thus they cannot all be right; consequently none is "I". This example shows the absurdity of the anti-religious argument, by recalling the real analogy between the inevitable external limitation of religious language and the no less inevitable limitation of the human ego. To reach this conclusion, as do the rationalists who use the above argument, amounts in practice to denying the diversity of the knowing subjects as also the diversity of aspects in the object to be known. It amounts to pretending that there are neither points of view nor aspects; that is to say, that there is but a single man to see a mountain and that the mountain has but a single side to be seen. The error of the subjectivist and relativist philosophers is a contrary one. According to them, the mountain would alter its nature according to whoever viewed it; at one time it might be a tree and at another a stream. Only traditional metaphysics does justice both to the rigor of objectivity and to the rights of subjectivity; it alone is able to explain the unanimity of the sacred doctrines as well as the meaning of their formal divergences.

In sound logic, to observe the diversity of religions should give rise to the opposite conclusion, namely: since at all periods and among all peoples religions are to be found that unanimously affirm one absolute and transcendent reality, as also a beyond that receives us according to our merit or knowledge—or according to our demerit and ignorance—there is reason to conclude that every religion is right, and all the more so since the greatest men that have walked the earth have borne witness to spiritual truths. It is possible to admit that all the materialists have been mistaken, but it is not possible to admit that all the founders of religions, all the saints and sages, have been in error and have led others into error; for if one had to admit that error lay with them and not with those who contradicted them, mankind itself would cease to offer any interest, so that a belief in progress or in the possibility of progress would become doubly absurd. If the Buddha or Christ or a Plotinus or a Kobo Daishi were not intelligent, then no one is intelligent, and there is no such thing as human intelligence.

The diversity of religions, far from proving the falseness of all the doctrines concerning the supernatural, shows on the contrary the supra-formal character of revelation and the formal character of ordinary human understanding; the essence of revelation—or enlightenment—is one, but human nature requires diversity. Dogmas or other symbols may contradict one another externally, but they concur internally.

Howbeit, it is easy to foresee the following objection: even if it be admitted that there is a providential and inescapable cause underlying the diversity of religions and even their exoteric incompatibility in certain cases, ought we not then to try to move beyond these differences by creating a single universal religion? To this it must be answered first that these differences have at all times been transcended in the various esotericisms and second that a religion is not something one can create for the asking. Every attempt of this kind would be an error and a failure, and this is all the more certain inasmuch as the age of the great revelations closed centuries ago. No new religion can see the light of day in our time for the simple reason that time itself, far from being a sort of uniform abstraction, on the contrary alters its value according to every phase of its development. What was still possible a thousand years ago is so no longer, for we are now living in the age known to Buddhist tradition as "the latter times". However, what we are able to do and must do is to respect all the religions—but without any confusion of

forms and without asking to be fully understood by every believer—while waiting till Heaven itself wills to unite those things that now are scattered. For we find ourselves on the threshold of great upheavals, and what man himself has neither the power nor the right to realize will be realized by Heaven, when the time for it shall be ripe.

The world is full of people who complain that they have been seeking but have not found; this is because they have not known how to seek and have only looked for sentimentalities of an individualistic kind. One often hears it said that the priests of such and such a religion are no good or that they have brought religion itself to naught, as if this were possible or as if a man who serves his religion badly did not betray himself exclusively; men quite forget the timeless value of symbols and of the graces they vehicle. The saints have at all times suffered from the inadequacy of certain priests; but far from thinking of rejecting tradition itself for that reason, they have by their own sanctity compensated for whatever was lacking in the contemporary priesthood. The only means of "reforming" a religion is to reform oneself. It is indispensable to grasp the fact that a rite vehicles a far greater value than a personal virtue. A personal initiative that takes on a religious form amounts to nothing in the absence of a traditional framework such as alone can justify that initiative and turn it to advantage, whereas a rite at least will always keep fresh the sap of the whole tradition and hence also its principial efficacy—even if men do not know how to profit thereby.

If things were otherwise or if spiritual values were to be found outside the sacred traditions, the function of the saints would have been, not to vivify their religion, but rather to abolish it, and there would no longer be any religion left on earth, or else on the contrary there would be religions by the million, which amounts to the same thing; and these millions of personal pseudo-religions would themselves be changing at every minute. The religions and their orthodox developments—such as the various traditional schools of Buddhism—are inalienable and irreplaceable legacies to which nothing essential can be added and from which nothing essential can be subtracted. We are here, not in order to change these things, but in order to understand them and realize them in ourselves.

Today two dangers are threatening religion: from the outside, its destruction—be it only as a result of its general desertion—and from the inside, its falsification. The latter, with its pseudo-intellectual pretensions and its fallacious professions of "reform", is immeasurably more harmful than all the "superstition" and "corruption" of which, rightly or wrongly, the representatives of the traditional patrimonies have been accused; this heritage is absolutely irreplaceable, and in the face of it men as such are of no account. Tradition is abandoned, not because people are no longer capable of understanding its language, but because they do not wish to understand it, for this language is made to be understood till the end of the world; tradition is falsified by reducing it to flatness on the plea of making it more acceptable to "our time", as if one could—or should—accommodate truth to error. Admittedly, a need to reply to new questions and new forms of ignorance can always arise. One can and must explain the sacred doctrine, but not at the expense of that which gives it its reason for existing, that is to say, not at the expense of its truth and effectiveness. There could be no question, for instance, of adding to the Mahayana or of replacing it by a new vehicle, such as would necessarily be of purely human invention; for the Mahayana—or shall we say Buddhism?—is infinitely sufficient for those who will give themselves the trouble to look higher than their own heads.

One point that has been already mentioned is worth recalling now because of its extreme importance. It is quite out of the question that a "revelation", in the full sense of the word, should arise in our time, one comparable, that is to say, to the imparting of one of the great

sutras or any other primary scripture; the day of revelations is past on this globe and was so already long ago. The inspirations of the saints are of another order, but these could in any case never falsify or invalidate tradition or intrinsic orthodoxy by claiming to improve on it or even to replace it, as some people have suggested. "Our own time" possesses no quality that makes it the measure or the criterion of values in regard to that which is timeless. It is the timeless that, by its very nature, is the measure of our time, as indeed of all other times; and if our time has no place for authentic tradition, then it is self-condemned by that very fact. The Buddha's message, like every other form of the one and only truth, offers itself to every period with an imperishable freshness. It is as true and as urgent in our day as it was two thousand years ago; the fact that mankind finds itself in the "latter days", the days of forgetfulness and decline, only makes that urgency more actual than ever. In fact, there is nothing more urgent, more actual, or more real than metaphysical truth and its demands. It alone can of its own right fill the vacuum left in the contemporary mentality—especially where young people are concerned—by social and political disappointments on the one hand and by the bewildering and indigestible discoveries of modern science on the other. At the risk of repetition let the following point be stressed, for to doubt it would be fatal: to search for an "ideology" in the hopes of filling up that vacuum—as if it were simply a matter of plugging a hole—is truly a case of "putting the cart before the horse". It is a case of subordinating truth and salvation to narrowly utilitarian and in any case quite external ends, as if the sufficient cause of truth could be found somewhere below truth. The sufficient cause of man is to know the truth, which exists outside and above him; the truth cannot depend for its meaning and existence on the wishes of man. The very word "ideology" shows that truth is not the principal aim people have in mind; to use that word shows that one is scarcely concerned with the difference between true and false and that what one is primarily seeking is a mental deception that will be comfortable and workable, or utilizable for purposes of one's own choosing, which is tantamount to abolishing both truth and intelligence.

Outside tradition there can assuredly be found some relative truths or views of partial realities, but outside tradition there does not exist a doctrine that catalyzes absolute truth and transmits liberating notions concerning total reality. Modern science is not a wisdom but an accumulation of physical experiments coupled with many unwarrantable conclusions; it can neither add nor subtract anything in respect of the total truth or of mythological or other symbolism or in respect of the principles and experiences of the spiritual life.

One of the most insidious and destructive illusions is the belief that depth psychology (or in other words psychoanalysis) has the slightest connection with spiritual life, whose teachings it persistently falsifies by confusing inferior elements with superior. We cannot be too wary of all these attempts to reduce the values vehicled by tradition to the level of phenomena supposed to be scientifically controllable. The spirit escapes the hold of profane science in an absolute fashion. It is not the positive results of experimental science that one is out to deny (always assuming that they really are positive in a definite sense) but the absurd claim of science to cover everything possible, the whole of truth, the whole of the real; this quasi-religious claim to totality moreover proves the falseness of the point of departure. If one takes into account the very limited realm within which science moves, the least one can say is that nothing justifies the so-called scientific denials of the beyond and of the Absolute.

If it is essential to distinguish between the realm of religion or traditional wisdom and that of experimental science, it is also essential to distinguish between the intellect, which is intuitive, and reason, which is discursive; reason is a limited faculty, whereas the intellect opens out upon the Universal and the Divine. For metaphysical wisdom, reason only possesses a dialectical,

not an enlightening, usefulness; reason is not capable of grasping in a concrete way that which lies beyond the world of forms, though reason is able to reach further than imagination. All ratiocination condemns itself to ignorance from the moment it claims to deal with the roots of our existence and of our spirit.

We all know that the need to account for things in terms of causality, as felt by modern man, is apt to remain unsatisfied in the face of the ancient mythologies; but the fact is that attempts to explain the mythological order with the aid of reasonings that are necessarily arbitrary and vitiated by all sorts of prejudices are bound to fail in any case. Symbolisms reveal their true meaning only in the light of the contemplative intellect, which is analogically represented in man by the heart and not by the brain. Pure intellect—or intuition and supra-rational intelligence—can flower only in the framework of a traditional orthodoxy, by reason of the complementary and therefore necessary relationship between intellection and revelation.

The fundamental intention of every religion or wisdom is the following: first, discernment between the real and the unreal, and then concentration upon the real. One could also formulate this intention in these terms: truth and the way, *prajñā* and *upayā*, doctrine and its corresponding method. One must know that the Absolute or the Infinite—whatever may be the names given it by respective traditions—is what gives meaning to our existence, just as one must know that the essential content of life is the consciousness of this supreme reality, a fact that explains the part to be played by continual prayer; in a word we live to realize the Absolute. To realize the Absolute is to think of it, under one form or another as indicated by revelation and tradition, by a form such as the Japanese *nembutsu* or the Tibetan *Om mani padme hum* or the Hindu *japa-yoga*, not forgetting the Christian and Islamic invocations, such as the Jesus Prayer and the *dhikr* of the dervishes. Here one will find some very different modalities, not only as between one religion and another but also within the fold of each religion, as can be shown, for instance, by the difference between Jodo Shinshu and Zen. However this may be, it is only on the basis of a genuine spiritual life that we can envisage any kind of external action with a view to defending truth and spirituality in the world.

All the traditional doctrines agree in this: from a strictly spiritual point of view, though not necessarily from other much more relative and therefore less important points of view, mankind is becoming more and more corrupted; the ideas of "evolution", of "progress", and of a single "civilization" are in effect the most pernicious pseudo-dogmas the world has ever produced, for there is no newfound error that does not eagerly attach its own claims to the above beliefs. We say not that evolution is nonexistent, but that it has a partial and most often a quite external applicability; if there is evolution on the one hand, there are degenerations on the other, and it is in any case radically false to suppose that our ancestors were intellectually, spiritually, or morally our inferiors. To suppose this is the most childish of "optical delusions"; human weakness alters its style in the course of history, but not its nature. A question that now arises is as follows: Seeing that humanity is decaying inescapably and seeing that the final crisis with its cosmic consummation as foretold in the sacred books is inevitable, *what then can we do*? Does an external activity still have any meaning?

To this it must be answered that an affirmation of the truth, or any effort on behalf of truth, is never in vain, even if we cannot measure beforehand the value or the outcome of such an activity. Moreover we have no choice in the matter. Once we know the truth, we must live in it and fight for it; but what we must avoid at any price is to let ourselves bask in illusions. Even if, at this moment, the horizon seems as dark as possible, one must not forget that in a perhaps unavoidably distant future the victory is ours and cannot but be ours. Truth by its very nature

conquers all obstacles: *Vincit omnia veritas.*

Therefore, every initiative taken with a view to harmony between the different cultures and for the defense of spiritual values is good, if it has as its basis a recognition of the great principial truths and consequently also a recognition of tradition or of the traditions.

"When the inferior man hears talk about Tao, he only laughs at it; it would not be Tao if he did not laugh at it.... [T]he self-evidence of Tao is taken for a darkness." These words of Lao-tzu were never more timely than now. Errors cannot but be, as long as their quite relative possibility has not reached its term; but for the Absolute errors have never been and never shall be. On their own plane they are what they are, but it is the Changeless that shall have the final say.

Gandhi's Theory of Society and Our Times

by
A. K. Saran

GANDHI is a world-historical figure. Though he refused to formulate a religious or philosophical system, he did stand, throughout his life, for certain ideas, which are nothing if not of universal significance. In order to see this clearly, let us review, very briefly, the nature and context of the challenge to which his life and thought were a dedicated response.

Within the limited scope of this essay, it is not possible to begin at the beginning of Gandhi's political career in South Africa; we cannot even review his role in the Indian independence movement in any systematic way. All that can be done here is to indicate some salient features of India's freedom struggle at the time Gandhi entered the scene as a major figure after World War I.

The Indian freedom movement was a number of different things at the same time. It was a reform, a renaissance and a nationalist movement. At the same time it was also a movement for religious revivalism under the name of Hindu nationalism. At the time Gandhi came on the Indian political scene, it was dominated by Gokhale and Tilak: Gokhale leading the reformist and secularist or non-religious form of nationalism and Tilak leading the religio-social revivalist interpretation of the nationalist movement. The tension that developed between Gokhale and Tilak, as leaders of the Indian freedom struggle, reflected something far deeper than a clash of personalities. It signified the essential incompatibility between the idea of nationalism and Hinduism, and for that matter, Islam. In other words, while Hindu nationalism or Islamic nationalism is a contradiction in terms, both nationalism and Hinduism had necessarily to be emphasized by the anti-Imperialist forces in the Indian political and social movement. At one level, Hinduism and Hindu society are inseparable and hence to strengthen or weaken the one has profound significance for the other. Now Hindu society being a caste society, an outcaste, though a Hindu is really an outsider and hence he can be easily lured into other religions. For this reason certain reforms became necessary and urgent, for Hinduism at this time was being threatened not only by Christianity and Islam, but also by Western rationalism. But this reform of Hinduism had at the same time to be a kind of revivalism, for that was the only way to unify, to get a collective identity and to rouse and gear the society to act against foreign rule. In other words, in the specific historical context of India under modern Western imperial rule Reformist and Modernist forces could work only within very narrow limitations. Thus Gokhale's correct non-religious interpretation of nationalism was bound to develop serious inner tensions in the Indian situation—for given the history of Hindu-Muslim relations, it was impossible to forge a truly national identity in terms of a common historical past. Hence there was not only the appeal, but a kind of irrefutability in Tilak's idea of nationalism as the completion of Sivaji's task—an interpretation, however, which can have meaning only within Hinduism and must be rejected by the Muslims. This inner schism in the freedom-cum-nationalist movement of India has persisted all the way down to our time. After Gokhale and Tilak, the two inconsistent aspects of the nationalist movement were represented by Nehru and Patel, and even though Patel died in 1950 the idealogical forces which he represented are very much alive and strong.

The immediate successor of both Gokhale and Tilak was, of course, Gandhi. How did he heal, or at any rate, deal with this inner schism?

Gandhi's response to this crucial challenge was threefold. He radically changed the basis,

the scope and the nature of the Indian freedom movement.

Basis: With Gandhi the Indian National Congress became a people's party. At any rate, it ceased to be confined to upper and middle educated classes.

Scope: He universalized the scope of Indian politics, emphasizing the world-historical character of the Indian struggle as representing the struggle of the oppressed and the exploited against all oppressors and exploiters. He thought of himself as fighting for a better world-order and not simply for a free India. Indeed, until comparatively late in his political career, he did not emphasize so much the freedom of India, as he did a reformed British Commonwealth in which India could be a self-respecting and valuable partner. In his own view, the Indian movement was not national but universal-human—one global in scope and paralleling the Marxist movement.

Nature: Gandhi changed the nature of Indian politics by spiritualizing it. By this I refer to the Gandhian principles of Truth and Non-violence as the basis of social order and the instruments of socio-political dynamics. In other words, Gandhi stood for the substitution of Power politics by Goodness politics in terms of his doctrine of the integrality and symmetry of ends and means. Gandhi repudiated the idea that morality is simply an individual affair; on the contrary he emphasized the idea that a moral and spiritual social order was a *sine qua non* for human life at its proper level. Accordingly, he firmly believed in and straightforwardly advocated a socio-economic order and a political system based on the traditional virtues: *Satya* (Truth), *Ahimsa* (Non-violence), *Aparigraha* (non-possession), *Asteya* (Non-covetousness), and *Brahmacharya* (Self-control of the senses and the sex impulse particularly).

The significance of this threefold Gandhian revolution can hardly be exaggerated. It is crucial not only for understanding the nature, the success and the failure of the Indian freedom movement but also and no less importantly, for understanding the relevance of Gandhism to contemporary India and the world. Suffer me to offer a brief analysis of this Gandhian revolution:

First, by emphasizing the people, their needs and aspirations, he at one stroke cut through the Gokhale/Tilak or the Rationalism/Tradition, or the Reform/Revival antitheses. To the masses Hindu or Muslim or Sikh or Buddhist or Christian religion was real and meaningful: thus by emphasizing the truth in Hinduism and Islam, indeed in all religions, and by extending political thought and action from the classes to the common people, the peasantry, he modified in a major way the nature of both Indian Nationalism and Hindu revivalism. He sought to accomplish the dual transformation by taking the religiousness and misery of the Indian common people as the given basis for a community of fate; the specific religious differences between Hinduism and Islam he attempted to resolve by a transcendent religion, or rather by a spiritual catholicism. In effect, Gandhi sought to minimize the twin problems of unity and identity of India which, he rightly thought, were at the root of the tension between nationalism and revivalism. His method was to universalize the perspective for the identity problem, so that the specific burden of India's history would not be felt as a dead weight. This was reinforced by the effect of his second revolution, namely the universalization of the freedom struggle, making his ideal essentially the foundation of a new stage in human history. It thus undermines the idea of nationalism which is both parochial and retrograde when viewed independently of its colonial or anti-imperialist context.

The viability of the second revolution depends in fact on his third revolution: the spiritualisation of politics. This is the foundation of Gandhi's thought. If there can be a goodness politics, then the idea of nation-states can be used creatively: in the absence of a spiritual social-

political order, as distinguished from a religious one, the concept of nation must be maintained for the solution of the identity problem, that is if a universal context is not found, one able to replace the imperial context. Religion and Communism have supplied so far the supra-national context for unity and identity. In his idea of spiritualization of politics Gandhi seeks to provide a renewal and a reinterpretation of the religious context which will at the same time supersede the Communist context. He attempted to do this by going beyond both the modern Western theory of the State as the embodiment of the will of the people, and the Hindu theory of State as the embodiment of the Dharma. He thought of non-violence and truth as the foundation of State as well as of social order, interpreting these as universal spiritual principles independent of all formulated religions. The idea, however, led him ultimately to the theory of a stateless society—a development that paralleled the Marxist theory of the withering away of the state. Though Gandhi was never a Marxist, this parallelism is not a mere chance convergence: it is inherent in all universalization of politics. Another concept that Gandhi evolved in his effort to provide a non-Marxian solution to the inherent problems of modern politico-social theory is that of trusteeship. In Gandhian thinking it has two fundamental roles: socio-economically, the concept of trusteeship is designed to prevent a productive society from becoming acquisitive and exploitative, and politically it is meant to resolve a major difficulty in the modern Western theory of democracy. The difficulty is this: the relationship between the State (Ruler) and the People (Ruled) in a democratic socio-political system ought not to be that of guardian and ward, doctor-patient, educator-educated. However, in modern democratic societies this is precisely the nature of the relation between the State and the people. Indeed the key institution of modern democratic process, viz. leadership may, strictly speaking, be said to be undemocratic, a point often indirectly conceded through opposition to what is called the cult of personality and through proposals for collective leadership. Indeed, the more technologically advanced a society is, the more have the people to be managed, the greater the need for protection, and thus the relation between the people and the State tends to be increasingly that of ward and guardian.

The Gandhian theory of trusteeship tries to resolve this dilemma by replacing the concept of representation by that of trusteeship. However, for this change of concepts to have more than a terminological significance it is necessary that the idea of trusteeship be an organic part of the Gandhian theory of a society based both individually and collectively on the virtues of self-suffering and non-possession. This approach was profound, broad-based, farsighted, and a failure. Gandhi himself was the most self-aware, anguished and undespairing witness to the grandeur and misery of his life's work: the grandeur, transfer of power to India, largely through a non-violent freedom struggle; the misery, the communal disharmony culminating in the partition of India.

Gandhi wanted two things: the restoration of a spiritual or normal social order in India and by extension in the world, and secondly to free India from foreign rule; this freedom according to Gandhi was a pre-condition for his first goal.

He did not succeed. For Gandhi the partition robbed India's freedom of its full truth and the socio-historical process culminating in the post-independence Indian society signified the failure of his main mission: the spiritual renewal of man.

Too saintly to lose faith and too great to feel frustrated, Gandhi nevertheless knew that his vision had suffered a great setback; indeed, he knew this with a clarity rare among the great.

II

If Gandhi was simply a survival produced by the liberal, civilized British rule in India, if his cardinal spiritual quest and mission were in the last analysis a clever Hindu's embellishments of his political struggle and hence a distraction for the social scientist, if Gandhi was just a parochial figure trying to do something good to the Hindu character under colonial rule—in a word, if the failure of Gandhi and the failure of the Gandhian idea are synonymous, then Gandhi's life and thought are irrelevant to our times. And if I, for one, believed this, I would see no reason to be interested in talking at all about Gandhi or Gandhism.

If, however, the threefold Gandhian revolution about which we have been speaking constitutes a real revolution with world-historical significance, if Gandhi was *not* just a colonial leader who happened to achieve some kind of world fame, but, on the contrary, is a universal figure with relentless and steadfast concern with the destiny of man, then the central question raised by Gandhi, his thought, life and work, is the question of its relevance to our times and this is nothing else or no less than this: Has the voice of sanity any chance at all against the dark, demonic powers of our times?

It is a terrible question. Apart from the fact that like everybody else I am deeply involved in the question, I have no competence to answer it. What I have to say in the rest of the space available to me is nothing more than an analysis of the question itself. Let me repeat, the observations that follow make no claim to answering the question that has just been put. All I attempt to do is to explore a little the implications of this question from the Gandhian standpoint. I said that to ask the question of the contemporary relevance of Gandhism is really to ask the question about society and survival. To see this, and to understand the question of Gandhism's contemporary relevance in its proper perspective, it is essential to speak briefly about the Gandhian vision of a normal society—the kind of society for which Gandhi lived and died.

Gandhi did not believe in the coexistence of moral man and immoral society. In fact, one of his most important contributions to political thought and action is the idea that ways of moral action and resistance could be transferred from the individual to the collective plane and be used as powerful forms of political action. Indeed, the technique of *Satyagraha* (fast, civil disobedience, *dharna*[1] and other variants) presuppose this basic idea. Gandhi believed that Society could be, and should be moral. Did he also hold that man as an individual needed a moral society in order to be moral himself? I think this is a fundamental point in understanding Gandhi's sociological thought. Let us therefore ponder it a moment.

Gandhi was a great believer in the virtues of compromise, not only in the political but in almost all spheres; it was part of his political theory and practice to lay the greatest stress on sincerity and the purity of the personal lives of every political actor. In a more general way, too, he gave all possible emphasis and attention to political participants as persons. Looking at his thought and practice from this point of view, it may look as if Gandhi did not rule out the possibility of moral men in a not-so-moral society. In further support of such an interpretation of Gandhi's thought, it could be pointed out that the ultimate orientation of Gandhi's political action was towards effecting a change of heart of the other party. Both his thinking and the forms of political action that he developed imply, it may be argued, a cumulative process of social change.

[1] This word may be roughly translated as "sit in".

All this is correct. However, I would like to argue that this does not invalidate my thesis that Gandhi did not think that individually man could be moral in a non-moral, immoral or unjust society, that is, he did not believe in the Niebuhrian antithesis of moral man and immoral society. I want to show that in any analysis of his thought and work the coexistence (of moral man and immoral society) theory would be seriously misleading.

Gandhi did place man as person in the forefront. But this was only a powerful and realistic way of focussing attention on what may be called the principle of normalcy.

A normal society is simply a society. Opposed to it are what have been called mass-society and mass man—and mass—or what is currently called "pop" culture. The mass and the society used to be contrary to each other. They have been hyphenated today.

A society has an intelligible order and an overall purpose. A mass lacks both. It follows that members of a society have their own place and function in it. Not so in a mass.

A society whose members are humans is a human society. When man is called a social animal, the reference obviously is to his innate love of order and purpose and not to any "herd" instinct or some "natural" inclination for the company of his own kind. For these propensities are by no means exclusively human. Man, unlike many other animals, cannot suffer to live merely as a unit, for the love of order and purpose are given to him in his self-consciousness.

Those who talk of mass-society certainly recognize the distinction between mass and society. They are often aware—implicitly, if not always explicitly,—that mass undermines society. They understand that the mass-man is not human—at least not fully human. They had learnt to admire certain things, certain states of affairs, certain states of mind which they conceptualized as civilization. They now realize that the mass will destroy this civilization more effectively, in fact, than any barbarian onslaught could ever do. They are not unaware that the barbarian has entered the soul. Somewhere at some time modern man was lured into the magician's bargain: Give up your soul, get power over everything in return. Anxiously aware of the deadening influence of this demonic deal, modern thinkers are nonetheless too much under its spell to believe in the possibility of its total repudiation. Through a variety of ideas they search for a synthesis of mass and society, that is, of the infra-human and the human: they are exploring the possibility of a mass that will have just enough of the social to save it from withering away.

Gandhi wanted to break the spell. He would disown and destroy this diabolic bond. Herein lies the basic difference between Gandhi's critique of modern society and those of most other modern thinkers. And what is even more important, this also defines the difference between Gandhi and Gandhism in India today.

Gandhi was against "mass-society". He was uncompromisingly opposed to the modern industrial technological society and civilization. He knew what forces, what propensities underlie such a socio-cultural system; and unlike most contemporary thinkers and leaders, he remained relentlessly consistent and thoroughgoing in his opposition to these forces. He went to the root of the matter and attacked the very concept of a rising standard of living. He could see most clearly what this really meant, viz., a continually rising standard of consumption even to the point when rapid, built-in obsolescence and wanton destruction become the controlling principles of the economy. In opposition to this economic theory, he boldly set up the theory of *Aparigraha* (non-possession, non-acquisitiveness) and the minimisation of wants. The principle of *Aparigraha*, it is to be noted, is one that emphasizes the present and hence it severely limits the cumulative process and thus undermines a capitalist as well as a State-planned 'Socialist' production system. Indeed, the ideas of minimal wants and of non-possession pre-suppose a world outlook that is quite incompatible with the currently accepted ideology for a planned society.

It is in this context that Gandhi's emphasis on the individual person should be understood. From the Gandhian point of view the modern industrial-technological mass-society is really a collectivity of sub-humans. Gandhi thought steadfastly in terms of a society of men: a society in which there will be no mechanical equality, but at the same time nobody will be forced to live at a subhuman level; a society in which every member will be a full member according to his own place and specific competence.

Contrary to a prevalent interpretation, I think that Gandhi did not believe in the individual as the source of social change. Absolutely believing in God and Providential guidance, Gandhi thought that man could only be an instrument of God's will. He emphasized purity of heart and mind so that one could attain to the highest point of human creativity and get a correct intimation of the divine will and act efficiently according to it. Gandhi believed that a suprahuman order was the common ground of both man and society. Given this frame of reference, the antithesis of man and society could not arise, unless one held, as Gandhi *did not,* that a social order could not be built on moral and metaphysical principles like truth and non-violence. In fact, a whole social order based on truth and non-violence—and not merely individual truthfulness and non-violence—is the very cornerstone of Gandhian sociology.

In summary form, the Gandhian socio-economic system can be described in terms of the following ideas and principles:

Means and ends should be seen as parts of a whole which has a transcendental reference.

The productive system should be based on the principle of optimal minimisation of needs (and not on that of multiplication of wants).

The economy should be life-centred (and not one that is oriented to commodity-production). This means that the socio-economic system should operate on the principle of a metaphysically grounded optimum (and not on the principle of maximisation).

Consequently, it is to be a non-exploitative economy based on simple and limited technology.

Social and economic organization should be decentralized based on the principle of optimum autonomy.

Truth and non-violence should form the foundation of the political order.

Satyagraha (the determined pursuit of truth or the right path) should be the chief form of political vigilance and protest.

Both the social and economic systems should be hierarchical, non-competitive and non-acquisitive, based on the principle of trusteeship. Ideally it should be a stateless society.

* * *

What has been the impact on our times of Gandhian economics and sociology, or better, of Gandhi's life and thought as a whole? The question has two parts, the first about the role of Gandhi's ideas in the independence movement of India and the second about the relevance of Gandhism to Free India and to our times in general.

The role of Gandhi and his ideas in the Indian freedom movement is greatly important; however to determine the precise nature of his role and its relation with other factors and forces operating to shape that movement is by no means an easy task. It requires difficult and careful analysis which I cannot attempt here. However, it must be pointed out that even though throughout his life Gandhi thought and worked in the context of a relentless struggle against imperialist forces, the question of the contemporary relevance of his thought is not bound by

this historical context. In other words, the question of the validity of Gandhism is inseparable from that of its universality.

I say this for two closely related reasons. First, Gandhi's thought and work developed in the context of an encounter between India and the West, tradition and modernity, and his stand was not simply that the Indians should not be forced to accept Western civilisation through British rule; much more important was his conviction that the modern industrial-technological civilisation is not good for man, Eastern or Western. He increasingly made India's freedom struggle something subsidiary to a struggle and movement for a normal world society. Second, the principles on which he based his political action as well as those in terms of which he constructed his vision of free India were universal by their very nature; and Gandhi always made it clear that he did not regard his fundamental ideas as merely matters of policy or suitable strategy in the Indian freedom struggle.

To return to the question of the impact of Gandhism. In my opinion, Gandhi's life and thought were completely repudiated by Independent India. I am aware that Nehru often denied this but I do not know what he was talking about. If the present interpretation of the essentials of Gandhi's social, political and economic thought is correct, the state-planned centralized industrial-technological society which India adopted as her goal is quite contrary to Gandhi's vision of free India. As to the political order, non-violence and truth have not at all been accepted as its foundation. In fact, today there is a great deal of violence simply in running the Government: much more than any democratic people should tolerate, whether or not they believe in non-violence. Gandhi would not have supported a government which needed this kind of violence as its sanction not only in extreme situations, but for its day-to-day running. And, in the so-called conquest of Goa, the Government of India explicitly, though unnecessarily, repudiated truth and non-violence as principles of state policy.

It is often said that Gandhi was not wholly uncompromising in his doctrine of non-violence, that he would make exceptions, that, in fact, he did not oppose the Kashmir war in 1947. Such a view rests on a complete misunderstanding. I think it can be confidently stated that Gandhi made no exceptions whatsoever to his doctrine of truth and non-violence. A full defence of the above statement will need another article; however a brief explanation may be attempted here.

Non-violence sounds as if it were a negative concept, but it is not. It is violence that is negative in nature; for essentially every violent act or thought violates reality. All violence is fundamentally violence against reality. Non-violence is thus acceptance of reality as it is. This is why Gandhi always emphasizes the equation—indeed, the essential synonymy—of non-violence and truth.

In the sphere of human relationship—leaving aside for the moment that of man-nature relationship—violence arises only when there is a failure of rational communication: it is one of the forms of infra-rational communication. So, in all such situations, instead of violence, Gandhi recommended, without exception, resort to non-violence. What does this mean? It means this: that when parties to a situation do not see the relevant reality in a mutually acceptable way, the believer in non-violence, that is one who wants to accept reality-as-it-is, will voluntarily undertake to suffer for his vision of reality. (That is, instead of trying forcibly to impose it on the other party, he will accept temporarily the other party's view of reality under protest and on pain of self-suffering). This will bring about a change of heart and mind in the other party, or in the sufferer, or in both: and thus a common vision of reality will emerge eliminating any imposition of a supervening reality by the use of superior physical force.

This implies that non-violence can only be an expression of the inner truth of the non-violent actor. Otherwise, his suffering cannot be said to be really voluntary, for if it (non-violence) is not the externalization of his inner vision, it can only be something forced upon him by external and even extraneous circumstances.

This is why Gandhi said that when non-violence does not express the inner truth of the person, it will be cowardly to stick to it. If the unity of truth and non-violence is disrupted and a choice is to be made between the two, Gandhi would be for truth. In other words, he preferred a straightforward and honest rejection of a fundamental principle to its half-hearted or insincere acceptance and lukewarm, opportunistic or compulsive application.

By the dictum, "rather kill than be a coward", Gandhi expressed his refusal to compromise with the purity of non-violence. He did not mean any approval of violence in assorted situations. This is why he stood steadfastly for a non-exploitative socio-economic order, for he understood perfectly well that violence is built into an exploitative social system. And holding fast to the doctrine of integrality of means and ends, he adhered throughout to the view that a technology-centred socio-economic system could not but be exploitative.

* * *

Do Vinoba Bhave and his movement represent the Gandhian spirit today? I wish it were possible to answer this question with a plain "yes" or "no". Unfortunately, the position is complicated. Even though in his vision of a normal human society Vinoba seems committed to the Gandhian principles, I think there are crucial differences between his thinking and that of Gandhi.

In his later thinking Vinoba has been inclined to emphasize the purely instrumental nature of technology and modern natural science. He distinguishes extensive, constructive and destructive types of technology and is really opposed only to the last type. He believes in the well-known argument that technology by itself is just a set of means; hence everything depends upon how and for what ends it is used. He also believes that man can develop the kind of spiritual power that can contain and control technology and technological power. He thinks that the Hindu tradition (in fact, all traditions) is not yet complete in its development. He hopes for a future develop-ment of metaphysics and religion which will be a synthesis of spirituality, science and technology.

In this article I cannot examine this theory in any systematic manner. It may be pointed out, however, that Vinoba's thinking is inconsistent here, for its violates the principle of the integrality of means and ends which he does accept. In other words, Vinoba fails to see that a technological system is not a free gift from Above or from the U.S.A., to be used in the chosen manner; it has to be produced by the society which uses it, and its *production,* apart from *use,* alters the nature of that society. A society based on the principles of the minimization of wants and non-possession is a society with a low level of technological development; it cannot be otherwise. By the same token, if one wants a Gandhian society, one has to be opposed to the development and production of technology beyond a certain fairly low level.

In talking about spirituality, natural science and technology, we must remember that the essential (spiritual) question is not, How and for what purpose is technological power to be used? The crucial question is: What kind of power and in what measure ought Man to acquire it? It seems to me that Vinoba's views on modern natural science and technology are not sufficiently sensitive to the traditional principle that man's knowledge must never exceed his being.

The other fundamental departure from Gandhian principles is Vinoba's support for a government which bases itself on a fundamental. negation of the principles of Gandhism and *Sarvodaya*. Whether the revolution for which Vinoba is working should necessarily involve a large-scale non-violent movement aiming at the complete overthrow of the present government is an open question. In any case, it can certainly be argued that it is not the only alternative in the present situation. However, what cannot be justified, I think, is the open and positive support Vinoba gave to the government over the Indo-Pakistan War (1965). Nor is it possible to understand why Vinoba and other Sarvodaya leaders have not yet straightforwardly rejected and opposed the government's socio-economic principles and plans.

I can only briefly touch upon the question of the impact of Gandhism on the contemporary Western world. I think the most important thing to note here is the general narrowness of the Western response. Gandhism calls for a radical revolution, for a complete transformation of man's thinking and way of life, social as well as individual. In a word, it aims at *metanoia*. But apart from the theoretical interest of certain European philosophers like Arne Naess, the major western interest in Gandhi, when it is not historical or aesthetic, is predominantly in Gandhian techniques that may be tried for resolving certain prob-lems and tensions of the modern society for which local methods have been proving increasingly inadequate.

With Gandhism as a way of life, that is, with a Gandhian socio-economic system, the West so far has been concerned only rarely. By and large, its interest in Gandhism and non-violent techniques has been experimental in nature and approach.

By virtue of its all-embracing scope and radical nature, the Gandhian vision is an alternative to the two dominant world-views today: the liberal democratic and the Marxian. The one question about Gandhism and our times is, therefore, simply this: Can Gandhism work as the new world-view? Is there a possibility of a radical change in the orientation and structure of contemporary society? Can we hope for *metanoia?*

Standing at the brink of an abyss, the next step lies not forward but backward. Did Gandhi then want to put the hands of the clock back? No, he wanted to set them to another noonday.

(Original editorial inclusions that followed the essay:)

Meister Eckhart says, He who is everywhere at home is Godworthy; to him who is ever the same is God present and in him in whom creatures are stilled God bears his one-begotten Son.

The Persistence of Essential Values among North American Plains Indians

by
Joseph Epes Brown

From a paper presented, with slight changes, to the International Congress of the Istituto Accademico di Roma, October 1968

INTRODUCTION

The focus for this examination of the complex question of the persistence of essential traditional values among American Indian groups will be upon the Indians of the great plains of North America. This selection in a sense is arbitrary, for similar studies could well be extended to almost any of the American Indian groups scattered in reserves throughout the United States, many of whom still retain, underneath the more evident surface changes and adaptations, a world view and life-ways still deeply rooted in ancient values. Since my closest personal contacts, however, have been the Plains tribes such as the Sioux, Cheyenne, Crow, Blackfoot, Arapaho, and Shoshone, I have chosen to look to these cultures for evidences of persistence in essential traditional values.

The use of the term "essential values" in the context of this paper refers to transcendent metaphysical principles which have been central to the spiritual ways of the Plains Indian, and which, it is insisted by this writer at least, constitute for these original Americans a valid dialect of what has been called the *Religio Perennis*. The uniqueness, or possibly strangeness, to us of the Indian's ritual forms or symbolical language should never blind us to this universal quality of the underlying values themselves. Due to this nature of the values we are here concerned with, there is not called in question the survival of the values themselves, for being ultimately timeless and eternal they can never in themselves be qualified by the vicissitudes of the socio-cultural environment. The question being accounted for, rather, is the degree to which forced changes issuing from an alien and generally profane culture will allow these values to continue to be operative within a changing cultural matrix and thus within the human substance of the individual himself.

This report will present first a description of selected core indigenous values of the Plains Indian as they are conveyed through their ritual supports, and thus as they contribute to methods of spiritual realization. This necessarily synthetic treatment should provide a reference base for the second part of the report which will deal with several dimensions in the dynamics of contact, as the indigenous culture confronts the pervasive and disruptive influences issuing from a materially dominant Anglo-American culture. The report will conclude with a brief statement concerning essential values which have remained viable to this day despite the often excessive breakdown of many traditional life-ways. It will be noted, in fact, that certain rites and ceremonies among some groups have not only persisted, but are actually, through a number of complex factors, now undergoing a period of vigorous revival.

VALUES

Among the many sacred ceremonies of the Plains Indian I have selected three major rituals within each of which, and in their totality, there is provided all necessary dimensions of a true way of spiritual realization for the individual and for the social group as a whole. These rites are

those of purification, the annual tribal Sun Dance, and the individual spiritual retreat.

The rites of purification, considered to be essential preparation for any important or sacred undertaking, are centered in a simple dome-shaped lodge made of intertwined willows and covered over tightly with bison robes. In the circular form of the lodge, and in the materials used in its construction, the Indian sees a symbolical representation of the world in its totality. Indeed, it has been expressed that the lodge is the very body of the Great Spirit. Inside this lodge of the world the participants submit themselves to intensely hot steam produced when water is sprinkled on rocks which had previously been heated in a special sacred fire always located to the east of the lodge. As the men pray and chant, the steam, actually conceived as the visible image of the Great Spirit, acts as in an alchemical work to dissolve both physical and psychic "coagulations" so that a spiritual transmutation may take place. The four elements, with the invisible spiritual Presence—or "fifth element"—contribute their respective powers to this purifying process so that man may become virtually who he is through first dissolving the illusory sense of separateness, then becoming reintegrated, or harmoniously unified, within the totality of the universe. In finally going forth from the dark lodge, leaving behind all physical impurities and spiritual errors, the men are reborn into the wisdom of the light of day. All the aspects of the world have been witnesses to this cycle of corruption, death, wholeness, and rebirth; indeed, the cosmic powers have all contributed to the process.

In the rites of the Sun Dance there is a shift in perspective and function. These dramatic and powerful rites, normally of four days duration, are generally performed only once annually, and should be participated in, directly or indirectly, by the entire tribal group. A major overt goal of this prayer dance is the regeneration or renewal not only of the individual directly participating in the rites, but also of the tribe and ultimately of the entire universe. The ritual dances take place within a large circular pole lodge, at the centre of which is a tall cottonwood tree representing the axis of the universe, the vertical link joining heaven and earth, and thus the path of contact with the solar power, the sun, symbol of the Supreme Principle or Great Spirit. Supported day and night by the powerful rhythm of a huge drum energetically beaten by many men, and by songs which are both heroic and nostalgic, the dancers hold eagle plumes and continually orient themselves either towards the sacred central tree, or towards one of the four directions of space, Blowing upon whistles made from the wing bone of the eagle, the men dance individually with simple and dignified steps towards the central tree from which they receive supernatural power, and then dance backwards to the periphery of the circle without shifting their gaze from the centre. The sacred forms and ritual actions are virile, dignified, and direct, and though the rites usually take place only once a year the power of the sacred centre, now realized within themselves, remains with each individual and contributes to the unity of the people.

The third quality of spiritual way is the solitary retreat known as the "lamenting", or the vision quest. In this quest the individual, naked and alone, and in constant prayer, endures a total fast for a specified number of days at a lonely place, usually a mountain top< In utter humility of body and mind, often emphasized by the offering of pieces of his flesh, or the joint of a finger, the man stands before the forms and forces of nature seeking the blessing of sacred power which should come to him through a dream, or preferably a vision, of some aspect of nature, possibly an animal, who offers guidance for the future direction of the man's life. These natural forms or forces, conceived as messengers or Agents, constitute for the Indian a well understood "iconography" in which forms, with their accompanying powers, are ranked according to their ability to express most directly the ultimate Power, or essence, of the Great

Spirit. Essential to this metaphysic of nature is the Indian's belief that in silence, found within the solitude of Nature, there is ultimately heard the very voice of the Great Spirit. This quest for supernatural power, coming symbolically from the "outside", but in reality being awakened from within, has always been essential to the spiritual life of Plains Indian men and women, and its influence upon the quality of their lives should never be underestimated.

Mention must be made, finally, of that important ritual implement, the sacred tobacco pipe which is central to all the rites which have here been described. In carrying this portable altar the Indian has at all times access to an effective synthetic support for spiritual realization. The rites of the pipe express sacrifice and purification, they affirm the integration of the individual within the macrocosm, and they lead finally to the realization of unity, prefigured by the totality of the grains of tobacco becoming one with the fire of the Great Spirit.

Pervading these spiritual ways of purification, of the Sun Dance, the retreat, and the use of the sacred pipe, there may be discerned a pattern for which parallels may be found in virtually all legitimate methods of realization within the world's great religions. This universal pattern affirms the sequence first of purification, followed by an expansive process in the realization of totality, or the state of human perfection, leading finally to the ultimate possibility of contact and identity with the one transcendent Supreme Principle.

CONTACT: DYNAMICS OF THE ACCULTURATION PROCESS

It is necessary now to pose the very difficult question which for decades has plagued those with a serious concern for the future of the American Indian: Is it possible today for small minority groups within the United States, or anywhere for that matter, to retain the integrity of cultural patterns and spiritual ways similar to those just described; ways which are rooted in traditions of primordial origin, and which had their essential supports in a world of nature still virgin and unscarred by the hand of any man?

All the forces of historical contact between the American Indian and the materially dominant White-American civilization seem to be totally against the possibility of any traditional continuity for the Indian. The power of alien forces and the inevitable disruption of life-ways which have ensued must not be minimized. It should be recalled that the people's subsistence base, the bison, was brought to near extinction through commercial exploitation combined with an avowed policy of extermination by the United States Army. Freedom of movement was restricted through force to reservations often arbitrarily chosen. Governing techniques based on the accumulated wisdom of the elders were replaced by an imposed bureaucratic system which could never, even if it wished, understand the real problems of the people under its charge. In accord with White-American concept of ownership, the random distribution of parcels of land on the basis of individual family units shattered the cohesive unity of the Indian's own larger consanguinial groupings, and the prohibition of plural marriages disrupted the immediate family units. School systems were imposed which had as their avowed goals the suppression and eventual elimination of traditional values in order to hasten forcefully the process of total assimilation. This is a policy, with all too few exceptions, which is still basic to the reservation school system of today. Ill conceived government attempts at economic rehabilitation again and again ended in total failure largely due to the fact that agriculture, then identified by the whiteman with civilization, was a practice contradictory to all Indian values which held the earth as sacred and inviolate and not to be torn up with a plough. Among the most difficult trials, however, were the hostile attitudes towards the Indian's religious practices. Sacrificial elements of the Sun Dance were prohibited, as were the rites held for the departing

souls of the dead, and it is well known how participation in the much misunderstood Ghost Dance ended with the infamous massacre of Wounded Knee.

What is seen in the assemblage of these series of traumatic shocks received by the Indian is obviously not just the inevitable result of straightforward military defeats, as devastating as these were, but rather we have the tragic drama of two cultures in conflict, each representing to the other diametrically opposed values on every possible level and in all domains. Such conflict between cultures was undoubtedly intensified by the fact that those segments of White-American society with which the Indian had the most contact were, with few exceptions, probably the least enlightened carriers of the more positive facets of "civilization". With the exception of some Christian missionaries of "good heart" the Indian found no segment of American society with which he could identify himself.

After more than a century of this quality of bitter confrontation with accompanying disruptions in the social, economic, political, and religious life, it is difficult to understand how the people have survived at all. Yet the Plains Indians, as well as other groups, have survived with such tenacity and even vitality that certain rites and ceremonies are today actually undergoing renewed affirmation. Much to the surprise of the social scientists, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs itself, the "vanishing American" has somehow not vanished at all. It had been incorrectly assumed, among other factors, that just as so many European immigrants had readily assimilated into the great American "melting pot", so too would the Indian. There was obviously the failure here to take into account the tremendous differences between the European and the American Indian. The result of this new awareness, on the part of the anthropologists at least, has led to a growing number of hypotheses to explain this phenomena of the tenacity of traditional values and cultures.

One such hypothesis has been the isolation of the reservations. This is undoubtedly a factor of importance, yet it must be recalled that with certain groups, the Mohawk for example who work in high steel in New York City, close and frequent contact has not resulted in total abandonment of ancient values. The sustaining power of culture-bearing indigenous languages has with validity been pointed to in the literature; certainly this is a factor which has been well understood by the reservation school systems which to this day often forbid children, under threat of punishment, to speak their own native language.

It has been suggested, with reason, that policies of forced or "directed" acculturation to which all Indian groups have been subjected, may lead to violent reactions which reject change and reaffirm traditionalism. A converse possibility which has been neglected by the specialists has been the role of the half informed, usually sentimental, "Indian lovers", the "do gooders", who would preserve certain of the "more noble" Indian values, albeit they should be incorporated with those "logical" modern innovations in such things as housing and hygiene. Paradoxically, such seemingly sympathetic approaches to Indian traditions may be far more corrosive to traditional values than the uncompromising ethnocentric attitudes of those agents of civilization who insist on total assimilation achieved through force if necessary.

Among the vast array of forces which may work for the persistence of traditional values is the often neglected psychological factor of the inherent stability of the basic personality structure which acts as a selective screen in processes of change. A dimension central to this complex question, but which is inaccessible to the quantitative experiential tools of either cultural anthropology or psychology, is the qualitative power of metaphysical, or cosmological, principles and the degree to which these become virtual or effective within the individual substance through participation in traditional rites and spiritual methods. Related to this entire

question of the quality of personality is the fact that where Indians are still able to live within a world of as yet unspoiled Nature, potentially they have access to a vast array of transcendent values. It is essential to add, however, that for this potential source to become virtual for the Indian he must still possess, to a certain degree at least, the Indian's traditional metaphysic of nature. Where this metaphysic is still understood, and can be directly related to the supporting forms of the natural world, here the Indian has perhaps his strongest ally for the persistence of essential values; it is also in this metaphysic of nature that we find the Indian's most valuable message for the contemporary world.

A final factor relating to the persistence of values must be mentioned since it is crucial today to a multitude of problems deriving from attitudes in America towards minority groups of various ethnic backgrounds. White-American racial attitudes have historically so tended to devaluate physical types of other cultural traditions that these peoples generally have been relegated to positions of inferior status in the larger society. With the possibility of social or cultural mobility thus being denied, many of these groups have tended to seek retention of cohesion and identity through reaffirmation of their own traditional values. The resulting low index of intermarriage between these minority groups and the dominant majority has in addition tended to slow acculturation. This is a situation, incidentally, which has not occurred in Mexico where positive valuation has been given to the Indian heritage. Among the ramifications of negative racist attitudes is the fact that many Indians who do attempt to assimilate into segments of White-American culture tend to undergo a cycle of progressive disenchantment, a process often hastened by the slum conditions of cities, or by participation in foreign wars. When such persons then attempt to reintegrate back into their own traditional patterns they often serve as powerful agents for the preservation of traditional values.

This review of factors contributing to the holding power of indigenous values under conditions of extreme stress, is obviously very incomplete. Yet the sampling may be useful to an understanding of the final concern of this report which will be a brief assessment of the viability of rites and their values on the plains Indian reservations today.

CONTEMPORARY ASSESSMENT

Reactions of the diverse plains Indian groups to several centuries of directed contact with White-Americans has resulted in such a broad spectrum of adjustments, conservative reactions, or total changes, that it is obviously impossible to make valid generalizations in terms of the contemporary persistence of values. Ranged on this spectrum of multiple possibilities are examples, across groups as well as within particular groups, of near total retention of traditional values at the one end of the scale to near total assimilation at the other end. The vast majority of groups or individuals, however, probably lie in the midrange and generally represent a more or less synthetic reassemblage of Indian and White-American values, always with the retention, however, of a remarkable degree of traditional Indianness.

If the range of possibilities on this spectrum are to be evaluated in terms of the major concern of this study, it should be pointed out that available data indicates that concordant with a high degree of traditional persistence there is generally a quality of culture that has cohesiveness, direction, and affords personal dignity. Assimilation, on the other hand, can be a double-edged term since it often represents acculturation into the lowest and least enlightened segments of White-American society, and this can be the first step leading to such extreme limits of cultural disintegration that we have the dangerous phenomena of a decultured people living precariously in a vacuum wherein they are unable to identify either with Indianness or

with any of the White-American values.

In viewing the degrees of cultural wreckage strewn today across the prairies, a most impressive and hopeful phenomena is found in the fact that so many of the core indigenous values, with their supporting rites, are generally persisting among most plains groups. In spite of the virtual disappearance of a host of minor rites, still being practiced are the rites of purification, the Sun Dance, the spiritual retreat, and the rites of the sacred pipe. Sacred arrows, the original sacred pipe, and sacred bundles in general, are still being kept with reverence and respect, even though some of the spiritual meanings of these forms may have been lost. One of the most notable aspects of these examples of traditional tenacity is the fact that those who today affirm these forms and values are not necessarily just the "long hairs", the old men, but rather there is a growing interest and participation on the part of the younger generations.

An outstanding example of the contemporary process of reaffirmation is the increasing participation throughout the plains generally in the Sun Dance. Among the complex factors contributing to this revitalization, which cannot be explained here in detail, is the example and stimulus afforded by a dynamic series of interpersonal and inter-cultural relationships between the Crow Indians of Montana and the Shoshone of Wyoming. The renewing interest among the younger generations may be partly explained by the fact that the youth have not been able to find channels in the whiteman's society for the expression of specific needs, personal qualities, or virtues, which had always been central, and which still are relevant, to the indigenous cultures. Public display of personal courage, sacrifice, and generosity, for example, are key Indian themes dramatically affirmed in the context of the Sun Dance.

Although the three or four day total fast required in the Sun Dance is still observed, the self-torture features have not been publically participated in since the government prohibitions of 1890. Such tortures, however, are still engaged in secretly by certain individuals. Also little known to outside groups is the fact that the spiritual retreat is frequently used today not only by the old, but also by younger men. It is evident, although it has not been specifically mentioned, that crucial to the spiritual ways which have been mentioned is the presence of the shaman or "medicine man". Judging partly from the present frequency and popularity of "yuwipi" rites, which allow for the ritual demonstration of shamanistic powers, it is evident that shamanism still plays a meaningful role among the people, and that it continues to have mechanisms for the transmission of power. The high personal quality and magnetims of many of these men is a very strong contributing factor to the holding power of traditional values.

The true nature of a growing number of Pan-Indian movements, or what I call the "pow-wow syndrome", still remains questionable, for the stimulus behind many of these movements represents reactions to White-American attitudes towards ethnic minorities. In being rejected the Indian affirms his Indianness, yet in doing this he often seeks to identify with the whiteman's image of what an Indian is—or should be. The result is a complex of heterogeneous forms and practices which have popular appeal and commercial advantage, but which risk sacrificing true spiritual content. The phenomenal growth of the new Black Elk Sweat Lodge Organization, with membership cards and all, is undoubtedly a good example of this double-edged phenomena of Pan-Indianism.

In concluding, there are a few basic questions which must at least be referred to, for the issues are vital both to the continuing viability of essential values within Indian cultures, and also to the ultimate quality of the larger American culture itself:

Will educational policy, which for so long has been dictated to the Indian, honour and support indigenous values and life-ways so that the young may grow with a rightful pride in

their own heritage? Or, must the schools continue in their efforts towards total assimilation, thus denying to the Indian his birthright, and robbing the larger American culture of the possibility of a spiritual enrichment which present crises indicate is so desperately needed?

May not Indian lands be allowed to remain inviolate, so that a unique religious heritage may continue to retain its supports in a world of sacred natural forms? Or, must policies for rapid termination of protective mechanisms continue so that remaining Indian-held lands will melt away under the pressures of often unscrupulous commercial interests?

But above all, and crucial to these and *many* other questions: Cannot it be affirmed that all peoples, regardless of skin colour, of ethnic background, or of religious affiliation, are rightful members of one family of man? Should not differences of appearance, of culture, or of religion, be affirmed as valid and even necessary expressions of a greater Reality, so that they may contribute to a richer world. Any alternative cannot but lead to drab mediocrity and ultimate chaos.

Whatever the outcome, we might well heed the words attributed to a great Indian after whom one of our cities was named, Seattle.

> We are two distinct races with separate origins and separate destinies. To us the ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their resting place is hallowed ground. You wander far from the graves of your ancestors and seemingly without regret....
>
> But why should I mourn at the untimely fate of my people? Tribe follows tribe, and nation follows nation, and regret is useless...
>
> But when the last Red man shall have become a myth among the White man... when your children's children think themselves alone in the field... or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone... your lands will throng with the returning hosts that once filled them and still love this beautiful land. The White man will never be alone.
>
> Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead—I say? There is no death. Only a change of worlds.[1]

[1] From: Frank Waters, "Two Views of Nature: White and Indian". *The South Dakota Review,* May 1964, pp. 28, 29.

Religion and Science

by
Lord Northbourne

(*A verbatim transcript of a lecture given to the staff and students of a University Department of Agriculture, with added notes*).

WHEN this lecture became inevitable, I decided, perhaps rather rashly, that I would try to set out what I believe to be the essential factors in a very comprehensive and complicated question: that of the relation between religion and modern science.

I am going to try to outline a situation chiefly marked by an unprecedented intellectual confusion arising out of the fact that the astonishingly rapid advance of modern science has caused many beliefs axioms and assumptions of very long standing to be seriously questioned. The origins and nature of the universe and the situation of man in it have become matters of doubt and of speculation; such indeed are the very questions to which religion and science appear to give different answers. Now these are not questions of interest only to a few philosophers and theologians, they are of immense and immediate practical importance, simply because everyone, even if he hardly ever thinks at all, acts in accordance with some assumption or other concerning the basic realities of his situation. That assumption dictates the tendency, and therefore the ultimate effect, of all that he does, and if it is false his best endeavours are bound to go astray; and this applies with every bit as much force to the collectivity as to the individual. But in these days, in which there is no established traditional order, no unquestioned hierarchy of the intelligence or of anything else, all fundamental decisions are thrown back on to the judgment of the individual, and few indeed are those who are equipped to stand the strain.

First I must define briefly but as unequivocally as I can the word "religion" and the word "science". Having once done so I shall not qualify them every time they occur.

The Latin root of the word "religion" is connected with the idea of "binding" or "attachment." First, a very broad definition: religion is the link by which humanity is effectively attached to what is greater than itself. By "humanity" I mean mankind as a whole, past, present and future, with all its achievements aspirations and potentialities both individual and collective. By the word "greater" I mean "eminently" or "incommensurably" greater. If no such attachment is possible, the word "religion" is superfluous. If it is possible, we ignore that possibility at our peril.

But that broad definition must be narrowed down a little. I am thinking, and I expect most of you (perhaps not all) to be thinking, primarily of the Christian religion. But I cannot include everything that claims to be Christian, for the epithet is used to bolster up all kinds of misconceptions, fantasies and sentimentalities. I do not exclude, with similar reservations, any of what are usually known as the "great religions" of the world. They are defined by the fact that they gave rise to great civilizations; it is therefore presumptuous to suppose that they fail to conform to my first definition, despite obvious differences in their outward forms. It is men and times that differ; religion in so far as it is a human institution differs with them, but in its sentials it is always the same.[1] I specifically exclude the many pseudo-religions of relatively

[1] The implications of *any* other view seem to me to be unacceptable. I am, however, far from suggesting that it is

recent origin that have attracted so many adherents and done so much to obscure the essentials of religion properly so called.

For present purposes I shall use the word "science" without epithet as a general term covering the whole field of modern observational science in all its branches, but with special reference to the philosophy that has grown up round it as distinct from its method. That philosophy has permeated modern civilization, and it governs the thoughts and actions of many people to whom the word "philosophy" means almost nothing. The outlook peculiar to it is now predominant, and this is something new; it is incontestable that in earlier ages an outlook that can broadly be called "religious" was predominant. Some would prefer to say "superstitious," but that is begging a very vital question. Others might prefer the more general word "traditional."

Is there a conflict between religion and science, and what is its nature if it exists? One can say that certainly there ought not to be a conflict, for each claims both to present truth and to be seeking it, so that the more nearly each justifies its claim the more nearly should they come together; but they don't seem to. I want if I can to indicate how far this is due to the fact that both religion and science have got themselves into a false position, though in very different ways, and how far it is due to fundamental divergences.

Religion and science both claim to be true, and I assert without fear of contradiction in this hall that nothing matters in the end but truth. The human faculty concerned in the appreciation of truth is the intelligence, and intelligence is therefore the highest human faculty. Now intelligence is more than reason alone, for reason must have material to work on; reason is that part of the intelligence which relates one datum to another. The source of the data available to reason is not solely external; in fact it is much more "how we see things" than "what we see." I shall return to this point, which is crucial. Meanwhile the point is that, if religion is true, it must engage the intelligence, and the intelligence above all, even before it engages the will and the emotions. I cannot emphasize this too strongly, particularly because the common assumption seems to be that science has a sort of monopoly of intelligence, and that religion is primarily concerned with the will and the emotions. Science, on its part is not worthy of the name unless it takes into account everything that can come within the range of the intelligence and not one aspect of reality alone.

What then is the universe? The common reaction to that question is to the effect that it cannot at present be answered fully, but that anyhow the only way to find out what the universe is is by looking at it. The difficulty is that looking at the universe, or at any part of it, can never tell us what it is, but only what it looks like to us. The image is not independent of ourselves who make it. We paint a picture of the universe; it is inevitably highly selective because the material available is limitless, and incidentally includes ourselves. So we choose what interests us, and we also choose the light in which it is to be represented. As with all pictures, the result is more than anything else a picture of our own outlook, however "representational" of the outer world we believe it to be.

Furthermore: the seer is not what he sees. This duality is inherent in the act of observation, to whatever that act may be applied; it defines the act. Each one of you can observe the psycho-

wrong to regard a particular religion as the best, or even as the only true religion, in a given set of circumstances individual or collective; on the contrary, it is normal and right. I can do no more than make these assertions, since a dissertation on comparative religion is out of the question here. This aspect of the matter is not vital to my argument. See also note 3 on p. 193 and note 9 on page 194, and note 11 on page 197.

physical complex of which his body is the material aspect; therefore that complex is other than the observer, other than yourself. So if anyone thinks either that he as observer is aware of anything but the reflected image of the outside world in himself, or that he as observer can turn round and discover by observation what he himself is, he is in manifest error. Yet if he does not know what he himself is, he cannot possibly understand the nature of the images that constitute his knowledge of the universe.

This is the inescapable dilemma sometimes slimmed up in the words "the eye cannot see itself." Directly we put ourselves into the position of observers, we elude our own observation. Our relationship to our environment is therefore not as simple as we like to think, for we are part of the universe and cannot separate ourselves from it. If we think we can, we fool ourselves. A common and natural reaction to this would be: "so what? We cannot alter that situation; we have nothing to go on but our powers of observation and deduction, and must do our best with what we have. So why bother our heads with such matters?" The answer is that I am talking about a philosophy of science that dominates the world, and these considerations are fundamental to that philosophy, whether it likes it or not.

Is there anything, then, that we can say for sure about the universe? At least we can say that it is an order, a "cosmos"; it is not a "chaos." The living being is also an order, an organism, a "microcosm"; like the universe it is a whole coordinated by something. What is it that makes the universe what it is, and us what we are, and gives to each its inward unity? This is the goal of philosophy, whether it be based on religion or on science.

Science seeks this coordinating principle in the observable. From this point of view the universe consists of identifiable and numerable entities; it does not matter what you call them, because all terms such as "particles" or "forces" are provisional and analogical, since the ultimate constituents, as at present envisaged, can only be described in mathematical terms. The point is that the nature of those constituents is regarded as being deducible from observation, and further, since they are the fundamental constituents of the universe, the coordinating principle is regarded as being inherent in their nature. Therefore the task of science is to elucidate that nature; and it is assumed that if this could be done, everything would be explained; and "everything" must include the psychic element we can observe in living beings. However, that psychic element comes late into the picture, since living beings are regarded as a late (and possibly rather rare and freakish) development in the evolutionary process; nobody supposes that it is they who arranged the stars. But if we, in the name of science, reject all that is not in principle observable, and regard life as a late evolutionary development, we are forced to assume that these inanimate elementary entities or forces, known or as yet unknown, are so constituted as to have here and there combined and arranged themselves in incredibly complex and relatively stable patterns, in such a way that all the phenomena of life are manifested: not only birth, growth, reproduction and death, but also a consciousness both objective and subjective, an active will, memory, emotion and intelligence itself.

This sounds like nonsense, as indeed it is. Nonsense is the only possible result of any attempt to find the coordinating principle of the observable in the observable, or, what amounts to the same thing, of the relative in the relative. Such attempts can only lead to a going round and round in circles, in search of something that is always round the corner and always will be; to a wrapping up of the mystery—or the miracle—of existence and of intelligence in words that get nowhere, in a desperate endeavour to escape at all costs from mystery and from miracle. But in vain, for this mystery is the only thing from which there is no escape save by death. It is the mystery of our own existence and our own intelligence, at once self-evident and inexplicable.

I must explain in parenthesis that the word "mystery", in its debased and commonplace sense, signifies merely anything that is unknown but in principle discoverable. I use it throughout in its original and proper sense, in which it signifies whatever is too exalted or too comprehensive to be grasped or defined distinctively, though it can in principle be apprehended directly. The mysteries of religion are always of this latter nature; the mysteries of science are of the former.

The very principle of the scientific method is to objectivize as far as possible. It uses the intelligence but takes its existence for granted; very practical, very sensible, since for most of the work of the world it is superfluous to do otherwise. But if you bypass the subject, without which there is no objective knowledge, you must not philosophize.

I am far from suggesting that, because they are not "properties of matter" or anything of the kind, life and love, beauty and joy, and intelligence itself, are not of the stuff of which the cosmos is made. Of course they are; they are inherent in its very cause, in its eternal principle, where they subsist as imperishable possibilities. We are aware only of their manifestation under terrestrial conditions, and that manifestation implies the co-existence of their negation[2]; but they are doubtless manifested under endless other conditions of which we can have no inkling while we cannot see beyond our present state. For our universe, in its totality, only represents one of an indefinite multitude of systems of "compossibles," and we only know or can ever know an insignificant fraction even of our own universe, which in its totality is far more extensive, more varied and more wonderful than the wildest dreams of science could ever make it out to be, as Shakespeare knew well: "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophies."

I said that it is nonsense to try to find the coordinating principle of the relative in the relative. It is in fact completely illogical, if words mean anything. I go one further and suggest to you that what we are always in reality looking for, what we lean on and what we thirst for, whether we know it or not and whatever we think we are looking for, is in fact non-relative, that is to say, the Absolute, although it is inherently mysterious, unseizable and non-observable. For instance: if you assert that everything is relative, your statement is itself relative, that is to say, contingent and mobile. It may be right today and wrong tomorrow, and is scarcely worth making. If you maintain that anything (your statement for instance) is less relative than something else, you are bringing in the Absolute. You may argue that there are regions of relative stability, or nodes of higher probability, and that your statement is related to them, and so can be said to be more valid than other statements. What can "relative stability" or "higher probability" be taken to mean? They can only mean "nearer to something yet more stable" or "still less relative," and so on; and in the end inescapably "nearer to the unchanging, to the non-relative," that is to say: "nearer to the Absolute."

In fact thought is impossible, it is completely chaotic, save in relation to *the* Absolute unqualified and unqualifiable. We are in fact usually thinking of something "relatively absolute," that is to say, of something that represents the Absolute on a particular plane or in a particular region, rather than of the Absolute itself: but this does not alter the fact that the Absolute constitutes the basic condition and the fundamental assumption of all logical and coherent thought. It is limitless and all-comprehending and therefore undefinable, nevertheless it forces

[2] Existence is by derivation a "standing apart." Anything that exists stands apart distinctively from everything else, including its own cause and its own opposite or correlative. Its existence therefore implies that of its opposite or correlative; neither light nor darkness has any distinctive existence without the other. In the light of a real grasp of all that this implies, many puzzling questions sort themselves out.

itself upon us even when we ignore it or try to dispense with it. If we try to escape from it, we inevitably end up by inventing a false absolute, which amounts to adopting an unreal and invalid point of reference. This fact is by no means unconnected with the fact that if we try to dispense with God we inevitably end up by inventing false gods; and this is true although the word "absolute" and the word "God" are not interchangeable. And when false gods fail it, as they must, humanity has nothing left to deify but itself. This development has a name: "humanism" we call it.

The rightful domain of science is that of the observable, and surely it ought to be enough, for it is inexhaustible, though so very far from being everything. The rightful domain of religion is that of the fundamental but non-observable mystery, call it what you will, that is the key to everything, though some who claim to represent religion seem often to behave as if they had forgotten the fact. Conflict and confusion arise when either tries to occupy the domain of the other.

Science gets into trouble and ends up nowhere when it tries to philosophize about ultimates, instead of getting on with its entirely practical work, its craft. Religion gets into trouble when it tries to adapt itself to the approach of science, instead of trying to perfect its own approach.

We are obsessed by the fact that we have found out how to do so much to enlarge the sensitivity of our organs of sense, by the use of telescopes, microscopes and all the rest. We forget that it is what we are, our own inmost nature, the "light that is in us" that conditions *what we make of* the messages we receive through the senses, and that is vastly more important than how many different sense-impressions we receive; "And if that light be darkness, how great is that darkness."[3] We forget that a mere multiplication of facts (which is, in the strictest sense of the word, interminable) can do nothing whatever towards improving the quality of our intelligence; indeed, when it becomes an obsession, it can easily lead to a fragmentation of knowledge rather than to its unification. I would go farther, and say that it inevitably does so; also that computers cannot help, because they are not intelligent. The most widely travelled individual is not necessarily the wisest; a hermit may be far wiser than he. It is indeed perfectly possible to see too much, and, in the common phrase, to be unable to see the wood for the trees. It is equally possible to look so hard in one direction that you see nothing in the other; to be so preoccupied with your botanizing that you do not notice the bull charging you from behind.

Only one who knows what his own existence is (and he cannot find out by observation, nor can he know any existence but his own) knows what existence as such is, that of other people and things, as well as his own. Not how he himself or other people or things look or behave, that can be learnt by observation, but what they are, what it is that behaves in such and such a way, whether its appearance be that of a man or an atom or a star. It is ten thousand times more important to know what man is, even imperfectly, than to know, however completely, the distances of the stars or how to smash the atom. It is perhaps not surprising that this kind of knowledge is often most accessible, intuitively but not analytically, to the mentally uncomplicated, and is "hidden from the wise and prudent."[4] You may recall too that the "mystery of the Kingdom of God... cometh not with observation" but is "within you."[5]

[3] Matt. VI, 23.

[4] Matt. XI, 25.

[5] Luke XVII, 20 and 21.

Not for nothing was the inscription "Know Thyself" written over the gateway to Aristotle's school of philosophy; but of course his philosophy was founded on religion. Religion is there to teach us what we are—each according to his capacity to accept and to understand—and, in so far as it does so, not only does it engage the intelligence, but it is the very foundation of intelligence. "To fear the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom," said Ecclesiasticus.[6]

Someone may be thinking: "What is all this preoccupation with oneself? Surely it is contrary to religion as well as to our natural feelings, and surely the one thing that is useful and unselfish is to get on as best we can with making the world a better place; for we can only take things as we find them, ourselves included, and do our best with them."

There are two immediate answers. Firstly: action cannot be effective unless based on a knowledge as accurate and as comprehensive as possible. Goodwill is of course necessary, but, alone it is powerless. If what I have said is right, and if the key to understanding is in the answer to the question, "What am I?", which cannot be answered by observation, then to seek it where it is to be found, namely "within you," cannot be selfish; even apart from the fact that no task is more exacting than that search, which necessitates (at first sight paradoxically) the elimination of all personal ambition or desire. Nor is any task more charitable, since its fulfilment alone can teach us what we are. As a specialist task it is by no means everyone's: it demands both vocation and training; but all other tasks are justified by the extent to which they help to make it possible. This may seem a surprising assertion, yet that is the principle underlying the structure of every civilization founded on religion, however imperfectly it may be realised. No wonder we don't understand such civilizations.

Secondly: the objective of action must be clear and valid. It cannot be either if it is based on uncertainty or misconception about what man is, or about what are his origin, function and destiny. Where any such misconception exists, efforts to do good are likely to be misdirected. That is putting it mildly. "Where there is no vision the people perish."[7]

Most of our actions today are dictated by a combination between a philosophy of science, more or less popularized,[8] and habits of thought originating in a religion that has largely lost its original authority. I am evidently implying that this combination is weak in its understanding of the origin, function and destiny of man. That there should be confusion is not surprising, for it is in their respective views of man's situation that religion and science differ most conspicuously. In discussing their differences, I shall of course use the religious language that is familiar to most of us. It is as adequate as words can be for giving expression to ideas concerning the mystery of existence but it is essential not to forget that it is symbolical, because it cannot be "descriptive" in the limitative sense of the word.[9]

[6] Ecciesiasticus I, 14.

[7] Proverbs XXIX, 18.

[8] The hypothesis of progressive evolution in particular has become established as a sort of dogma both scientifically and popularly. Nevertheless, it remains no more than a hypothesis, and a very questionable one at that, not only because there is much contradictory evidence, but also because it leaves open the vital question of what constitutes progress.

[9] Not all religions envisage the origin of the universe in terms of a divine "Creation," as do Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Not all are even theistic, for Buddhism is not. The mystery that underlies all existence can be symbolized in many different ways, not necessarily outwardly coincident, much in the same way as separate two-dimensional projections of a solid object may differ according to the point of view without being intrinsically false. They may suggest the third dimension, but cannot specify it by their form alone. We rightly seek precision in our statements, but a statement can be precise in two senses: either because it is inherently unequivocal, or because it

Let us consider origin and function first. According to the religious view, the origin of all things is divine, and therefore mysterious in the proper sense. Man is the culminating point of the creation, the representative of God on earth, and his special function is to keep the universe in touch with God, who is its origin and its end, and this implies that he must above all keep himself in touch with God. For this purpose he was created and has been given his dominion over the animals and plants. But let me quote St. Francis of Sales who, in his "Introduction to the Devout Life," puts the religious view of the function of man in its purest—some would say its most extreme—form.

> "God did not put you into this world because of any need that he had of you, but only that he might exercise in you his goodness, giving you his grace and his glory. To this end he has given you understanding wherewith to know him, memory wherewith to remember him, will wherewith to love him, imagination that you might picture his benefits, eyes that you might see the marvels of his works, a tongue wherewith to praise him, and likewise with the other faculties. Being created and put into this world with that intention, all intentions contrary thereto must be rejected and avoided, and those that in no way serve this end must be despised as being vain and superfluous. Consider the misfortune of the world which thinks not at all of this, but lives as if thinking that it had been created only to build houses, plant trees, amass riches and disport itself."

The scientific view, in its purest or most extreme form, is that all things are the product of an evolutionary process, the details of which it is the task of science to elucidate. They are mysterious only on the popular sense. According to this view, man is a product of evolution; his faculties have been developed step by step, by a process not yet fully understood, but in principle ascertainable. The function of man is therefore whatever he likes to make it, and in practice, to look after himself. If he has a responsibility towards his neighbours, human and non-human, it is a matter of conscience or of mutual advantage; and conscience itself must be a product of evolution; and evolution cannot be allowed by many advanced contemporary philosophers to be purposive in any sense, for fear of admitting the idea, however attenuated, of a god of some sort. So the best that man can do is to derive as much advantage to himself as he can from the accidents of his constitution and of his environment.

I cannot begin to see how these two points of view can be reconciled, unless they are so watered down as to be unrecognizable. However they may be formulated, the priorities implied by each are diametrically opposed.

So much for origin and function. What about destiny? Or if you like a nice scientific-

is understood as it was intended to be. Only one kind of statement is inherently unequivocal, and that is the purely quantitative, of which the type is "two and two make four" and the development is constituted by mathematical formulae of all degrees of complexity. Quantity by itself has no significance, however elaborate its formulation; in order to be significant it must be related to something qualitatively distinguishable. In our efforts to obtain precision we are continually seeking to reduce quality to quantity, that is to say, to reduce reality to mathematical formulae. The result is that the great positive qualities: love, beauty, goodness, mercy, intelligence and so on, are relegated to a secondary position, as if they were purely human and subjective, whereas in reality they lie at the heart of everything. For the world, inanimate as well as animate, is constituted by the interaction of quality and quantity, which very broadly correspond to what we call "spirit" and "matter" respectively. In trying to express everything in terms appropriate to the "material" aspect alone we lose sight of the spirit. A statement having a qualitative significance can be perfectly precise, despite the fact that the possibility of misunderstanding cannot be eliminated.

sounding word: eschatology? Religion says that God gave us our lives and that at death they are taken back by him. Our bodies are but the temporary dwelling-place of an immortal soul, which is subject to a judgment after death, as a result of which it goes to paradise, purgatory or hell. This aspect of religion is often nowadays glossed over as far as possible, but that does not alter the fact that it is absolutely essential?[10]

It may occur to you that if what you the observer, the knower, the subject really are is other than the psycho-physical complex you can observe, there is no particular reason why you should perish when it perishes. But the exclusively scientific mind shies at such ideas because they cannot be checked in any way by observation. How could they? They are concerned only with that inmost "I" which we cannot observe, but which is nevertheless our real selves, on the one hand, and on the other with a state in which the real self is detached from the conditions of its mundane existence, including time and space. And if anyone says that only things tied to time, space or other terrestrial conditions can have any relevance for us or contact with us during our lives, I reply that it is precisely the intelligence that is not tied in that way—unless indeed it insists on forging its own chains.

By contrast, the eschatology of observational science is extremely simple, for the method it employs can never reveal any reason for regarding death—the only certainty that faces all of us—as anything but a total extinction; indeed if man is identified with his body it can be nothing else. (I might mention by the way that there is no need to question the reality of some of the phenomena associated with spiritualism; the interpretation to be assigned to them is a very different matter.) If extinction be in fact our destiny, the hitherto almost universal belief of humanity in some sort of "after-life" must be a delusion, no doubt largely wishful in origin, and must be replaced as quickly as possible by a more realistic view. A realistic view must however take account of every aspect of reality inward as well as outward: so which view is really realistic? And incidentally which is really dispassionate? It seems to me that the postulate of total extinction can serve as an easy way out of the necessity of facing the dread alternative of a heaven and a hell, and the prospect of a judgment in which our smallest and least considered actions and attitudes may outweigh all those we now regard as significant, because it is they that give the show away. And then, with the veil of the flesh torn away, at last we really see ourselves.

An eschatological compromise seems even more impossible than in the cases of origin and function. Either religion is childish and misleading, and destined to give way to an intellectual maturity of very recent appearance and great potentiality; or else science, in so far as it concerns itself with the origin of the universe or the function and destiny of man, is just plain wrong.

Such fundamental divergences impose an ineluctable choice. I have suggested that, since truth is in question, that choice must be referred to the intelligence, bearing in mind that intelligence is more than reason alone., I should not be surprised if some of you are thinking that in that connection I am attributing more to religion than is really there. More than meets the eye of the casual or unsympathetic observer—yes; more than it is easy for the unprejudiced but puzzled enquirer to find—perhaps; but more than is there—no.

The enemies of religion are interested above all in making it appear to be as arbitrary, as non-essential and as unintellectual as possible. One would sometimes think that some of its

[10] Our eschatological situation is beyond the reach of our imagination, which is derived entirely from our terrestrial experience. The symbolical image of it that most adequately suggests its reality to a particular sector of humanity is the image presented by the religion characteristic of that sector.

defenders, in their efforts to popularize it, were prepared to go a very long way in the same direction. I have made frequent reservations concerning religion in connection with some of its contemporary tendencies, all pointing to the fact that its intellectual aspect—the doctrinal aspect that engages the intelligence and is "metaphysical" in the proper sense of that much abused word,[11] or "philosophical" in the ancient sense of that word—that aspect has become so obscured by an overlay of moralism and emotionalism as almost to be forgotten. Nevertheless, it is always present, and accessible to those that "have ears to hear," in the words of the sacred Scriptures and of their orthodox commentaries; it is also implicit in the outward forms of religion, including its doctrinal formulations and its ritual which, if they had no intellectual basis, would indeed be arbitrary. This intellectual or metaphysical background is the heart of all religion, and, when it is lost sight of, religion cannot but go astray.

There are two ways of accounting for the hold that religion has maintained on mankind since the dawn of history until now—or should I say—"until very recently"? One is that there appears to be a kind of religious phase, factual but difficult to explain, in the evolutionary progress of humanity from a relatively bestial state to a civilized maturity, of which the present age is probably only the beginning.

The other is related to what I have just said, that the ultimate truth about the nature of the universe and the situation of man is implicit in, and somehow shines through, the very varied forms of religion; and that it is the concordance of this truth with our own inmost nature that confers on religion its mysterious power to attract and to hold. This, truth is too comprehensive to be contained by any unequivocal dialectical formulation, so that, for a large majority at least, religious conformity in the shape of belief and observance brings them much nearer to the truth than anything else possibly could. Religious belief therefore is a manifestation of intelligence, at least in so far as it is the expression of a real inward understanding which is unable to express itself in any other way, and moreover has no need to try to do so. Religion takes man as he is, and not as if everyone were a saint or a sage.

Belief is the form in which religious truth reaches the many. There are always some whom it reaches in a more explicitly intellectual form, and they alone are qualified to oppose dialectically any system of ideas that contradicts either religion as a whole or a particular religion. When those who are sufficiently well qualified are too few, or when pandemonium prevents their voices from being heard, religion is led into making more and more compromises, not with facts, which it never denies, but with a philosophy which seeks to reduce God to the measure of man, even when it does not reject God flatly, in either case depriving man of the possibility of rising above himself. The real strength of religion lies in its conformity to its metaphysical

[11] The word "metaphysical" comes from the Greek. It does not mean "beyond the physical" in the current sense of the last word, but rather "beyond the natural," that is to say "beyond the observable." It is therefore equivalent to the Latin "supernatural," provided that the latter is understood literally and not in its degraded sense, in which it is applied to almost any unexplained phenomenon. Properly speaking, neither word is concerned with phenomena as such, but exclusively with the universal principles underlying all phenomena, explicable or otherwise; and that is as much as to say—with the "mystery" in the ancient sense (from a Greek word meaning "to be silent"). Therefore the language of metaphysic is always symbolical and not descriptive; it must leave room for the inexpressible. It can be outwardly very simple, like the language of the sacred Scriptures, but, whether outwardly simple or outwardly complex, it cannot be understood by anyone whose outlook is confined to the world of phenomena, however erudite and mentally agile he may be. Hence the frequent misuse of the word in all sorts of connections, and in particular its application to statements that are not in the least metaphysical.

background,[12] in the light of which a synthetic view of the complexities of experience becomes possible, and in which the situation of man becomes clear in all its essentials. The strength of religion lies also, humanly speaking, in the uncompromising nature of its doctrines, provided that it does not admit compromise.

Religion, in seeking the absolute, loses itself in the relative, science, in probing the relative, mistakes it for the absolute.

There can be no justifiable criticism of the precision of science, nor of its objectivity, its quasi-mathematical detachment and (in theory at least) its dispassion. The effectiveness of your work depends on your maintaining those characteristics to the utmost; but their inherent limitation must be recognized. 'A good thing can get out of place, and I am certainly not suggesting that it is the fault of you, the practical men, that it has happened in this case. The fact is that the approach of science does not get to the heart of things, and it is impossible that it ever should. Nobody denies its effectiveness in changing the face of the world, and in providing us with material possessions on a scale hitherto undreamt of, and in combating disease and pain. Nevertheless, its application has not yet produced much contentment or feeling of security, which seem to be as far off as ever, if not farther. Why do people persist in their quarrels and discontents, hatreds, suspicions and revolts, and show no signs of amendment? Is it really because they have not yet got enough, or because someone else's lack of goodwill or stupidity delays the raising of the standard of living everywhere? It becomes daily more difficult to make that kind of explanation fit the facts. Or is it in the last analysis because even those who are most abundantly equipped for living are starved as never before of all that could give meaning to their lives, and because what is being offered to them—or should I say: what is being thrust down their throats?—does nothing whatever towards meeting this, the first of all needs?

If that be so, I suggest that the reason is that we, whatever may be our *credo,* have in practice behaved as if this life carried its own justification in itself, and have chosen to treat our existence as if it were an accident, and our intelligence as no more than a tool for the satisfaction of earthly needs and desires; whereas in reality that intelligence, provided that we are not too proud to acknowledge the mystery of its origin and of our own, can penetrate beyond the confines of the universe of phenomena and give us a glimpse of what is greater than ourselves; and that is what we need above all to give direction and meaning to our lives, to give us something to live for, and something to die for.

[12] The essential unity of the great religions resides in their conformity to this common metaphysical background, and in nothing else. That background has been called the "philosophia perennis"; it is the "undying wisdom" that is the heritage of the whole human race.

Between Time and Eternity

JOHN OF THE ANGELS ON *The Conquest of the Divine Kingdom*

Edited and translated by:
PEDRO and ANN-LAWRIE AISA and MACKENZIE BROWN

PART II

IV

Friar. That is truly a great thing, and a man ought not to relax nor cease praying until God permits him to drink at least one swallow of such water.

Master. If you were to drink even a single drop you would no longer thirst after vain things, nor transitory creatures, for your thirst would then be only for God and his love, in which the more you grow, the more you profit by divine union. The more thoroughly united and profoundly committed to God you are, the more clearly you will know him, and thus known, he must inevitably be loved with greater ardour. That is the goal of our works and exercises. There all are ordered and all end. If you lack this love, all your labors (although they may surpass those that have been suffered and are being suffered by all the men of the world and the devils) are vain and fruitless, as you will find lengthily written in our *Triunfos*.[1] Finally, you will have only as much sanctity as you have charity, and no more. And if it seems to you that I place too much stress on this, hear the great Augustinian father, who says that if you wish to fulfil with perfection all that is explicitly or implicitly contained in the divine Scriptures, keep in your soul true charity, for it is the object of the Law and of the prophets. The apostle says to his pupil Timothy: "The goal of the precept is pure charity, of good conscience and sincere faith".[2] In which words, although there is much to be noted, I only want you to see for the present that "precept" does not mean special or sole commandment, but all that which is commanded and ordained in the law, which, being as it is, directs itself to the maintenance and development of charity. It is the keystone of the spiritual structure, and if it is endangered, all which rests on it is endangered. With this you will understand that difficult place in the writings of St. James: "Whoever offends in one point of the law, is offending in all".[3]

Friar. I have never understood how this could be possible; Why must the adulterer be indicted or punished as a murderer? Or the thief as an adulterer?

Master. The declaration of the apostle, superficially understood, may not seem to be true, but if we apply what has already been said of charity, what the apostle says is found to be important and reasonable. If all other precepts are dependent upon this virtue of charity or selfless love extended to God and to one's fellow man., it clearly follows that, by not observing it, one is untrue to all the virtues. Conversely, if a person is lacking in any virtue, charity is itself diminished. Ina circle you will see this very clearly, for all the lines which are formed from the center to the circumference communicate with the center, where they meet and unite. Could one possibly touch this center without touching all the lines?

[1] Fray Juan's *Triunfos del Amor de Dios* (1589).

[2] (I Tim. 1). I Tim. 1:5.

[3] (Iacob. 2). James 2:10.

Friar. It does not seem so.

Master. Very well. The truth is, that the center of the Law and the prophets is selfless love, and all other precepts, as I have said, are precepts within this charity. They end in it and proceed from it. Therefore if one violates it and injury is done to it, all receive injury and whenever any of the others is violated, charity is offended and all are offended in it, being all one in it, like the lines in the center. Although each one, considered in itself, seems different from the others on the circumference, as the precepts of not to steal, not to kill, not to commit adultery, not to swear, and so forth, seem different, the lines are not different in the center nor are the precepts different within. Thus Saint James is finally understood, and for good reason you are left with a concern for charity.

Friar. Indeed very much! And also with a great desire to know how one may love God with perfection, so that one might achieve that which the Saints have achieved so quickly by this means.

Master. The way is taught by the most divine Lord, who asks only that, in return for all that we and other creatures owe him, we give love. He says to love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, all your mind, all your power and all your virtue.[4]

Friar. This use of words with such subtle meanings confuses me greatly. In order to really understand this imperative, I need someone to throw light upon such terms as heart, soul, mind, power and virtue.

Master. I would very much like to excuse myself from answering, because it is a matter of considerable difficulty and requires a higher knowledge of spiritual matters than I possess. So you will have to be content with my telling you what I happen to know, which is simply what the Saints say and what philosophy teaches us.

Friar. No more could be asked of you.

Master. Observe, then, that as a foundation of religious doctrine, it is held that in each man there are actually three men: the animal, the rational and the divine. In each of these there is a power which perceives and another power which fears or desires that which is perceived—depending upon whether it seems damaging or beneficial. The "animal-man" acts and perceives by the five exterior senses sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch and all that which is perceived by these senses is transmitted to the brain. Then, by certain images and fantasies this man views things there, organizes them and retains them in his memory. Accompanying this sensitive power is another natural power of appetite, with which this man desires these exterior things (riches, friends, pleasures and other delights of this kind) and flees from adverse things which are contrary to him. This appetite is called animal or sensual, and is the affective force that moves solely through the activity of the senses. Whoever lives according to this man, lives according to sensuality—not very different from the way the brutes live. In this aspect we are without nobility and are subject to corruption and death.

The second man, who is said to be rational, has a certain power, which is called reason, whose function it is to weigh all things and to see which is good and which is bad, which is true and which is false. This power draws conclusions from premises, and draws insensible things from things which are felt. It is a power that in its operation does not use any corporal organ, as the preceding one does. It involves free will, which moves toward embracing and doing all that reason dictates and teaches. Others call it rational affect or the appetite of reason. He who

[4] (Deut. 6). Deut. 6:5

exercises this power makes himself rich with wisdom and virtues, which grow according to the amount he desires them. The more of them he attains, the greater is his desire to fully possess them. This life in itself is imperfect, because something is always lacking which is above human reason. It is in the end defective, because outside of God there is nothing which can satisfy the hunger of the rational animal.

The third man is characterized by supreme and pure intelligence. This is the cognitive force of the spirit which immediately receives a certain natural light from God, by which the truth of religious principles is recognized, once the terms are known. To this pure intelligence corresponds a soft, agreeable and pure love of the spirit which immediately receives an inclination towards the supreme good. Those who utilize this amorous power and obtain a familiarity with God are lifted so high at times that, hushing for a time their understanding, they forget themselves and all things together and are engulfed by God and transformed in Him. Ruysbroeck called the life of this third man divine life, because in this life God is carefully contemplated and the soul is united with Him through love, and he enjoys and tastes as much as there is of this sweetness. He melts and renews himself continually in Him, and this is the road of rapture and elevation above all our powers to a state where God himself rules us. The soul undergoes this transformation and is lit with a divine light, as is the air with the rays of the sun, or as iron by the heat of the flame.[5]

Also I want you to know that the spirit (*ánima*) of man is called such principally because it enlivens and animates the body, and in those forces of the spirit, known as understanding, memory and will, shines the image of the Holy Trinity.[6] According to the superior man, or pure intelligence, the soul is the spirit or intimate part, or consciousness, or depth, endowed with such nobility that there are no words to describe it. This intimate sanctuary of the consciousness cannot be filled or satisfied by any created thing, but only by the Creator with all His immensity and greatness. Here He has His peaceful abode, as in heaven itself. Nor is it necessary that we look for Him outside of ourselves when we wish to converse with Him. To the degree that we do not banish Him through sin, He is inseparably there, in this, His sanctuary, prepared to hear us and to show us mercy—although at times He is so hidden as to appear to be absent. For which reason we must here commit to Him all the efforts of our soul with strict attention and reverence. From this spirit, or intimate part, or center, or apex of the spirit proceed all its forces, just as rays proceed from the sun. And these forces return to their center and source through dedicated charity and sincere concern for God. Blessed is the man who knows how to arrive at this center by perfect resignation, because one hour of such effort is worth more, in gaining pardon from sins and obtaining of grace, than many years of other efforts, no matter how lofty and acceptable. God works in the soul so converted, such profound things that it itself does not understand them. But with those who dull these precious faculties and interior powers, He has no intercourse nor communication. And this is the greatest misery which the rational creature can suffer.

V

Friar. Frankly, I am amazed and beside myself to hear what you say. I never realized that

[5] This theme is developed in Ruysbroeck's, *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage,* (Book II).

[6] The Spanish for "spirit" is *Anima.* The meaning is thus clear because the spirit "animates" the body.

there are within us such great riches nor that there exists such a wonderful and satisfying center.

Master. You will find very few who know this, because most are given to external things, without attempting to enter into themselves to seek this treasure and converse with that Lord who says: "My kingdom is within you".

Friar. It seems that with what has been said I should now readily understand the commandment of love, which has always been so obscure to me. If you were willing to explain it, I should be greatly consoled.

Master. To love God with all your heart is to love him with all your will and desire, in such a way that you want nothing which is opposed to God, outside of God, or above God. I mean to say that, having removed all creatures from your heart, you must offer it wholly to the Creator, in order that He only and He alone may possess it. To love God with all your soul is to love Him with all the animal-man, having in control all the five senses, and keeping them removed from all indulgences which could offend the divine eyes. You must use the senses not to sin nor to please yourself, but rather to honor and glorify your Lord. To love God with all your mind is to persevere in true faith with sound understanding, trusting in God without reservation or false views. Or, in accordance with the doctrine that I have given you, to love God with all your mind is to enter into yourself, always intent on Him, with a pure and sincere love, undiluted by any other love which is alien or adulterous, for it is certain that no other but God can really fill our soul.

Finally you must love with all your might. All the strength in you, interior and exterior, must be employed and consumed according to His highest approbation, without any contemplation of self-interest. You may be sure that you will in due course receive the glory and other gifts and mercies that God customarily gives to His friends. In a word, I want you to know that the various aspects of this commandment clearly demonstrate that God our Lord wants you all for Himself, without there remaining in you any room for other created things which could make war with or contradict His will. It is necessary that you rid yourself of all such things in order that God can dwell in you as in His temple, for it is not possible that He make His dwelling place within you while your corrupted self remains. Have you never seen a great Prince take lodging, entering in a village along the road, in the house of a rustic laborer?

Friar. Indeed I have seen it.

Master. Well, then, just as the laborer welcomes the Prince into his poor little house by emptying it of all his valuables, without leaving a thing, large or small (because the Prince carries with him all the furnishings and adornment worthy of his person) so, in order that God may dwell in a soul He asks that it first be emptied of the love of all creatures including itself. The Ecclesiasticus says: "Write wisdom in your heart in the time of emptiness and note well that he whose heart is least occupied with the world is the one most filled with wisdom".[7] The wisdom that knows and nourishes the soul is received to the degree that our hearts are vacant and are emptied, not only of the love of creatures, but also of the acts of interior and exterior feelings. Once these are put aside and silenced, the pure soul flies to its Creator and undergoes

[7] (Eccl. 38). Ecclesiasticus 38 has not got this text. Ecclesiasticus 38:25 says: "The wisdom of a scribe cometh by his time of leisure: and he that is less in action shall receive wisdom". Modern Spanish version of Vulgate: "*La sabiduria la adquiere el letrado en el tiempo que estâ libre de negocios; y el que tiene pocas ocupaciones: ése la adquirira*". Jerusalem Bible: "Leisure is what gives the scribe the opportunity to acquire wisdom; the man with few business affairs grows wise".

at this time the transformation wrought by the Holy Spirit, which works great marvels in the soul which is thus pure and empty. Before this divine Spirit in the beginning of the world came walking on the waters and made them fertile and produced so many lives, it is said that the earth was vacant, which is to tell us (speaking to the interior man) that the region of our hearts must be cleared of all creatures so that it can better receive the coming of Him who fills it wholly, who is God.[8]

How emptied was the heart of him who, speaking of charity and imperfect knowledge, said to the people of Corinth: "When that which is perfect is come, you must do away with that which is partial and small. When I was small, I spoke and understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things".[9] Everything is small and childish which is not God, and the knowledge that one has by means of creatures, is as darkness compared to that light which God infuses in the soul cleared and free of them. In truth, whoever plays with these transitory things in his mind and gives them a place in his heart, is a child. In order to grow up he must push them aside and free himself for the Creator alone.

The Prophet Jeremiah (and holy King David in agreement with him) says that before God, as in prayer, we must pour out our hearts like water—meaning that nothing should remain within them, neither thought, nor affection for creatures, so that we may find ourselves alone with His Majesty.[10] In the 138th Psalm it is written: "The night is the illumination for my delights". To my view, what those words mean in the spiritual sense is that by freeing ourselves of our present concern for creatures (for these are darkness, as I said in the 15th chapter of the *Triunfos*) we find the delights and subtle pleasures of the contemplative soul, whose will at this time is activated and working or receiving great gifts and riches from its celestial Husband. God, in order to symbolize this freeing of the heart, commanded in his ancient law that the altar where the perpetual flame of sacrifice burned be hollow and empty.[11] In order that this be understood, He makes transpire that which occurs in the Holy Sacrament of the altar, when at the voice of the priest the bread abandons its own substance and the body of Christ succeeds it, leaving only the outward signs of bread. After the consecration, in the substantial sense, it is the body of Christ, and in the accidental sense only is it bread. I mean to say that there is no substance there of bread, even though all the outward signs are there, and for that reason it is called transubstantiation. Therefore, He wishes that, at His call, by which he converts us to Himself, all creatures, including ourselves, should depart from our hearts leaving this dwelling free and vacant for Him. Even so did that divine Apostle who in carnal flesh dared to say: "I live, yet Christ, not I, lives in me".[12] This is to say that, in the spiritual sense, the accidental part of me is man, but the substantial is of God. This is how God wants us to be for Him: accidentally men and substantially gods, ruled by His spirit and in accordance with His will. This excludes all things which are possessed and excludes all misplaced loves, because, as a Prophet has said: "The cavity of our heart is narrow and there is not room for two in it; the canopy of this love is small and cannot cover more than one".[13]

[8] (Genes. 1). Gen. 1:2.

[9] (II Cor. 13). 1 Cor. 13:10-11.

[10] (Psalm. 21). Psalm 22:14. Douay: "I am poured out like water". Jerusalem "I am like water draining away".

[11] (Exod. 39). Exodus 38:7.

[12] (Galat. 2). Gal. 2:20.

[13] Juan de los Angeles here identifies the prophet as Isaiah.

Friar. It seems that you are saying that the just cease to be men and become gods in essence, just as by virtue of the words of the consecration the bread ceases to be bread and becomes the body of Christ.

Master. I do not quite say this. I am speaking of transformations of love, all of which are accidents. I say that in loving God I don't cease to be what I am in respect to essence, but only accidentally. I am saying that the soul transformed in God by love lives more for God than for itself, because it desires and follows not what the exterior man asks, but that which God ordains. Therefore since this soul dwells more where it loves God than where it gives life to the body, it follows that it is more a part of God which it loves than it is of itself. And in this sense you can say that the just are accidentally men and substantially gods, for they are ruled and live by the Divine Spirit. It is like molten steel which continues to be steel although dressed with the qualities of fire, appearing more fire than steel in essence—although truthfully it is not fire except by participation, as the just are gods only by participation in the Divine.

Friar. This certainly is an admirable doctrine, father, except that two things sit badly with me. First, the idea that I can live without myself, as you say the Apostle lived. Second, the idea that the rational spirit being only one, should have such different faculties and carry out such varied tasks as though it were many spirits.

Master. Your points are well taken. The spirit is one in respect to its essence and substance; and according to the doctrine of Duns Scotus and other men of Paris, there is no real distinction between the spirit and its powers.[14] Saint Thomas, however, says that there is a real distinction between the spirit and its powers, which considered in their diverse respects, are sometimes called accidents, and sometimes considered as virtually the natural properties of the same spirit.

Friar. Let us, if you do not mind, leave these differences for the schools to argue about and say with Isidore that the powers are aspects of the spirit, that they are the same with it, and that due to the diversity of tasks with which the spirit is occupied, it has diverse names.[15]

Master. This is how it seemed to Duns Scotus, and following him now, let us say that the spirit is one, since everyone has it, but that there are in it diverse faculties or virtues, which the Lord gave it as instruments for work, except that with their little use they are confused in us and are not in that state of readiness which is required for such high exercises as these. So it is necessary to first cleanse and dress oneself carefully. By which I want you to know, Desirous son, that in order to perfectly convert yourself to God, understanding and reason must serve as tutors to the bestial and sensual man, removing him from all the profane likes and delights, of thoughts and words as well as actions, in order that in this way you can achieve perfect mortification and negation of yourself. You thereby bring this man to such a point that from then on he does not labor because of exterior feelings nor spend himself for creatures, but rather in accordance with that which sound reason dictates and understands to be the will of God. This mortification of the natural self will be very annoying and difficult for you at first, but in the eyes of God will be very well accepted and will give off a fragrance like the softest aroma,

[14] Duns Scotus: (Oxon., **H,** d. 16... "*essentia animae indistincta re et ratione, est principium plurium actionum sine diversitate reali potentiarum... anima continet potentias suas unitive, quanquam formaliter sinc distinctae*". In other words, he says that the soul is one single indivisible power, having intelligence and will. There is no real distinction, but a formal distinction, between the soul and its powers.

[15] (Isid. lib. II Etim, c. 1). Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636), the last of the Latin Fathers, was a man of phenomenal learning, best known for his encyclopaedic Etymologiae. The reference here is to book 11, chapter 1.

the most exotic incense. Keep your understanding free of perplexing doubts, let it be, as I have said, founded in Catholic faith, in accord with and completely responsive to the holy church.

Offer your will to God with perfect abnegation, cleared and free from desire, affection or inclination towards any of the creatures of the world. And keep, so far as possible through divine grace, your memory empty and vacant of images and forms of all that which is not God. See to it that these mundane concerns are purged and made submissive to your spiritual center, where God dwells and is present. There you can adore and revere and embrace Him with the firm ties of intimate love. Take care that in the same way that you are led to see and know the material sun by its rays, so also by these very mundane concerns you are led and carried to understanding, and from under-standing to the secret of the spirit, and from there finally to God. You will also realize that our spirit is in this world midway between time and eternity; and if it elects to walk with exterior things and is converted to time, that is, if it is made temporal by loving temporal things, it will without doubt forget eternity. Then all that which is divine will be diminished in it and will pass it by and leave it far behind. Just as things seem smaller than they really are when viewed from a distance (and the farther away the smaller, and with even more distance are not even recognizable) so the divine things which are far' from our heart come to be judged as small by those who do not know how to contemplate eternity. And because our flesh wars with our spirit, it is exasperating for the spirit to have as would-be friends in its earthly or natural place, all these temporal and worldly things when the spirit doesn't even have its kingdom here. It is in exile, for its true friends are in heaven. Therefore it is necessary to arm ourselves against the flesh and conquer it with strict penitence in order that it does not brazenly return and rise against the spirit. Do you want, then, to conceive in your soul a singular devotion and ardor against yourself? Just imagine that you are now dead, for in a brief while, like it or not, you must die, and consider at the same time that your soul is parted from your body and joined with eternity. You will then see how little you care about those injuries and wounds that might happen to your body on earth and how little you care about that which occurs in the world. Also, remember how heedless the martyrs were of their bodies, even before they were parted from their souls, having merely thought that shortly they would have to leave them.

VI

Friar. I am very gratified with what you have said, both in regard to the supreme commandment of divine love and in regard to the purification of the forces of the spirit. The only thing which I need now to know is that which you seem to have deliberately omitted, and that is the first thing I asked concerning the living and not living of Saint Paul—a thing which has always been difficult for me, because it seems impossible for one man to exemplify at one time, the words: "I live and I do not live".

Master. I was given a good opportunity to explain this passage of the Apostle when in my *Triunfos* I spoke of the transformation or death or mortification of love. Since I said so much there, I was ignoring your question. However, since you do not excuse me from answering, I shall try to relieve your doubts. Saint Dionysus cites this passage.[16] Because what he had said

[16] Dionysius the Areopagite, converted by Saint Paul according to Acts XVII, 34, was the first Bishop of Athens. Various philosophical writings by an author of Neoplatonist views in the fifth or sixth century were attributed to Dionysius, hence the designation "pseudo-Dionysius".

appeared difficult to his pupil, as it has appeared to you, he purposely set to work to clarify it. Among other notable things worthy of his exalted understanding, he says that divine love causes ecstacy, which is to say, it takes those who love out of themselves and does not let them belong to themselves, but rather to the loved thing. Because the love of the Apostle for Christ was so great that he was not his own nor did he live for himself, but completely for Christ, he dared to say that he lived and did not live, and that his life was Christ. This is as if he had more clearly said: "I am made God by love or love has transformed me in Christ, and I am a Christ of love". Two things presuppose this ecstatic love of Saint Paul, which must be considered in whomever suffers this ecstacy as he did: the first is the natural being of whom it is said, "I live"; the second is the being of grace, who says, "I do not live, because Christ lives in me". The corrupted natural being wanes in this condition, while that of grace grows so that the spirit feels Christ within itself more than it feels itself. So, concerning the first life, he lives as if he were not living, because he heeds only the second life and says he lives in it. And how much more justification has a man for praising himself more because Christ lives in him than because he himself lives! Oh, if you allowed Christ to work in you how it would inflame your will, how your understanding would sharpen and how your memory would come alive in order that, not you within yourself, but He in you would live and you would be truly another Christ through love. Like Saint Paul, you would have the power to convert many souls to his service as he did! This is that union so desired and so sought by Christ himself, who after the supper, when close to Death, speaking with so many truths, with his Father, says: "My Father, I have given to my disciples, for their participation in my union, the glory which you gave me, so that they may be one as you and I are—I in them and you in me, that they be consummated in one and that the world may know you sent me and that you loved them as you loved me".[17]

Friar. That is certainly a superb flight!

Master. It is a flight no less than that of the proud eagle, that makes us gods in God and christs in Christ and sons in the Son, in order that what the Prophet said may be verified: "I said, Gods you are and sons of the Majesty all".[18] Here is where the practice arose of calling Christ the vine and ourselves the shoots, to better signify this close union that he desired between Him and us.[19] Also he called himself leaven because the dough after seasoning is a whole with it and, as they say, a part of its nature.[20] Oh, absent and vain heart! gather yourself a bit into yourself, or better said, into your Christ, who is no other than yourself, and finally understand that from here forward you have nothing more to desire than to be man-god in Christ, diminishing yourself, in order that you may glorify yourself with the Apostle saying: "I am living, and I am not living. Christ lives in me". Because with this you will have understood what it is to be substantially Christ and accidentally man, I want to say what it means to have Christ living more in us than we ourselves and how one carries out that strict commandment of love required of the heart, spirit, mind and all interior and exterior forces.

What I have said will be enough for today, advising you in conclusion that the greatest loss to the soul comes from not keeping open the entrance to its intimate interior, where God is, and where no desire exists for any creatures. Therefore, whomsoever by his great negligence

[17] (Ioan. 17). St. John 17:22-23.

[18] (Psa. 81) Psalm 82:6.

[19] (loan. 5). St. John 15:5.

[20] (Math. 13). Matthew 13:33.

and carelessness loses this openness, loses in one hour more of the spiritual and interior gifts than he could earn if in this time he were to learn all the Scriptures. This is because all of them were ordered and written so that with their help we might be a complete and pure sacrifice for God our Lord. Therefore, I ask as emphatically as I can that, freeing yourself from all distraction, you dwell within yourself and withdraw all your efforts and feelings so far as divine grace permits, from useless exterior actions. Retire to the secret interior, and closing the door of your heart against the vain images and fantasies that distract the spirit, dwell alone with your Lord God, who built His holy temple within you. He who, without the hindrance of creatures, that is, with purity and simplicity, draws near to God, becomes one with Him and is superior to all the images and forms of creatures. And since grace flows abundantly from this interior into a man and augments the forces and powers of his spirit, all of these labor by means of it with happiness and enthusiasm. Here is where you must offer all to God and abandon yourself, living completely in Him, flowing like melted liquid in Him, and adoring Him in spirit and truth. In order that you may conserve this interior in intercourse and celestial conversation with your God, see that this flow is neither of words nor of works through the exterior sensations, for the more words and works, the more there will be distractions and accidents. I advise you that here, more than in any other exercise, is our health and spiritual well-being. Believe me, if you constantly dwell in your interior, you will lose yourself. Then you must restrain the natural man so that it is not distracted and does not wander this way and that. It is certain that a single idle conversation will distract you and many such will impede the peace of your soul. You are also warned that, although by the grace of God all sins are now beaten down and dead in you, the inclination and cause persevere always with you and with these tendencies you have to war continuously during your mortal life.

Friar. And what if I should not feel God within me?

Master. Then work with all your power until you find Him again, exiling from yourself all which would or could be an impediment. Choose death before doing anything against the will of God or consenting to a sin, however minor it might be, and do not trouble yourself in pleasing any creature outside of God. Be content with the good part of Mary, without making persistent complaints, like Martha, for this is not usually done except by those of little spirit or good in their souls. I beg you one and many times, do not go outside of that sacred dwelling place within you, for it could be that you will pay for one hour of absence with many years of frustration and even with the possibility of never more re-entering yourself. Devote yourself without interruption to interior solitude, and, speaking in secret, say to yourself: "He whom I seek is not comprehensible by feeling nor by intelligence, but pure souls may embrace and receive Him. This I profess and seek, and whatever might come to me, be it prosperity or adversity, I must suffer it and rise above it and continue my way. Our father friar Pedro de Alcántara recollected himself with only these words: "Return, my soul, to your rest (which is the interior center) for there your bountiful God awaits you".[21] He said that with this verse his soul, as if ashamed and dismayed by wandering at random, withdrew within itself and awaited the approach of its Husband. Do keep your heart free of verbiage, for very few words are enough for this seclusion and many are likely to impede it. Therefore, be silent, repose and submit. Trust in God, and do your part with good will. Believe me that very shortly you will be marvellously enlightened with knowledge of the most perfect paths of interior life. And this is

[21] (Psal. 144). Psalm 116:7. Saint Peter of Alcantara (1499-1562) like Juan de Los Angeles, a member of the Discalced reform of the Franciscan order, wrote only one work which has survived, *Treatise of Prayer and Meditation*.

enough for you to know how to walk within yourself, which is what I most wish you to glean from talking with me.

Friar. Blessed be God for giving me such a true and sincere master. I do not intend to depart from this teaching in the slightest, nor to tire myself in reading other books. I only ask humbly that you do not conceal from me those paths and roads which you say are in the interior life.

Master. I, son, am very weary and you must reflect well upon what you have heard. The night invites us to be silent, and it is right that we respect it.

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Book Review

A SUFI MARTYR.
by A. J. Arberry.
(Allen and Unwin, 28s.).

Review by R. W. J. Austen.

This small volume contains, for the most part, a translation of a work entitled *Shakwā al-gharīb* (Complaint of a Stranger Exiled from Home), written by ʻAin al-Qudāt al-Hamadhāni, shortly before he was murdered in his prime in 1131.

The author was a Sufi and Shafiʻite lawyer, some of whose writings on the teachings of Sufism had incurred the wrath of the religious authorities who had brought about his imprisonment. He was accused of heresy in respect of his statements on the nature of prophecy, his insistence on the need for the spiritual master and his statement that God is "the All", which was regarded as pantheistic. In answer to these charges he wrote the *Shakwā al-gharīb* in order to show that he was innocent of heresy and also that his accusers had jealously and deliberately misrepresented what he had written. He bases his defence on two main points which he argues with considerable skill. The first of these is that his statements had been judged out of context and the second that his accusers had no proper understanding of Sufi terminology, and were thus not qualified to pass judgement on him.

Two things would appear to have prejudiced his cause. Firstly, he had shown considerable brilliance from an early age and had written daringly on Sufi doctrine. It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that the older and more established scholars should have regarded him with suspicion and envy. Secondly, the Vizier of the time was an evil and tyrannical man, which would have tended to exacerbate the fanaticism of those under him.

Although not of the same stature and importance of al-Hallāj and al-Suhrawardī, ʻAin al-Qudāt is certainly deserving of the care and effort which Professor Arberry has devoted to him.

Once again Professor Arberry has made available to the public, in a manner which will appeal both to the academic and the more general reader, the work of a notable Sufi. The translation is accurate and lucid and the introduction and notes provide a wealth of information regarding the life and writings of the author.

We have learned with regret of the death of Professor Arberry a few days after this review was written. Editor.

Correspondence

THE ANCIENT WISDOM IN AFRICA

Sir,

In the article entitled "The Ancient Wisdom in Africa", which appeared in the Spring number of your journal, we read that "Africa also was once the home of a learning as profound as any in Asia can show". This opinion, although exaggerated when put in this way, is nevertheless basically acceptable, for it is incontestable that profound metaphysical ideas are to be found amongst animistic Negroes; but what is strange in the article in question is that the author damages his own thesis with ethnographic considerations which, to say the least, are paradoxical. His first informant is a Zulu medicine man; he describes him thus: "Mankanyezi was a pure Zulu, of the royal blood... He was a tall, lean man, light chocolate in colour, of a distinctly Jewish cast of countenance, without a trace of the Negroid, with the exception of his snow-white hair which was frizzled". At once the thesis of an authentically African wisdom is destroyed; for the average reader will necessarily think that the Zulus, or the aristocrats of this race, are not true Africans, but immigrant Semites, who have brought with them a white man's wisdom.

Further on the author describes a strange population encountered "in a certain large Native Reserve"; he does not say which because, allegedly, there are circumstances that oblige him "to be vague concerning dates and places"! According to the author, these people whose "features were of a pure European type", "identified themselves in all respects with their Bantu neighbours"; and they assured him that they were "Kabyles" who had come from North Africa.

Three remarks must be made here. Firstly, if these people came to South Africa before Islam, they cannot call themselves "Kabyles", because this name was given to them by the Arabs; *qabā'il* is in fact an Arabic word, the plural of *qabīlah,* which means "tribe". Secondly, if these people arrived amongst the Zulus more than a millennium ago and became assimilated into the Negro civilization, as the author affirms, they could not have kept their racial identity; in the absence of any intention to represent either a separate religion or a caste, they would have melted into the mass of the Negro people. Thirdly, if they came following the advent of Islam, it is impossible that they should have ceased to be Moslems, for it is unheard of for any Moslems of the white race to have exchanged their religion for any Negro animism whatsoever.

But let us return to the Zulu medicine man mentioned above, who is said to have had nothing Negroid about him but, on the contrary, resembled a Jew. An ethnologist will see the true state of affairs right away: amongst the Bantu, the Zulus represent a separate group, who are lighter than the Bantu in general and whose prognathism is less marked; but there can be no question of separating them from the Black race, and it needs all the lack of talent for observation characteristic of so many travellers in exotic countries to enable one to describe a pure Zulu as a pure Semite, or rather as an Armenoid type, for there exists no exclusively Semitic type. Each of the great races repeats within its characteristic framework the general or particular types of the other races, and it is necessarily so, because the human race is one; thus it is always possible to find a Mongol who will remind us of such and such a White or Negro type, and inversely, quite apart from any question of racial mixing. Be that as it may,

the contradiction in "The Ancient Wisdom in Africa" is that in order to make us accept the spiritual value of Black Africans, one begins by assuring us that the spiritual men of Africa are in no wise African. Moreover, the reader will suspect that the author of the article in question is insensitive to the beauties that the Negro type can present.

Apart from such ethnographical improbabilities, the Bantu Brotherhood "founded in Egypt in the reign of the Pharaoh Cheops" likewise inspires no confidence; such a thing might just be possible in the case of the Watutsi of Ruanda, but certainly not in the case of the Zulus. And what is especially improbable is that an authentically African spiritual society should have "many disciples, not merely in Africa but in Asia, Europe and America"!

It is not necessary to go on any further.

F.S.
Sept. 1969

ASTROLOGICAL SYMBOLISM

Sir,

Mr. Bolton obviously confuses zodiacal signs with zodiacal constellations. While it is true that signs and constellations do not coincide any more due to the precession of the equinoxes the signs remain unaffected by it. The argument is old and has always been put forward against Astrology. Ptolemy in his Syntax and Tetrabiblos (III, 11) had already drawn attention to the gradual divergence between the signs of the zodiac and the constellations; and in the third century Origen made out of this fact an argument against Astrology which he thought to be decisive. Such arguments can be found throughout the centuries: Apomasar, Junctinus and last but not least Boll-Betzold-Gundel in our times, have all put forward arguments based on this discrepency between zodiacal signs and constellations. The answer is not at all difficult if one returns to the original revealed Astrology. There was indeed a time when both signs and constellations coincided, about 2000 B.C., which might have been the time when Astrology was established in the form or "system" as it is known to us.

In order to understand the metaphysical meaning of the difference between signs and constellations one has to revert to the cosmological order as it was expressed in the well known Ptolemaic world picture wherein the planets and spheres are eternal prototypes (whereby it is the planetary rhythms and not the planets themselves that determine their spheres).

The centre of all is the Sun, the "heart of the world" (*qalb al'alam*) and beyond the spheres of the planets are to be found the heaven of the fixed stars (the constellations), beyond that the heaven without stars, and beyond that the two highest spheres of the divine Pedestal and the divine Throne. It is the heaven without stars which represents the end of space, the place of discontinuity between the formal and supraformal manifestation. Here the invisible becomes the transcendent. And it is in this heaven that the 12 signs of the zodiac are located. It is therefore here that the entrance to the formal world and the exit from it find their symbolical localization in the two signs Cancer and Capricorn, and it is to this symbolical or principial localization that Guénon's diverse articles dealing with this are related. ("Les Portes solstitiales", "Le Symbolisme du Zodiac chez les Pythagoriciens", "L'hiéroglyphe du Cancer" and others).

Let it be clearly understood that this heaven of the zodiacal signs is the place of the heavenly prototypes or archetypes, which remain eternally as they are, unaffected by what is below them (the constellations), while what is below is subject to change. The qualitative differentiation of the heavenly regions as expressed by the division of the zodiac has its origin in the four

constant limits of the sola. cycle, the solstices and equinoxes. It is wrong to say that the vernal equinox has changed from the sign of Aries to the sign of Pisces because the signs are reckoned from the vernal equinoctial point. One has to say on the contrary that the constellation of Aries has turned towards the sign of Taurus or that the vernal equinox is no longer confronted by the constellation of Aries but by the constellation Pisces. All those changes might have their importance perhaps in changing what might be called the "influences of heaven», but the signs and their principial importance remain unaffected thereby.

That all such considerations are far removed from the arguments or the reasonings of most Astrologers—old and new—does not devaluate the eternal truths contained in the metaphysical considerations which are also found in those articles by Guénon just mentioned. It is these considerations which are alone valid and which give to Astrology quite a different perspective from what is commonly understood of this traditional art.

It might be added—because it belongs into the same order—that the fact that technically conditioned beings have set foot on the moon does not in the least devaluate the profound symbolism of the moon; the symbol must not however be confused with what it symbolises.

DR. HANS BANDMANN.
Germany, 2.8.69